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An Interview With:

COACH FRAN McCAFFERY

Q. You made a lot of strides last year. Would you say you're making the same amount of strides shooting the ball from the perimeter?

COACH McCAFFERY: I don't think there's any doubt about that. We already have a couple players who have already shown they can do it. I think that's one thing you look at. Zach, for example, was a 41 percent three-point shooter two years ago, went to 31, still made big threes late.

I think Josh Oglesby went from 37.5 to 27, so he's already shown he can do it. So those are two guys I think are going to come back and really shoot the ball well for us this year. If our foreign tour and practice is any indication, they're both shooting the ball as well as they ever have.

Then you add in some other folks, obviously Peter Jok is one of the better shooters I've ever coached. Jarrod Uthoff is also somebody who can really shoot the ball. So that's two guys in addition to what we had that I feel can really shoot the ball.

I think Mike Gesell's numbers will go up and I think Marble's numbers will go up. They were both right at 33, 32. They even go to 35, 36, that would make a major impact.

Q. There are so many guys with experience and so many guys with multiple skills sets. How do you work those two together?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think in a couple of different ways. Number one, our style of play is the best way to create substitution situations because when guys are coming out, they're tired. The other thing is to have players who truly want to win and legitimately care about each other, and I think that was evident last year in particular.

I think if you look at a team game by game, and who's on the floor at the end of the game, it's usually always the same guys, and for us it was not. Sometimes it was the same players, but I'm very comfortable playing five players who didn't start the game in the last two minutes, and I don't think there's very many teams that would do that.

From that standpoint, I think everybody is ready. They all know they're going to get their number called. They prepare that way in practice, and they all complement each other in terms of skill set. I think that's the way we put this team together.

We can press more, we can zone more, we can run more motion, we can run more sets, and we can go to different people in late-game situations, which makes us that much harder to prepare for.

Q. Do you take an expectation and do you embrace it?

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, absolutely. I think I have obviously had teams, even here, in both situations, where we've had expectation and had no expectation. Clearly you want to be in a position where everybody thinks you're going to be good. Now, what we have to do is have the maturity to recognize that and prepare appropriately, and I think that's going to be the challenge for our team. So night in and night out, we prepare the way that we need to professionally. Scott mentioned a minute ago about our defensive improvement. Well, that has to get better, as well. Look at the numbers: We'd take those numbers again, but we'd obviously like those numbers to go up.

I think you look at in particular our rebounding numbers and how they dramatically changed and how that impacted our defensive percentages. I don't think there's any doubt that we are excited that people think enough of our team to rank us in the top 25 and project us to be

in the NCAA Tournament. That's exciting. It's an accomplishment for some of the guys who have been here and haven't had that before. But the reality is now we have to go out and do it.

Q. Can this team be a success without an NCAA tournament berth?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think you can always have success. I think obviously we're looking at that being the next barometer, clearly. That's the next logical step, but if you look at it, it seemed like we had last year, and we just missed. You win 25 games and you're not going to say it's a failure. I think what we have to be able to do is look at your program and say can you consistently win at this level in this league with the competition being what it is.

I always would say to you guys when you'd ask me where do you want to go from here. Well, I just want to be better than we were last year. If we were 10-8 in the league, that doesn't necessarily mean we're automatically in. It probably does, but you just never know.

I do think we've addressed some of those issues with regard to our non-conference schedule. I don't know when you look at our double plays this year if it would have mattered who we played in the non-conference. There's your opportunities. You want to get in, you've got to go beat some people. We're playing a lot of teams in the top 10 twice. We've got a tremendous amount of opportunities to take care of business, and obviously we've done that here, and now we've got to do a little better job on the road.

Q. You mentioned a couple months back how having the practices bumped up to late September has been a benefit because you could spread them out. Now that you're a couple weeks in, how have they gone to this point and what have you been able to take away from your team?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think this year is a little bit unique for us. I don't know that it's been a positive because we practiced and played the entire month of August. I think it would have been of better benefit had we not done that. We get to the first day of practice, and it seems like we never stopped practicing to be honest with you. But I do like days off. Giving them more than one day off a week, even two days off and a short practice in a particular week, to try to make sure that we are fresh as we move into January, February and March.

