

**January 8, 2013**



An interview with:

## **COACH FRAN McCAFFERY**

**Q. How do you think Anthony will do going against his high school teammate, his hometown team?**

COACH McCAFFERY: I don't worry about him too much with that kind of stuff. I don't think it will impact him at all.

**Q. Do you think he grew as a player last week?**

COACH McCAFFERY: You know, I think every game for him, he seems to get better. Even if he doesn't have the kind of numbers that he had on Sunday, which were obviously very good, 14 and 7, he just seems to be learning quite a bit.

We're hitting him with a lot of stuff, threw him right in there. There's things he forgets to do. He just keeps working and concentrating. I'm really, really pleased with his professionalism in terms of how he approaches things.

**Q. What kind of player is Valentine as you watch him play?**

COACH McCAFFERY: He's really versatile. He's a big body. He's 220 at 6'5". Maybe the best part of his game is his passing. He likes to pass the ball. He's a really good ball handler. He's kind of a mismatch nightmare. He can play point forward, go in there and play the four spot. He's really a wing, I guess, but he can score, he can drive it. Very unselfish. Makes plays for his teammates.

You can tell that he's played a lot of basketball. He comes from a basketball family. His father was a great player. He just really knows how to play.

**Q. What impresses you about Gary Harris?**

COACH McCAFFERY: He's a scorer. He's different than Valentine. Not that Valentine can't score. But Gary Harris is a handful when he gets the ball. He's going to try and score. He's going to shoot, drive, attack. That's what he is. He's very athletic. He's quick and powerful off the floor.

He's always been a great player. We tried to recruit him. He's shooting the ball extremely well. He was always a good shooter. He's becoming a great shooter. I think that makes him that much harder to guard.

**Q. Is it too early for a sense of urgency or is that how you like your guys to go into games?**

COACH McCAFFERY: There's always a sense of urgency. Every night in this league you've got a handful.

**Q. Do you like the term 'must win'?**

COACH McCAFFERY: I don't think about games that way. We're going to try to win 'em all. If we lose, we're going to try to get better. There's no other way to approach it.

**Q. Do you ever worry that your players think about it that way?**

COACH McCAFFERY: I don't think they do, to be honest with you. I think coaches would be more likely to think of things in those terms than the players.

**Q. You questioned the teams toughness after the game the other day.**

COACH McCAFFERY: A lot of times when you say stuff like that, you look at the film, it's maybe not as bad. If it is as bad, which in this case it was, probably worse, you show it to them and then they have to make a decision. Don't

have to rant and rave. Rant a little bit, but not too much.

They got to look at it and justify to themselves and their teammates what they didn't do. I will never get on a guy for not doing something that he maybe isn't capable of doing. But you can run back on defense. If you're on a Division I scholarship, you better run back on defense, and we didn't do that. That's really disappointing.

**Q. Does that fall under 'toughness'?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Yeah, because what happens is they're on a run, we're struggling. Everything was going great, then we couldn't score. Well you better shore up your defense at that point in the game. We can't just trade baskets because all of a sudden you go five straight possessions. Even if you get a good shot, doesn't go in, they're scoring, running it right back at you. You better get back and get Burke under control, find the three-point shooters, limit them to one shot. If we do that, we're still up one, down one, still in the game. All of a sudden you look up, you're down 11. We were not as tough as we needed to be.

I think 'toughness' is defined in more ways than not banging people, this is mental toughness. It's understanding how you carry out the game plan.

The thing about Michigan, we look at them as a very good offensive team, which they are, but they're substantially better defensively certainly since I've been in this league. They're more powerful, they're deeper. They have big, strong guys. They have athletic wing guys. They have terrific guard play.

You're going to have to really work to score against them. We did a really good job of that for about the first 19 minutes. If you can do it for 19 minutes, you can do it for 38 minutes, 40 minutes. That's where we sort of fell apart there.

**Q. Have you challenged this team on the toughness thing for this game Thursday?**

COACH McCAFFERY: We challenged them at the start of the season. That game was very reminiscent of our losses last year if you think about it. You look at the percentages. Well over 50% from the field. Well over 45% from three. Got pounded on the glass. If you give up those numbers, you're going to lose, I don't care who you play, unless you shoot 78%. It makes it impossible.

So if we can rebound with other teams, we should have been able to rebound with a team that plays four guards most of the time.

