

January 9, 2014



An Interview With:

COACH SPERAW

COACH SPERAW: Very proud of our guys today. They really approached the week with great maturity and focus and thought they executed the game plan very well tonight.

Andrew did a great job in the scouting report and putting the game plan together. Sherm had outstanding input as he always does on the evening, and I just thought in totality, our guys did a great job of defending them, making it tough for them to get a number of open looks on the three-point line. I think they shot I guess 20 percent from the three point line, and that was important for us that they don't come in and hit ten or 11 threes.

Moved the basketball well, 22 assists from 29 baskets; so great unselfishness out of our group, but that's to be expected, and just very proud of the way they have focused and attacked the week.

Q. Early on you commanded the board, you had nine of the first ten rebounds of the game. How important is that to get a 10-nothing lead?

COACH SPERAW: Well, that's a part of your defense. We wanted ball pressure, we wanted activity defensively. Certainly you have to finish off the possession with a rebound so you can get out and run. I thought that all was very critical. We did a great job on the glass, kept them off the boards for the most part, and I thought we ran pretty well at times.

Got a little sloppy a little bit on some possessions but overall, guys did a nice job. You got Dev gets six assists, no turnovers. Mike gets six assists and one turnover, and those guys are tremendous.

Q. How did it feel to be back in the head coaching position?

COACH SPERAW: Well, it was just a fun evening I think for our guys to get out and play another Big Ten team. So I just try to fill in how I need to fill in. And that was a big part of me coming up here with Fran and appreciate the opportunity, and whatever I can do to help out. But it certainly wasn't me out there tonight; it was the players and the entire coaching staff.

Q. Basabe had a really big night, five for five from the floor, but getting a thousand points must feel pretty good?

COACH SPERAW: I thought it was terrific, very proud of him. He's been working hard. He's been very active. In the last couple weeks, he's been blocking shots, he's been rebounding, he's been running the floor, and it was good for him to finally get some offensive production out of some things. So very proud of him. He's had a great career here and continues to have a great career.

Q. How key was the three-point shooting that you guys had, I believe it was like five of seven and you had a stretch where Gessell made a couple and allowed you to get up?

COACH SPERAW: I think any time you shoot the ball well, it makes your offense look a lot better certainly, and I thought -- very proud of Mike that he was able to knock down some jumpers and get going there. Jarrod, of course, was one of the best shooters in the Big Ten.

So it was good for all of our guys. We made eight, only took 14, Dev goes three for three from the three point line, so he's shooting it real well right now from beyond the arc.

Q. Can I ask what you need in Columbus?

COACH SPERAW: Well, we need a lot of

things in Columbus. We need great defense, taking good care of the basketball, shooting the ball well, rebounding the ball well. I mean, that's one of the better teams in the country obviously, and so it's just another step in our journey down the Big Ten schedule.

Q. You got off to great starts in the first half and second half but shooting almost 59 percent, how important is it for you guys to make good buckets, especially Northwestern made a few runs every now and then but seemed like the field goal percentage helped you out.

COACH SPERAW: Well, we didn't have any long dry spells offensively but I think a lot of that was good defense and getting things in transition. You know, we are much better when we are able to do that and score in transition but we didn't go through long dry spells on the offensive end and that's critical. We got the ball inside. We got the ball to the free throw line. We shot it well from the perimeter. It's always good to have all of those options coming through for you.

Q. Woodbury, didn't play very well -- the one play in transition, seemed like his focus --

COACH SPERAW: Well, it always is. I think that's the thing that people maybe don't appreciate as much about Adam is that he's a terrific defender. He takes great pride in it, not only individually, but his team defense is outstanding for us.

And he does a great job of getting his teammates open offensively and setting screens. He's one of the better seven-footers in the country as far as running the floor and getting out and showing hard on ball screens and recovering back, and he moves his feet exceptionally well. I thought he brought great energy and did a lot of nice things.

Q. Important to get Pete some minutes tonight and get him back on the floor?

COACH SPERAW: It is, and I wanted to do that, really wanted to get Pete in in the first half but you know, it's hard. It's hard to get everybody in and get the minutes that they all deserve to have. But I thought he came in, did some awfully good things, was active defensively, and he continues to get better. Each week he makes progress.

Q. What's your overall assessment of this team, it's an unusual group.

COACH SPERAW: It's an exceptional group because they get a long so well. They are so unselfish and they can all play. It is a great advantage that you can turn to the bench and rotate people and bring people in and there's really not much of a drop off.

But we are all still getting used to the minutes that they are going to get individually and how it all meshes together collectively. And I told them in there that we are doing an awful lot of good things.

But we are not playing our best basketball, and that's good. Because we don't want to play our best basketball right now. We want to play our best basketball in the end of February and throughout the month of March. There's still a lot of things that we've got to get better at. We've got to get more consistent in some areas, but they understand that and they are good guys and they will continue to work on that.

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