

January 7, 2012



An Interview With:

COACH McCAFFERY

Q. Did you think it switched back -- as an opportunity to get away, three starters on the bench, last 11 minutes and you guys are right there and couldn't seem to make the baskets.

COACH McCAFFERY: I don't -- I don't know that I looked at it that way. I looked at it more so that we didn't play well and we were still within striking distance. And it felt like if we could play better, we could shorten the gap on them.

Q. You guys seemed to be pressing on some of the shots, very makeable shots.

COACH McCAFFERY: Yeah, there's no question about that, we did that. You know, it sort of started early and then it just kind of continued, and then, you know, once they got up double digits, it seemed like it was impossible to get it in. And then, of course, they are shooting it free and easy, draining 3s out of the corner. So that was frustrating.

I thought we ran reasonably well, got it to the rim a bunch of times, just couldn't get it in. The one disappointing thing is we would have liked to have gotten a lot more second-shot opportunities when you are struggling like that. But, you know, very big, strong athletic team, it's not so easy.

Q. They are a really long and athletic team; did it seem like they were really cutting off the passing lanes?

COACH McCAFFERY: The first half, they were really physical. I mean, they committed ten fouls-- or I should say, ten were called, and you've got to give them credit for that. They got up into us. They took us out of some stuff and we

rushed some shots. We short-armed some shots. We had multiple, I think, transition opportunities where we could get to the rim, and didn't really have much to show for it.

We were in the double bonus, seven or eight minutes to go in the half. We were driving the ball, getting to the free throw line, but not enough. We jacked a little bit in that sequence. We were open when we took some 3s. When you are in a double bonus, you work hard to get into the double bonus; you've got to drive the ball.

Q. The first five minutes of the second half, Ohio State was pretty effective.

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, you know, Thomas hits a three first possession, a pick-and-pop three; he's a really good player.

And we get it right to point-blank range, miss, and they really started going to Sullinger. Even though he had 15 in the first half, 7-for-9, we were focused in on him and got a couple steals early, we made him work for it. Obviously did not want to give him another half of that, which we ended up doing.

We just didn't do a very good job on him, and it's a collective thing. We didn't have enough ball pressure, we didn't have enough weak side help. We didn't recognize when to be on the high side, when to be in front, when to be behind.

Sometimes you try to simulate it, and he's a hard guy to simulate, because he's just so quick. He's so elusive, you know, for a guy with that size, his hands -- he's got the best pair of hands I've ever seen. He catches everything. He finishes everything. And he's amazingly quick, whether it's a spin or an up and under, whatever he's doing.

The other thing he does, is he passes it well. So you've got to be careful of how much you go on him, because he's very unselfish.

Q. Their defensive efficiency seemed very highly rated all season, Jared said after

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the game he thought it was their best defensive effort since Duke. What did you see on tape of their defense that makes them as effective as they are?

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, it starts with ball pressure. You know, with Craft and Smith in particular, the two guards; so there's pressure at the point of attack.

Buford, he's got that kind of frame where he can really get after somebody; if you have a wing scorer, he can really get after that person.

And the other two guys take advantage of their size. But you find yourself shooting a lot of either contested or sort of rushed shots, and then like I said, the thing they do, also, is they rebound.

So if you don't make it a contested shot, then you don't have a whole lot of second-shot opportunities.

Q. Your team earned the crowd they got today with the two straight road wins and people were excited. What do you say to fans, people who came and were disappointed by what they saw?

COACH McCAFFERY: We are all disappointed with what happened today. You know, we can nitpick; and all we have to do is go back and break the film down and try to look at, okay, what did we do to get two great wins and what did we do today that wasn't as effective, and grow from it.

And the only thing I can say to the fans is how much we appreciate as a program, how engaged they were today, and encourage them to stick with us, because we have great kids, and they will work hard and they will come back and we'll play better.

It can sometimes be a bumpy ride when you're building, as we are, we have got a lot of young guys out there that made some freshman mistakes and we have got some guys that are in a little bit of a funk. It takes time.

As we mature, we'll be better able to handle the situation, this environment.

Q. What about the wrist, is it bad --

COACH McCAFFERY: It's been bothering him for a while. He got chopped pretty good. He was going to the hole and they went for the ball and they got his wrist.

I think he'll be okay. I mean, it has been lingering.

Q. Melsahn has been on a bit of a roller coaster at times this year, how do you turn it around the next couple of games?

COACH McCAFFERY: You know, he looked like he was starting off well, because he was up, he steals the pass to the post; he's running; he has a layup early that doesn't go in for him. I was encouraged a little bit early for where I thought he was headed.

But I just don't think the last two games he's played with the energy level that he needs to play with. He is a different kind of forward. He's got to run and attack the basket. He's got to run and rebound. He's got to run and block shots.

But it all starts with the running and activity. You know, he is not as much of a low post up and under. He's not that kind of guy. We're not going to isolate a side and have him do three crossovers and spin in traffic and shoot a finger roll; that's not who he is. He's an energy guy, who in the last two games, has not played with any energy, and that's why he's played 11 and 14 minutes. If he's not going to play with energy, he's not going to play. Can't make it any simpler than that.

Q. When Craft came out with about 11 minutes, the game was tied, they got it up to a 9-point lead at halftime, Shannon Scott played really well in that stretch --

COACH McCAFFERY: He wasn't the only one.

Q. Did he surprise you at all?

COACH McCAFFERY: No, he's a good player. He plays behind one of the best point guards in the country probably. But he's a very talented player.

I think the thing that was impressive about him today was how under control he was. You know, he came in and ran their offense. He didn't come in and go for himself, and it made a difference for their team.

Q. The team has been pretty good at bouncing back after losses all year; do you think this one might be a little bit tougher for them to recover from?

COACH McCAFFERY: I don't know. I guess we'll find out. I don't think we thought we would get blitzed like this. And you look at the stats and you go down and you keep going down,

we don't have anybody in doubles. It's not like we said, okay, one, who played well, what were the positives.

I thought Archie and Brommer were pretty solid off the bench for us. I thought they gave us some quality minutes doing what they do. But offensively, we were struggling the whole day. And of course, it has a lot to do with their speed and quickness and their defensive intensity, and I think what we have to recognize from that is, we are getting their best.

You know, we win on the road, twice, we are not sneaking up on anybody anymore. So we got their best shot today. And that's what we have to understand, because the next two games are against ranked opponents, as well.

So we have to learn from it, grow, affect change. I think recognize individual mistakes, you can't be pointing fingers at anybody. I'm not blaming, they can't blame each other. You have to look in the mirror and say, okay, what could I have done better, and that's it, and I being me and whatever player is watching this tape, say, okay, it's one game, it's in the past, and now we have got to go on to the next one and come up with another game plan and go out there and play with the level of intensity that we did the previous two games.

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