I think if you ask me do I like the rule, would I want to keep the rule the same way, I would. But I don't think it's really had the positive impact that I hoped it would based on the fact that we were so busy in August.

Q. You're like third best in the country at getting to the free-throw line. Is that something you want to improve on or keep status quo there?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think if you look at all my teams that we've always been there. We always say we were a little under, but we typically try to make more free throws than our opponents attempt. I've had a lot of teams that have done that. We're just going to play with an attack mentality, and when you do that, you're going to get to the rim.

Conversely, our defensive numbers, as we've pointed out, were a lot better, but I do think we have to improve in transition defense. If you're going to be a running team, you have to be able to defend in transition as well, because they're going to be running it right back at you sometimes, and there are a number of teams in our league that do run.

We'll continue to attack. We were third best in the country in that particular stat, and hopefully we'll move up.

Q. When you're trying to develop shooters, is there, beyond repetition, beyond shooting more, that can you work on to help them improve?

COACH McCAFFERY: The most success that I've had is to try to convey a tremendous amount of confidence on my part. I think the worst thing a shooter is ever going to deal with is every time he misses a shot, why didn't you drive it, why didn't you pass it. All I tell all my shooters is keep shooting the ball. Don't shoot contested shots. That's going to be a problem because that's going to keep your percentages down. But we shoot a ton of shots in practice, we shoot a ton of free throws. We play a style that's conducive to shooting the ball early in the clock. I don't think you ever see one of our guys concerned, looking over to me, is this a good time to shoot it, should we have waited. Obviously we're going to be cognizant of time to score, but if we get a shot early in the clock, we're going to take it, and I just consistently encourage my guys to shoot the ball,

and I think in particular sometimes you have a player that needs to work on his release, can you make that quicker.

We did that with Matt Gatens in particular. His first year with us he was passing up what I thought were good shots and he was shooting the ball right in defenders' faces the following year because he really worked on coming off screens and shooting the ball quicker, and we've done that with Josh. I think you're going to see a completely different Josh Oglesby.

Q. The role that you envision for Devyn Marble this year, is it a point guard role or is it just getting the ball in his hands?

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, I would say I expect him to be our point guard. If he's our starting point guard, I want him to play like a point guard. I want him to think like a point guard, and to me that means you engineer victory, at home, on the road, late game. Every game is different. Some are faster, some are slower, and you're going to see changing defenses. Sometimes you'll see one defense. He's been through so much, I think he's at a point in his career where he completely understands what's necessary at that position.

But that said, if you just look at him, he is a guy that clearly is a better player when he has the ball as opposed to waiting for it coming off screens. But again, sometimes you say, well, he always has the ball on top and he's always in the same place, and that makes it easier for teams to scheme defensively against him. So I think while he is going to be our starting point guard, I'm going to move him around, I'm going to get him the ball in different situations where he can be more creative. He's always played well from the wing, he's always played well on the baseline, which is not typically where you have your point guard, but your point guard is usually not 6'7", either, so we will take advantage of his entire skill set.

Q. Late game situations were kind of an issue on the road. How have you replicated those situations in practice so far as to simulate what it'll be like?

COACH McCAFFERY: We've done that. Every team I've had we work on situations constantly. You're ahead, you're behind, teams are pressing you, they're not pressing you, they're zoning you, they're playing you man-to-man, and you just try to set up every possible scenario, when you get the ball back how much time is on the

clock, is it a side out-of-bounds, is it out-of-bounds under, are you at full court, just so you get the team to a place where they've kind of seen everything at least in practice, and they know what we want to do in terms of trying to get a shot.

I think a lot was said last year about our inability to make baskets at that particular time, but what happened in addition to that was we played teams who have made baskets at that particular time.