**Q. Do you think a defensive leader has emerged for your team?**

COACH McCAFFERY: I think it could be Eric, but he hasn't been in the starting lineup. It's a little bit harder. But he has really been the guy when we've needed that level of toughness.

I think it was evident, in particular, in the Northern Iowa game. He was phenomenal in that game because once we got a lead, they kept coming, as we knew they would. We were getting stops 'cause of him.

When he was out there, we were better collectively.

**Q. If you don't start to see that toughness in this game against Michigan State, is that when you start thinking about changing the lineup?**

COACH McCAFFERY: I would. I think that's a legitimate question. I think I would.

It's hard sometimes. Let's say, for example, the two biggest culprits are your two leading scorers, which is arguably what the case was in our last game. That's a dilemma. When Marble and White are struggling defensively, we still have to score. That's our two leading scorers.

That makes that decision a lot more complicated, quite frankly. But it may come to that.

**Q. Do your best players have to be your best defenders like Matt last year?**

COACH McCAFFERY: You would hope they are. I think the reality is that's not always the case. It's not usually the case, I would say. You would like your best players to be your hardest workers. I will say in our case, our two leading scorers are really hard workers. They've got character. They're great people. They want to be good.

Maybe I'm playing them too many minutes. You tend to leave your two leading scorers on the floor longer than anybody else. Maybe that's not in their best interest or our best interest. So we have to look at that.

There's a lot of things you look at as you go through the process.

**Q. Was Sunday's game a setback for you? Did that surprise you?**

COACH McCAFFERY: What surprised me was the last two minutes of the first half. I thought we were better than that. They may not lose at home this year. So a lot of people probably thought we were going to lose that game. But we shouldn't have lost it the way we lost it.

There's a right way and a wrong way to lose a game, I guess you'd say. As well as we played, we should not have been down 11 points. We get the ball back, we should shoot the last shot. Maybe Dev shot a little quick, but the other guys better get back. If we're back, Robinson doesn't get a layup, he pulls up to make sure he gets a shot off, maybe we're only down 9.

We go down 11, a three to start the second half, all of a sudden it's 14. A minute ago we were down 2. That's difficult to overcome on the road. You have to be able to understand that before it happens, not figure it out after it happens.

**Q. Do you need to get your point across this week considering who your next opponent is if they don't have a good performance defensively?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Once you get into this league, I don't know that it matters. I mean, the next game, no matter who it is, is going to be a really good team. Anything short of our best, we're not going to win. We're not good enough to beat anybody in this league with anything less than the attitude that you're talking about.

It doesn't matter that it's Michigan State, in my opinion.

**Q. Aaron White, what was it offensively and defensively after that block? He seemed to fade.**

COACH McCAFFERY: It was before that. He wasn't as physical. He wasn't moving the way he normally was. He wasn't running back. He wasn't engaged. You're playing the second ranked team in the country on the road, it's a total engagement game. You have to sprint back, turn and face the ball, get five guys under the best point guard in the country, figure out are they running their 2-3 high action, ball screen stuff, where is Hardaway, where is Stauskas? You can't try to jog back and find your man because while you're finding him, they're scoring.

We talked about that at the front end. So when it happens, it's upsetting. It's upsetting to the

coaching staff and to the other guys that are out there.

Now, if he was the only guy, we could try to talk to him. But he wasn't the only guy doing that. That's really disappointing. There's no other way to put it. Had a chance to watch it and digest it. Can't make excuses for it. It's right there.

Again, when it's all said and done, they have a responsibility to themselves above all else, but most importantly to each other. You'd like to think they have responsibility to the coaching staff as we have responsibility to them to get them ready. But when the effort isn't what it needs to be, then you got to look at your teammate and say, I let you down, I can't do that again.

I don't think it will happen again because I think we have character in that room.

**Q. How hard was it for the freshmen to bounce back after a game like that?**

COACH McCAFFERY: I don't know that that particular aspect makes any difference, whether you're a freshman or a senior, sophomore, junior. That's an area that really doesn't matter in terms of experience, in my opinion.

The bottom line is you can play poorly, but you better play hard. I don't know that I looked at that game and said, Boy, we really stunk it up. We didn't play that poorly. We didn't play with the effort, intensity and concentration to beat a team of that caliber. That is a difficult thing sometimes to deal with as a coach, as a program, as we try to build and get better.

The truth of the matter is we did not play well against Indiana, but we fought 'em, we fought 'em harder. Granted, okay, we had 15,400 people helping us. But it was a different feeling that you had at the end of that game.

