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An interview with:

COACH McCAFFERY

Q. Coach, this is your fourth opening game at a new school, I guess, are they all the same or all different as far as the anticipation and pressure you feel?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think in terms of what a coach would feel personally, it's all the same. It's the same feeling. You have the same challenges. This is obviously different in terms of the attention that the game will receive. But I'm well aware of that.

I'm excited about the challenge and the opportunity to see how we perform in our first game that matters.

Q. What did you see on tape when you looked back at the exhibition game? Did you learn a lot?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think two things. We kind of did what we should have done. We had a better team, and they were missing their two best big guys.

So when a team like that comes in to a Big Ten arena, they kind of need all their people, especially those with size. There are two 6'7" guys that are out, he's playing four small ones. We should have been able to exploit them inside. We should have been able to get some second shot opportunities.

So I don't want to get too excited about what happened. But at the same time, we did what we were supposed to do. Our intensity level was there defensively. We created some opportunities to score in transition.

We were 13 for 17 from transition in the first half. A lot of that was off long rebounds, deflections, and you know we got some guys out in space and got them a chance to get to the rim. I

thought Eric May in particular was spectacular. And then, everybody seemed to settle down.

Then when we went to our bench, which I also thought was very good for us, everybody that came in really picked us up. As you know, that's going to be really important, not only in terms of knowing what they were supposed to be doing and maintaining defensive intensity. But also putting some points on the board.

Lot of times when you go to your bench, you're bringing in specific things, but not necessarily offense. But the guys that we're bringing in can score the ball. So I think from that standpoint that was a real positive for us.

Q. Has Matt had his hand looked at yet?

COACH McCAFFERY: He's supposed to get his cast off today. I haven't seen him yet here at practice. I think, I'm not sure what time his appointment was, but he was supposed to get it off today.

Maybe have a little bit more information with regard to can he go ahead and go on Sunday? Can they put something on it, or do they want to wait another week or two and see. He was real anxious yesterday to see where it is.

Q. What do you know about South Dakota State at this point?

COACH McCAFFERY: Quite a bit. I watched them on film. We got a lot of tapes from last year. Scott does a really nice job in terms of how they execute their offense.

They spread you out. They share the ball. They're not a mistake team. They make threes, and they compete.

I think Sargent is somebody that has really impressed me. He's their leading returning scorer, but he's tough. He can do things off the dribble. If you give him any space at all, he's going to make the three.

Walter's also really impressed me at the point guard position. You know, he can run your offense, but he can also go for 25, and that's always a tough combination to prepare for.

I think one of the unique things for this team, they've graduated some people, but they've got some really talented young big guys, two freshmen in particular, Dykstra and Heemstra, and then Fiegen's a sophomore. He played a lot last year and came into his own.

So he can go one of two ways. He can go with four small ones, which is how he's been starting which we'll see what he does Friday night. He can also go with a bigger lineup if he wants to. So I like the team.

It will be a very, very good challenge for us with our inexperience. Preparing for the game as if Matt will not play, but he may. But preparing for the game as if he will not.

So I'm looking forward to seeing how we can execute the game plan. We did it Sunday, and now we're playing a better team, see if we can do it again. As you all know, there will be better teams to follow.

Q. If Matt is able to go, would the idea would be to start him, or do you want him coming off the bench?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think that would be a function of what does he do between now and then? Does he practice Friday and Saturday? Does he practice Saturday? Does he just get some shots up and doesn't really go up and down?

Because he's really been working hard with his conditioning. So he's got a cast on so that he can run the steps and he can ride the bike. He can do some lifting stuff with his legs.

So he's maintained himself physically. I think from a cardiovascular standpoint he'll be fine. But in terms of getting your timing back down where it was, I mean, he was really in a groove. So it's understandable to think he might be a little rusty. So let's see what he does Friday and Saturday, if, in fact, he can do anything.

