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An Interview With:

COACH FRAN McCAFFERY

Q. What's the best update you can give us on Aaron and his status?

FRAN McCAFFERY: He won't practice today. He'll try to do some conditioning stuff. He'll see what he can do, see what he can do today, see what he can do tomorrow.

Q. What do you see him being able to do on Saturday at this point?

FRAN McCAFFERY: We really won't know until we go through what we go through today and tomorrow. Obviously he can run. It's the other stuff that could be problematic for him when he starts to play. We don't know.

Q. Is it tough not knowing?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I mean, you'd rather know. I don't know if it's tough, you've just got to be ready to go to other options.

Q. Have you seen any improvement?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah. It's better than it was on Saturday. It's looked better every day.

Q. Gabe has an ankle; is it the same status as what you mentioned last night?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Pretty much, yeah. He'll try to move around a little bit more today. He won't practice up and down, he won't practice five on five. He'll maybe try to do some dry stuff.

Q. You had success at Purdue with a smaller lineup but it would seem maybe not the best match-ups against Wisconsin?

FRAN McCAFFERY: It'll be harder when they go three bigs. Matching up is difficult with that.

We've got other options. We can go with Dom or we can go small again.

Q. Do you have your lineup worked out if he can't go?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I would say lineups, because as you get into the game, if some guys are playing better than others, they might get more minutes in that game.

Q. Mike really took over the game late. He scored on six of seven possessions and just seemed to be in complete control of the offense and you could see that Purdue was struggling to defend him in any situation. Was that kind of what you envisioned of him when you were recruiting him way back?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, that's the way he always played and that's the way I want him to play. I want him to play with that kind of aggressiveness offensively. I've been pleased with him and his development.

Q. You've mentioned playing Dom. Have you talked to him about the possibility of starting and playing obviously more minutes?

FRAN McCAFFERY: No, but I will. If he ends up starting I will. But it won't make any difference to him.

Q. Mike showed that kind of aggressiveness at North Carolina, as well. At what point do you think he's just going to understand what you're saying and just go out every day and try to play that?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think he tries to do that as much as he can. The other team sometimes is defending him differently or whatever. I think for the most part he tries to be aggressive every time he takes the floor. I haven't noticed him to be tentative at all. Sometimes his jumper is falling a little bit more. I mean, Saturday he had it going

both ways at the rim and with his pull-up game. I think that's when he's at his best.

Q. One thing he's done really well, too, is in transition he kind of has attacked more off the dribble, taking it all the way to the basket. Is that something you've told him or is that just a feel for the game situation?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Right, he's had the green light to do that from the day that he got here, so I think what you're seeing is a guy who's just more comfortable now, he's been around, and knowing when to go and when not to go.

Q. You said at the start of the year that this was Aaron's team. If Aaron is sidelined, does this become Uthoff's team? Is it that simple or is it by committee?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I don't know. We still have two other seniors, and we have obviously Jarrod, Woody and Mike as your juniors that have had a lot of experience. I would think it would be a little bit more by committee.

Q. What do you change strategically against Wisconsin from what happened the first time, or was it more execution than anything else?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, it's a little of both. Execution was poor in a lot of areas. Their execution was really good in a lot of areas. It was kind of the perfect storm that way. So we've got to do a better job defensively. We've got to do a better job with offensive execution, we've got to do a better job on the glass. We've got to do a better job taking away the three. They shoot it so well.

But offensively we were as bad as we've been, I thought, in that game. You've got to credit their defense, but we got a little impatient at times, tried to go a little one-on-one at times when we didn't really need to, and we've got to do a better job there.

And then from a strategy standpoint, you can do some different things, but you're still guarding the same guys, and they've got a lot of offensive weapons, they've got a lot of three-point shooters. They've got size, they've got post-up guys, and we just have to try to do a good job on the glass to limit them as much as we can.

Q. You've done a good job of playing both man and zone. Zone you were pretty good at Purdue down the stretch. Is this a team you can zone for a long time?



