

**December 7, 2010**



An interview with:

## **COACH McCAFFERY**

COACH McCAFFERY: I thought that tonight, above all else, was an effort win. It certainly wasn't a thing of beauty. I have tremendous respect for Ben Jacobson, his program, what he's accomplished, having coached against him the last two years. It's a very, very hard team to beat. It takes everything you have. I think tonight that's how we performed.

Defensively, without question, the most consistent 40 minutes we've had. We seem to continue to have these scoring droughts that have plagued us in other games. In those games we have defensive droughts along with them. That's part of the reason why we have the four losses we have.

Tonight when we weren't scoring, we were defending. It's not an easy team to defend. They run great stuff with counters and they've got good players. To get a win like this is really good for our program right now.

**Q. Jarryd seemed to be all over the place tonight, really attacking the boards. Is this something you expect from him or something that's better than what he's shown?**

COACH McCAFFERY: You know what, I think he's feeling better, I really do. The last couple days in practice, his energy level was what you saw tonight. He was like that early. When we first started practice in October, he was like that. Then he wasn't explosive. He was playing below the rim, getting his shot blocked. He was frustrated. Consequently, then I'm playing other people, he's not getting as many minutes.

But he's a guy that takes care of his body. He's been living in the training room. Now what

you see is a guy that's getting rebounds above the rim and he's active. What he did tonight I thought was he made really good decisions. It wasn't like he only got a bunch of rebounds. He knew when to kick it back out and when to go back up with it. Against this team, that's important.

He made one mistake that I remember when he drove it into the lane, he was trying to make a play. But I'm happy for him because he really earned a great opportunity tonight.

**Q. (Indiscernible.) Held them scoreless at the second half. How much of that goes to your defense and switching defenses?**

COACH McCAFFERY: I think our change in defense has had a little to do with it. I would say I think he got the same looks in the first half that he got in the second half. We paid the same attention to him. Eric left his feet one time when he got the one bucket late in the first half. You have got to stay down on him. When he's driving, he shot fakes at the end of his move, you have to stay down. But he got some clean looks at three. We didn't pick him up in transition late. He missed a wide-open three. He doesn't usually do that.

So I think we disrupted their rhythm enough. But they got some clean looks. They didn't shoot it well from three at all, and they were shooting plenty of them. Typically they hit enough of those to erase a seven-point lead and be in a position to win the game. The thing we were doing is we weren't giving them.

**Q. Do you look at this as another win or as a benchmark for the program?**

COACH McCAFFERY: I look at it like this. What I'm trying to do is trying to get our program better. I don't look at benchmark wins. I don't look at signature wins. I don't look at it's more important because it's in-state. Everybody else is going to do that. I understand that.

What we have to do right now is get our

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team to play better than we played in the last game and get our players to play better than they played in the last game, to get our young guys to play more like experienced players. When they do that, then we'll get better, we'll have more wins. But until we do that, it doesn't matter who we're playing because we're not going to be in a position to win.

So I think we made a big step today in terms of how we approached this game mentally, how we competed, and the fact we were able to get a win against a really, really good team.

**Q. You get a pace that's more to Northern Iowa's liking but you come out with a win.**

COACH McCAFFERY: It's interesting because everyone talks about our style versus their style. What ends up happening is everybody thinks they're letting the air out of the ball. They're not. They're executing their offense and they're deliberate. But the way they play defense requires us to be deliberate. If we come down and quick shoot the ball, this would be a 15-point loss. You have to break them down. You have to screen, cut, drive, shot fake, move the ball, spread the floor, space them. If you don't, they're going to lock in on you and you're going to have a really bad day.

The games against them are pretty much going to be like this. No matter how much you want to run, you could play like Loyola Marymount did in the '90s, they're going to keep it here and you have to be able to play this way. We needed to be able to run some set plays when we needed to. We got some buckets.

You know, every game, we tell the kids it's the anatomy of the game, every game is going to be different, and they've got to be able to manage the game from one media timeout to the next and one half to the next. I thought the way we came out to start the second half was much better than the last two ball games for sure.

**Q. (Question regarding Matt's three being a turning point.)**

COACH McCAFFERY: We had a number of possessions there where we had a chance to get it to 7 to 9, 7 to 10. I don't know how many there were, maybe you guys counted, but it seemed like there were five or six. We kept going down and getting stops. Normally a Northern Iowa team is going to erase a 7-point lead in four possessions. They run such good offense, they're going to get good looks at it.

Like I said, it looked like they were running stuff for threes, maybe they were settling. I don't know if Ben was wanting to go inside a little bit more. But when they were shooting the threes, we were rebounding the ball. Jarryd was great and Mel was great.

**Q. Mel seemed to have a career effort.**

COACH McCAFFERY: I'm really proud of him because if you saw him down in The Virgin Islands, he was playing like a freshman, he was confused. He started to get down on himself a little bit. We just stayed positive with him and he stayed positive with himself at that point. He's been terrific ever since. The other thing, he's actually a really good foul shooter. So that will get straightened out, too.

I think double-doubles for him are not going to be out of the realm of possibility on a regular basis.

**Q. The pace was slower, but are you happy with the decision making?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Happy with the decision making. That's the key. They don't press you. I mean, they pressed a little bit the last minute, but they're not going to press you. They're going to close on penetration. They're going to do different things on ball screens. I mean, they hard edge, they bump and under, they switch, they really kind of keep you on your toes.

So it comes down to your ability to make decisions correctly without charging and without taking a bad shot because a bad shot is the same as a turnover. When you watch teams get drilled by Northern Iowa, they're quick shooting the ball, they're shooting contested jumpers, they're shooting low-percentage shots. We just felt like we had to shoot high-percentage shots, and that's what we did today.

**Q. (Indiscernible.)**

COACH McCAFFERY: Yeah. You know, we were moving. We were spaced. We made them guard us. To come back and shoot 55 in the second half after we shot 28 in the first half, obviously we needed to do that and get the lead back. It's a lot harder to make those threes when you're down seven than when you're up seven.

**Q. Your guys showed a lot of intensity tonight for this in-state game. Another one**

**coming up. Is one of your messages going to be to keep that intensity up?**

COACH McCAFFERY: The reality is we have to play like that every night. We're not good enough to be like, "we're going to play hard tonight because it's Iowa State, but the next game we're not going to play so hard." We can't do that. We have to have the same effort every time we take the floor, I don't care who it is. That's when we'll have a chance to win.

Thank you.

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