You can have an offensive lapse late in the game, but you could also have a defensive lapse there. So not only were we missing shots, we were giving up shots. Now, okay, a number of them were threes. Traevon Jackson's three and Austin Hollins's three in particular, they were tough shots, and you've got to give credit to the other team sometimes.

What I'd like to see is if we don't score in those situations that we very definitely get a stop. Obviously that is the next step, and I think we're to the point now where we know and understand that.

Q. What have you seen out of Peter Jok since he's been on campus, and what do you envision his role being this year?

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, the thing about Peter that I really enjoy is he's really an interesting young person. I enjoy coaching him. I enjoy having him around. He's easy going. So in the beginning, he was sort of playing that way, and we can't have that. He's going to have to rev it up. That to me was the most important aspect of his growth. We were thrilled to have the opportunity to do that August 1st. We know he can shoot the ball in the hole. He is as good as I said at doing that and when we went overseas, he was our second leading scorer.

Now, truth of the matter is they didn't know who he was and they weren't guarding him as a guy that they were paying attention to. That won't happen to him for his entire career here. So what we have to do is make sure he understands that not only are we going to go to him and we're going to set him up, we're going to put him in a position where he can be successful for us, but he's got to play the other end, because in our league, he's either going to be playing the 2 or the 3, and pretty much everybody at those positions in our league thinks they're going to play in the NBA. Now, they all won't, but some of them will. You have to be able to understand how to play defense with the

same level of intensity that you play offense, and then sustain that effort over long periods of time.

If he does that, now you're talking about a guy who has a chance to play in the NBA. And I think what we've seen as coaches is a growth in that area. First couple days he was -- he wasn't in great shape and he wasn't guarding anybody, and he was getting killed on defense. It was frustrating for him. But what I've been appreciative of is he's continued to work. He's accepted coaching. He's studied film, and he's a completely different player than he was five weeks ago, eight weeks ago, because he has character, and he knows he has a chance to be special.

While we're coaching him and criticizing him sometimes, at some point in time, I don't ever stop making sure he knows and understands that we think he's got a chance to be really special.

Q. How much further ahead are you because you don't have to convince them how important defense is, they've seen it on the floor?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think you've got to look at the big picture with that. Our defensive numbers were not good the first two years, and we were putting a lot on our offense. We were running, trying to establish a style of play. We didn't have the size or the depth, not in this league, to be able to put up the defensive numbers necessary to win 20 games or more. We have that now.

You look at the number and say, boy, we were really bad. We obviously had to make dramatic changes. Well, we have fresh bodies now. We have fresh legs. It's even more amazing when you think what Matt Gatens did two years ago because he's playing 38, 39 minutes, he's guarding the other team's best perimeter player and he's going to be our leading scorer.

The conditioning that that took and the mental toughness was incredible. Great example to our younger guys.

Ee know and understand what it takes, but I think it really started on the glass. I can't emphasize that enough. Our percentages are down, but we didn't give up as many second shots. That's what kills your percentages because second shots usually are lay-ups or they're kick-out wide-open threes. So you look at those two areas that improved, and a lot of it was because we were +5, +6 on the glass, and that's because we're bigger and deeper and longer.

Q. How important is this year in terms of taking the next step as it relates to opening doors in recruiting?

COACH McCAFFERY: Any time you can continue to make progress, and that obviously would be indicated by an NCAA bid, more TV games, more ESPN games, more CBS games. One thing leads to another, and that's what affects recruiting. Fortunately, we've got more ESPN games and more CBS games this year. We're being talked about now where we weren't being talked about now the last couple years. If we can continue to be talked about and get into the tournament, because as you know, that's what everybody talks about pretty much at least from January 1st on. I think it's a little ridiculous myself that we start jumping ahead to the postseason a lot of times before we've even started conference play. Last four in, first four out, all that kind of stuff. I think it's premature, because you never really know what's going to happen later on.

It's the reality of the situation. That's what people are talking about, and when prospects watch TV, that's what they hear. If we are one of the teams that's in, that will really help us. Then of course the next step is, and hopefully it will happen right away, is not only do you get in but you make some noise when you get in. That even makes it more beneficial in recruiting.