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FRAN McCAFFERY: You've got to be careful how you play it, when you play it. Some teams you can just pack it in and they struggle shooting the ball. Obviously, it's not the case here. Most people would probably say it's not a team you would zone. But we can still play it. If you play it right and you're really communicating who's where and who's got the ball and where the shooters are, you can play it.

Q. What's the confidence level of this team right now? What's it like in the locker room?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think pretty good. They're a team that doesn't get too high or too low. About the same.

Q. Since Big Ten play with the exception of maybe the Wisconsin game, your half court offense has really looked good. The ball movement at Wisconsin wasn't quite there. Is that a function of their defense or was it something else?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I think it's always a function of the other team's defense to some degree. But again, there's always more to it. We weren't defending, either, so we didn't get any transition opportunities. We got behind early, so we were putting our heads down and putting contested shots up which aren't going to go in, which is going to give them opportunities to run or keep you on defense, and then once we got down double digits, then it's even harder. You're trying to get it all back at once. We tried to come out in the second half a little more patient, and for the first five minutes I thought we did that. But they were pretty comfortable at that point. They were up 18.

Q. The quick shots seemed to hurt you -- you're a good offensive rebounding team --

FRAN McCAFFERY: You're not going to get any, you're absolutely right. You're not going to get any.

Q. Your transition defense kind of dried up once Big Ten play started. These coaches know you so well and what you're trying to do, but is it something you're not doing, maybe not executing in that break?

FRAN McCAFFERY: You can always do better. I think it's a function of you're playing better

teams offensively, as well, so you have less opportunities to run. They might drop three. They might jam the outlet. They might come up and pick up the point guard. There's a lot of things that they can do. But ultimately it comes down to can you get stops and are you sprinting, and if you're doing that, you can still run.

Q. What were your thoughts on Dan Dakich being assigned to the game this weekend?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I don't have any thoughts. That's none of my business. He's one of the top crews, he and Bob, and I think he'll do a fine job. I'm not worried about it at all. I think he'll be very professional. He's done a ton of our games over the years, and those two guys in particular have been very good together, and I expect more of the same. I think they'll be fine.

Q. Did you guys have any conversations, and if so, what were they about?

FRAN McCAFFERY: We didn't have any conversations. We texted back and forth, and as I've said publicly, I mean, I feel very comfortable that both he and I will both be professional, as we should be. That's what I'm looking forward to.

Q. How do you force the issue with turnovers against Wisconsin? They had virtually none against you last week.

FRAN McCAFFERY: It's not easy. The reason is they've got five guys who can dribble the ball, handle the ball, make decisions. They're all experienced. They don't play with any panic. The only thing you can do then is try to keep pressure on the ball, keep pressure on them as much as you can, and then limit their second-shot opportunities, as well.

Q. Would you say it's kind of a hard game to repeat like the one last week with how Wisconsin played, and you guys mentioned that you didn't play well offensively, either?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, we didn't play well in pretty much every facet of the game, so I would certainly hope it wouldn't be anything like a repeat.

Q. You had no turnovers the second half of Purdue. As you reviewed that tape, what were you doing well? What pleased you the most?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I thought we moved the ball extremely well. I thought we attacked when we had opportunities. Our decision making was very good, when to go, when not to go. Sometimes you want to put your head down and go, sometimes you've got to move it on, move it on and wait, and recognizing that is not often easy, and I thought we did a really good job, and we shared the ball. I was really pleased with our ability to go back and get it.

Obviously Gabe got 11 offensive rebounds; that's big time, so I was thrilled for his energy level and that impacted our ability to come back, because we made a comeback and they answered it, and they extended the lead again and got it back to 10, and then we came back again, which I think showed a lot of character on our part.

Q. How has the team utilized this extra time off?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, obviously a couple guys have been in the training room, and that's been good. Other than that, we've got a lot of shots up. Whenever you have that amount of time, typically what I do is we work on us, what do we need to do to get better before we start worrying about the opponent and what they're going to do and how we're going to defend their stuff and how we're going to execute, things of that nature. For us, it's just conditioning, working on our break, our offense, our defenses, staying sharp, and then today we'll start focusing a little bit more on our opponent.

