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An Interview With:

COACH McCAFFERY

COACH McCAFFERY: It looked like it was going to be a pick-and-pop; Abrams turned the ball screen down. We were getting ready to switch it. And when Abrams went the one way, White froze for a second and then didn't get back to him. He contested pretty hard. Kid made a tough shot. You've got to give it to the kid. But you can't get the shot off there. You can't separate. You've got to make Abrams make a tough two.

Q. What was the hope with .5 seconds left on the wrong end?

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, we were running shooters to the line. We obviously needed a three. My quarterback throwing it, he threw it a little low. He rolled left and came back to try to create the space he needed, and he was trying to throw it on the rope I think, figuring that he had to deliver the pass. If he threw it too high; it might get deflected. It got deflected because it was too low. But you can't blame Zach for that one.

Q. At the start of the game, they pretty much had -- inaudible.

COACH McCAFFERY: I don't know about that. I mean, I obviously wasn't pleased with the start of the game. What are we down, 20-5, something like that? You know, it's really hard from that point forward. Yeah, we got the lead a couple times, but it just changes everything.

Q. With the start, obviously that's a big hole, within that or the whole 40 minutes, where was this game lost?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think it was lost there. You're in a situation where you're at home, you can't get down 20-5. We played unbelievable defense from that point to the end of the half. That was as good of defense as we've played, but that was the only good defense we played.

If you really analyze it, the start of the game we were not good and in the second half we were not good. We essentially have a 20-point run on them because we go from down 15, up five, but you know, it changes everything.

We were never able to get any separation because we were constantly working, working, and working. We did a pretty good job not turning the ball over, we only had eight, but a couple late were very costly.

Q. How do you account for that?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think a couple things. It's fatigue a little bit. I think we're a little bit fragile. I think that's safe to say. When you're playing from behind and you're playing in a tight game, a lot of times, you stick with a lineup, you stick with guys maybe a little longer because you need them on offense. Whereas you'd much rather get a fresher set of legs out there.

But you know -- I don't do that. I've got Marble and White for a brief period in the second half, and rode those guys. Same with Mike, same with Josh. Those were the guys I was going to down the stretch with and Gabe and Woody were going back and forth, because those were the guys I thought gave us the best chance to win tonight.

Q. In the first half, Dev was in foul trouble; what was Illinois doing defensively that allowed --

COACH McCAFFERY: They weren't doing anything that they haven't done recently. They are in; they are switching and they are in.

So you've got to get some threes and you've got to be able to mix it up with driving kicks

and post-feed kick-outs, and we didn't get a ton in the post. Woody had some buckets; Basabe had a couple. But we didn't get a lot going in there. We got White fouled a couple times.

It wasn't anything special other than they were keeping everybody in front of him to take away his penetration.

Q. Do you say anything special to your seniors after a tough loss like this?

COACH McCAFFERY: No.

Q. What would it take for this to be a successful season in your mind?

COACH McCAFFERY: You know, just going to try to keep winning. I think we've done a lot of things so far this season. I'm very pleased with a lot of things that we've done.

But it's a long journey; and you have great points and you have mediocre points. And you have areas where you go in the other direction, and then you've just got to keep working. As a staff, we'll keep working and the players will keep working. We've got character in that locker room. We'll be fine.

Q. Do you think you're in the tournament?

COACH McCAFFERY: I don't know. I'm not Joe Lunardi.

Q. Egwu sat for twelve minutes in the first half, after a little foul trouble; played all throughout the second half. Do you follow that strategy of taking the guy out after two fouls?

COACH McCAFFERY: I do.

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