Q. Does it feel like you've been held back a little bit, just in general terms, by not getting to the NCAA Tournament?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think there are so many factors to look at in recruiting. That would be one of them, but I don't think it's that critical. But I do think if we make those steps you're referring to, it will improve it.

Q. Iowa hasn't put a player in the NBA in a decade. Is it important to start doing that?

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, I think it helps, but I think what's important is that we have good players here. You don't have to make the NBA to have a great impact on the program here. Would I love to have multiple pros? Absolutely. Are we trying to recruit those guys? Absolutely. But you're not always going to get them, and a lot of times they're one-and-done, so you have to look at how that impacts your program, as well.

As long as we have good players and can be competitive in the best league in the country,

then I'm comfortable with that.

Q. Talk about sort of the role that Jarrod Uthoff will play. Have you figured that out yet or is that going to take some time to figure out?

COACH McCAFFERY: No, I think I have a pretty good handle on that. He's going to play a lot. He's a really good player. He can score, he can rebound, he can block shots, he's tough, he's physical, he's a team player, he understands how to play, understands how to win. So those kind of guys have to be on the floor.

Now, again, how many minutes exactly? Well, that's going to differ game to game, but he's going to play. He deserves to play.

Q. Another curious role is Mike Gesell, where is he?

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, Mike, it's a shame he couldn't go (play) overseas because I thought he was really playing well. You look at him in the primetime league, he was playing extremely well. In workouts prior to his injury he was playing really well. And his season ended last year with a foot issue. It was amazing he was as productive as he was on one leg, which shows you how tough he is.

What you're going to see with Mike Gesell is a guy that's got a chance to be a star. He's in phenomenal shape. He's making shots. He's making plays. I'm playing him at both spots. He'll still play a lot of 1, even though he won't start there, but he'll play a lot at that position. Just an amazing, amazing competitor.

Q. At center you have inexperienced guys that were kind of growing with the position last year. What kind of strides have Woodbury and Olaseni taken?

COACH McCAFFERY: Woodbury has been our most impressive player since the first day of practice. He's hungry. He's in phenomenal shape. He has been incredibly consistent, and I'm just thrilled with his development. But the same could be said for Gabe. He was really good overseas. He had a phenomenal summer. He's a completely different player than when he first got here. He's comfortable now in what's expected of him, what he's capable of doing. And the two of them go at each other in practice and have consistently made each other better, which is exactly what I think any coach wants. So that's a position of strength for us, no question.

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Q. You haven't mentioned Aaron White. Did I hear this right, you saying he could be a super star?

COACH McCAFFERY: Oh, no question. He's right on the verge of that. I think this summer, if you think about what he experienced, I'm just thrilled for him. To play for the United States team and come back home and then train with us and go back overseas and play, and play as well as he played and learn what he learned is really, going to pay dividends as he goes into his junior year. His jump shot has improved. His game is much more complete, and he's a fierce competitor, as well. There's somebody that I think has a chance to be first-team all-league and ultimately play in the NBA.

Q. Is there a sense of urgency with McCabe and Melsahn right now?

COACH McCAFFERY: You know what, with Zach, he's just always the same. He competes. He wants to win. He accepts any role you give him. He's in the best shape of his life, without question, so maybe from where he sits, he wants to maximize this opportunity. But from where I sit, he just is a guy you'd love to have on your team because he brings it every day and he does whatever he can to help your team win, and he's a really good player.

But when you have somebody who's been through what he's been through, I think we all know that he hasn't started a lot of games recently, but he seems to be on the floor a lot at the end of the game because of the fact that he can make shots, he can handle the ball, he can inbound the ball against the press. There's no panic in Zach McCabe at all, none.

Melsahn is a little bit different story. Great freshman year, sophomore year inconsistent, junior year really came on, arguably better than anybody overseas. He's really, I think, right now in the best shape of his life in terms of where he is physically and his confidence level. So for him, I think he kind of views himself on a different level. I'm where I was supposed to be, an elite player, and that's what I expect from him.

