

December 29, 2010



An Interview With:

COACH McCAFFERY

COACH McCAFFERY: Obviously we just played a really good team. I have really been impressed with Bruce's team and the job he's done. I've been impressed with them on film. We worked on a lot of things defensively that we thought we could have success with, and obviously in the first half that was not the case. They shot it well. They moved it well. McCamey is one of the best players in the country and I've really been impressed with him, his composure in traffic situations, he's an amazing player and he had a great game.

But I thought we battled. We kept coming. Disappointed in the start of the second half, how we came out in the second half. I mean we felt like we didn't play that well, we were down 12 at halftime, we were right there, even though we didn't play well, and then we started poorly to go down 18, put it to the sticks, and then can't seem to put it in at the free throw line; so that was unfortunate.

But proud of my guys of how they fought and we're getting better, and we'll keep getting better.

Q. Can you talk about playing a good team, Illinois, how much of that is just them being able to make shots and you live with that and how much of it was breakdown?

COACH McCAFFERY: It was a combination of both. This is a team that's difficult to defend because they have multiple three-point shooters and a phenomenal point guard. When you're a 7'1" guy and you can hit a three and your subs are hitting threes. You know they are going to stretch the defense and that gives McCamey more time to penetrate.

I don't think we were as quick with our rotations as we need to be. I guess it seemed like this: We were close, but not close enough, and we have to do a better job with those. We'll work on it and get better.

Q. When a team is shooting that way, best defense in the world sometimes, if they make ten or 12 threes, what are you going to do?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think what you have to do is you've got to chase them off of it. Now you might run the risk of penetration dunk, penetration pull-up. But I think once they started to get into a rhythm, I mean, seven in a row in the first, you've got to chase them off it, and that's what we were trying to do it, and obviously we were unsuccessful.

Q. So you're inside because you were extended outside --

COACH McCAFFERY: Now you've got to go. I mean, you've got to go all the way. And they have got some stand/feel guys, but they have some shot/fake/drive guys. It's not like they are surrounding the 3-point line with stand/feel shooters; if you get there, then you've got it covered. These guys will drive it.

And the other thing that I've been impressed with with this team, they really share the ball. I mean, they make the extra pass, the extra-extra pass, and they move it on.

Q. How much did the early foul trouble impact Mel and Jarryd?

COACH McCAFFERY: Jarryd more so than Mel. Melsahn has been sick. I think you could see his energy level is not what it needs to be. He's been sick since the Louisiana Tech game. I thought we could get some quality minutes out of him. He gave us 12 minutes and four points.

You know, he'll be better. He has not eaten in about five or six days.

Q. A situation I think it was an eight, the intentional foul on Eric, miss the free throw, you turn the ball over on a possession --

COACH McCAFFERY: I thought that was a huge momentum swing for us. I feel bad for Eric. He shot a ton of free throws. We have shot more free throws in practice than any other team in America, I guarantee you, and we are drilling them. And that's what's frustrating for all of us.

Feel bad for Eric because I thought he played well. He really worked defensively. He was right in the middle of a lot of things. I'm confident with him there typically.

Q. What was the problem offensively in the middle of the first half?

COACH McCAFFERY: I don't think there was that much of a problem offensively. I think probably we weren't screening enough. But yeah, we got some clean looks. They were making them. We weren't.

Q. What's the main positive you take out of a game like this even though you don't want to start the Big Ten season 0-1?

COACH McCAFFERY: You know, I thought we kept coming. We kept coming. The crowd was phenomenal for us. We needed that.

We had some guys step up and make plays. I thought Marble, I thought he was really good, really good. Cartwright was good. Gatens; Jarryd Cole in the second half, seven offensive rebounds, steal post feeds, he was just all over the place. Brommer gave him some quality minutes.

And I thought McCabe, he was kind of close to having a good game, but he was off a little bit. A couple calls went against him and got him a little bit sideways, but he was solid.

I mean, we lost to a really good team, and a team that I have a lot of respect for, and hopefully we have learned from this experience and we'll be better the next time out.

Q. Tuesday night you play another really good team, Ohio State, No. 2 in the country. You've got six days to prepare; do you feel that that's a benefit for the team at this point in time to have those extra days, as opposed to having a game this weekend when some of the other teams are going to be playing?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think for a young team, general answer to that question will be the more time, the better. I think it will be the longest that we have pretty much from here on after Ohio State. They come pretty regularly, two games a week. We'll take advantage of it and we will get Melsahn a little bit stronger and a little bit healthier and I think that will help us. And we will break this game down and take a look at it, and that's the only thing we can do is try to make progress.

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