Q. After last week, how nice will it be to have this game at home and finally come back to Carver and a sold-out crowd?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, it would be great. Every time we take the floor here we feel thrilled to have the opportunity to play in front of these fans. They've been tremendous for a while, certainly since I've been here and long before that. It will impact the game in a lot of ways: Our energy level, defensively, and especially if we're short-handed in any way. It'll be very helpful. But ultimately we have to go out and execute better than we did the last time.

Q. What did Gabe do in the Purdue game that enabled him to get those rebounds?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I don't think it was anything more than energy and anticipation. He

had a good feel, where is the shot going to come off, and be the first guy there. I don't think it was anything more than that.

Q. Do you notice your players maybe feel loose, tightness during this week when they're focusing on themselves?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I haven't noticed anything different one way or the other. They're a pretty businesslike bunch.

Q. Does this kind of take a margin for error in the post? Even if Aaron is able to play, obviously he's probably not going to be able to play the same amount of time that you'd expect, and knowing what Wisconsin has and how aggressive they are, how do you defend that with the same passion and intensity as you usually do?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, you can't change it. You've got to do the same thing. You've got to adjust to foul trouble if some guys get in foul trouble because you're a little bit depleted, but it doesn't change anything as far as what you have to do. You're still playing the same guys, they're still doing the same things, so Kaminsky is a handful, Hayes is a handful, Dekker is a handful any way you cut it, so whether it's Aaron or Jarrod or Woody, Gabe or Dom or a smaller guy playing Dekker, for example, just got to fight.

Q. You have a senior who might miss games. Does that really bother you as a coach even more because you know there's a limited number of games left in his career?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, he hasn't missed any. Obviously we want him in the lineup. He wants to be in the lineup. Yeah, I mean, there's a lot of things that go into how you feel about it. Obviously I want him to be out there. I think there's probably a good chance he's going to try to do something. We'll see what happens when he gets out there. Again, we won't know until -- if he's going to play Saturday, he'll probably try to practice tomorrow I would think.

Q. How remarkable is it for a guy to get through four years of his career without being injured when you consider the pace of the game and the speed and the size and the physicality?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah, I think it's probably true. We do a great job with our training staff and our strength and conditioning staff.

That's a year-round process now, so the way we train and the way we prepare so that that doesn't happen, and the way we take care of injuries and our ability to shorten that recovery time, it's amazing considering what I remember when I was playing. We just didn't have strength coaches. We had one trainer, didn't have the technology and the wherewithal that we have now. I think there's a lot that goes into that, and we take great pride in our staff being able to get our guys strong in the off-season and make sure that they remain healthy, and if they do get hurt, get them back as quickly as we can without jeopardizing their future, and we've had pretty good success there.

Q. Aaron wants to play obviously, but how much do you factor in he could tweak that again and give it a little more time to rest?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, that's all part of it, so if the doctors decide that, you know what, there's a lot of risk here, he can probably play but there's a huge amount of risk, then we wouldn't play him. If they can put a pad on it and say he's going to have a little bit of discomfort, he can go, then he'll go. But he'll have to be cleared.

Q. Do you not let the player buffalo you, too, tell you, hey, I feel fine?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I don't think that happens as much as people think. There's no player buffalooing anybody. They have both been seen by our doctors multiple times. They've been seen by multiple doctors multiple times in the last four days, and I mean, they're living with Brad Floy. They'll decide. Regardless of what he says, it will be determined by our medical staff.

Q. You opened the second half with Clemmons on the floor. Is that what you would anticipate Saturday if Aaron isn't able to play?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, he certainly played well enough to earn that opportunity. That would be a way we would have to think about going. That makes us small against a big team, so I'm kind of weighing that in my mind, do we have to go with Dom, get another 6'8" guy out on the floor, or Josh who's about 6'6", but Clemmons, he was really good. I was really impressed with him. Sometimes you give a little bit up defensively and maybe your team is a little bit better offensively, and just got to go with it.