Wow, if we just played a little bit better, shot a little bit better, made our free throws, we would have won our game. That would have been a great win for us. You feel like we're right there.

Now you go on the road, we take a step back. It's disappointing, upsetting. But you can't pretend it didn't happen. You have to confront what happened and you got to confront it in a very direct way, openly and honestly. When it's all said and done, there has to be accountability across the board from our staff to the players, all right? You break down everything that happened on that trip and say, Okay, that can't happen again.

Now, sometimes you run into a buzz saw,

all right, and there's nothing you can do about that. But that's not what happened. We got up 7-0 and were in control of that game and we let it get away from us. We've got to take care of that.

**Q. Are you concerned about giving up 95 points in each of your true road games?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, we'll deal with that in our next road game. I'm not uncomfortable playing games in 80s and 90s. Obviously you don't want to give up 95 when you're scoring in the 60s and 70s. That's a problem. The way we're playing, we're going to score and give up some points. 95, you're right, probably too high of a number in those two situations. We played very potent offensive teams.

Again, I think if we get back and get our defense put together quicker, do a little better job on the glass, it's a completely different game. They're probably not at 95, and we're probably at a better number. Now the game's in the balance all the way to the end.

**Q. The film session, did that take longer than normal?**

COACH McCAFFERY: It was about twice as long. There were a lot more clips.

**Q. How long did it take, would you guess?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Normally it's going to take about 20 to 30 minutes. This one was probably just short of an hour, I would guess.

**Q. Was it yesterday?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Yeah, we broke it down on the plane coming back. It was all broken down before we landed. But what you do is you pull clips. They're teaching points. Again, it's not just the mistakes. So when they walk into the room, we're not going to watch 67 mistakes, this guy is going to get yelled at. It's not that.

We're showing good plays. This is exactly what we want to do, this is exactly what we talked about doing, and you couldn't have executed it any better, okay? If we do that, then why can't we keep doing that? That's kind of how we do that.

We might have five positive phenomenal teaching points in a row, then there might be eight or nine mistake in a row. It doesn't matter. It's how they appear in the game.

So there were a lot more of those clips yesterday than there were before.

**Q. A lot more negative than positive?**

COACH McCAFFERY: There was more negative. There was more negative.

I think the disappointing thing was there were more negative things in the clip. Whereas you might pull a clip with one negative thing, there might be three negative things in the same clip. Well, that can't happen.

**Q. How has Keith Appling improved moving from the two to the one?**

COACH McCAFFERY: He's a scoring one. He's the leading scorer. He's always been a scorer. His freshman year, he played off the ball quite a bit with Kalin Lucas. Last year he took the ball exclusively. He was really good. But it was a little bit of an adjustment. Now he's really comfortable.

He goes and gets his own when he needs to. He gets them into their stuff when he needs to. He's got a really good understanding of when to push it, when not to. They run, as you know. He's got a tremendous burst. Go right by you. He knows kind of when to go. You have to be real careful with him in terms of containment.

But he's shooting it well, too. He's impressed me. I thought last year they really went to him a lot as a scorer even though he was bringing it down. Ran a lot of stuff for him. This year he's got some weapons. Downshifted there a little bit. Now Dawson is a four, Valentine is in the starting lineup, Harris is the two. So they've got a lot of weapons. They still can go big, if they want to.

When you go Nix, Payne, Dawson as your forwards, that's an imposing frontline physically. You have to be careful that they're not getting one shot after another, multiple possessions till they put it back in. All three of them are very good offensive rebounders.

**Q. When your players are on the road and they are in a home area, the night before a game do you have them see friends and family or wait till after the game?**

COACH McCAFFERY: We got 'em locked in. We pretty much control the entire itinerary. Like the other night, by the time we got done, when you land, it's eat, meeting, practice, shower, eat, meeting, dessert, lights out. There's no opportunity for them to go anywhere.

The concern you have a lot of times in that

situation is tickets. What I prefer is that any family member take over and deal with whoever's coming.

I told Dev let your father figure out which family members are coming, I don't want you worried about it. Roy has been through it, so he took care of that.

It's funny. A lot of times kids play great, a lot of times they don't. Usually one or the other. In this case, they both played really well. You're always really happy when that happens. I was happy for both.

We didn't play well. Maybe we didn't play great defensively. But I thought Clemmons in particular, he really went after Burke. That was impressive to me. Even when Burke scored, he had to work really hard to get those points.

### **FastScripts by ASAP Sports**