Q. Is there any measure of-- you mentioned some of the signals that people are confident in your program, whether it's NCAA Tournament projections or rankings or those sort of things. But are there other more

personal ways that you feel that buzz, like during recruiting periods in living rooms or when you're at the grocery store? What kind of personal feedback are you hearing or feeling out there?

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, I definitely feel it with our fans, and as I said the very first day I got here, I've always been impressed with our fans and their knowledge, and they've been watching great basketball, and they know really good coaching when they see it, and they're not afraid to talk about it. It's been going on for quite some time. You go back to the 50s and 60s, we've had great teams.

Clearly it's evident in our fan base, and it's evident in our season ticket sales, without question. In terms of recruiting, by virtue of the fact that we have to recruit on a national level, we still have to do a little bit of talking along those lines. There's a clear understanding of our league and the quality of our league. So many more people now talk about games that they watched versus three years ago when they weren't watching our games. So there's a clear improvement, but I think we kind of have to keep moving the needle to the point where we really get the full effect of it in recruiting.

Q. Will your seniors be the leaders of the group?

COACH McCAFFERY: Yeah, the leaders would be obviously Marble, McCabe, Basabe, those three. McCabe and Basabe aren't big talkers. Don't have to be a big talker. Gatens wasn't a big talker. But as long as you're a worker and you're producing consistently, that's going to be critical. I would like to see Aaron White and Mike Gesell in particular take that next step and be a little bit more vocal. I think they command the respect of their teammates based upon how they play.

I don't know that you point and say -- other than Marble, that there's any one guy. It's going to be a group of guys that are committed to winning.

Q. You guys had Eric May last year kind of elevate his game; he kind of helped shut down defenders at times. Do you have a player that you think is going to elevate to that role, a selfless type?

COACH McCAFFERY: We're going to miss Eric May a lot more than the numbers would indicate, for that very reason. He could lock up anybody from the 2 to the 4 spot whenever we

needed him to, and that's incredibly beneficial. So somebody is going to have to step up, not only in terms of that skill set but that toughness.

I think we can make up for his offense, although he was a tremendous scorer late in a number of games, but somebody is going to have to step up with that leadership and defensive toughness. I think it can be done in a variety of ways, many of whom we've already talked about. I think Mike Gesell is going to have to be a guy, but he's not 6'5". Peter Jok could be a guy. I think a lot of people lock into Oglesby and they think, well, he's just a shooter. And the thing about Josh is, often I was criticized last year, why did you keep him in when he wasn't making shots. I kept him in because he doesn't turn the ball over and he guards. He plays defense. He works extremely hard defensively, he's incredibly tough, and he'll have to step in and fulfill some of that role, as well.

Q. The depth you have this year, has it been challenging to figure out the different schemes for different situations?

COACH McCAFFERY: What I've done is I've rotated different lineups pretty much since the beginning of August, all through the foreign trip and then from the first day of practice. And I'm trying to figure out who can play together, who makes sense together, and I guess at this point what I've concluded is we have a lot of good players, and they're all going to play. As long as you have unselfish people that are committed to winning, you can pretty much play any of them at any time with each other, provided you have enough rebounding and provided you have a point guard on the floor.

But we have multiple options at point guard, we have multiple options at center, we have multiple options on the wing, so that's obviously very exciting, so I'll be subbing freely with great confidence.

Q. Will you put Gabe and Adam together?

COACH McCAFFERY: Absolutely. We've done it at practice, we did it overseas. You know, in the beginning -- there's slight differences when you're playing the 4. If you run a transition of motion, the 4 spot and 5 spot, same thing, but if you're running set plays it's dramatically different. So one of those guys has to run the plays at the 4 spot and learn them and not only that but learn the

intricacies of them, and there's a little bit of a learning curve there for both of them. I've put Gabe there and not Woody, so Gabe is picking it up little by little.

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