Q. How has Jarryd Cole's foot responded?

COACH McCAFFERY: Seems to be fine. He practices full go. We don't hold him back; we don't pull him out. So until he tells me otherwise or until -- and actually he probably would never say anything anyway.

I haven't seen him where his motor's stopping or he has no explosiveness. I think that

would be the thing. If he can't play where he can really attack the rim and be a factor, then we'd hold him out and get it rechecked. But he says everything's good.

Q. Assuming Matt can't play, is your lineup pretty well set in your mind or is it still to be determined in the next few days of practice?

COACH McCAFFERY: I would probably go with the same lineup we went with on Sunday. The only possible exception is to put Bryce Cartwright in there and bring Zach off the bench. That would be the one other thing I would think about.

Q. As you look at tape of Melsahn, did he grade out well? He did a lot of nice things that looked good at first glance?

COACH McCAFFERY: The thing about Melsahn, he typically doesn't try to do the things he doesn't do well. I think that is the key to success at any level. He knows what he's good at and he competes. He runs the floor. He's great around the basket.

He does have some stuff facing the basket, which I don't think anybody's seen yet. So if you don't respect him at 15 feet or on the baseline, he can make that shot.

He can put it on the deck a little bit, but he typically just is a defensive presence in the post. He can block shots. His greatest strength is his rebounding. He's consistently been at the top of our rebounding chart every day.

So he's going to rebound the ball, even on nights when he's struggling offensively, he'll still get you 10 rebounds, which I think is something that we desperately need. I think the more comfortable he gets with what this level is and at the same time our offense, because this is all new to him, everything's new, every play call, everything. Everything we do defensively. You can see that he's a little bit unsure at times.

But we need him. We need him to play the way he's been playing. Goes for 19-8, that is not a bad debut. Let's see if he can back it up against a more veteran team.

Q. How did your back-up post grade out, Devon Archie and Andrew Brommer ?

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, Brommer's been terrific. I thought he did a lot of good things. He was in foul trouble a lot, so his minutes were a

lot less than I wanted. I wanted him to play a lot more.

Andrew's really impressed me. The only thing that was disappointing was he picked up that fourth foul because I wanted him to stay out there for another five or six minutes and impact the game.

Archie, he was terrific. He was in there more at the end, but three weeks ago I wasn't expecting anything from him. He was limping around, had knee surgery prior to the season. He was stumbling and fumbling. It was really a non-factor.

Stokes was way ahead of him. He wasn't even getting practice reps. But he started feeling better, and he started asserting himself. I got on him pretty intently and he responded.

Now it looks like we're going to get something out of him this year. He's long, he's got a body. And as long as he stays within himself, he can be an effective player. Not going to dribble the ball that much, not going to shoot it outside. Catch and finish around the basket. Get some traffic rebounds, contest some shots and run. If he does that, he can be effective.

Q. Your two point guards, I know their assist to turnover ratio was terrific. But how did they grade out as you watched tape of them especially executing your best break?

COACH McCAFFERY: Yeah, I would say they graded out well. We typically look at the things that they could have done, the things that they should have done. We get a little more nit-picky than anybody else. You look at 15-2 and you say, well, we won the game. What else can you expect?

But we missed some opportunities. We played to the crowd a little bit. We were throwing alley-oops when we didn't make the defense play us. We talked to Cully about that.

I thought Bryce got sloppy the one time. He got stripped at half court. He just got sloppy with the ball and that can't happen. So they were real good. They did what they had to do to get us home, but we need to be better than they were.

Q. Do you think you're going to continue using Marble to the extent that you did?

COACH McCAFFERY: Yeah, he's going to play a lot. He's a good player, he's versatile. He's more of a scorer than he is a shooter. I think he's become a little enamored with that three, and

he's not really a three-point shooter. He's a pull-up jump shooter; he's a slasher; he's a finisher. He gives you at the two-spot or the three-spot a guy who can get eight rebounds. He got eight rebounds and that is pretty good because of his length.

Q. Is there more pressure, but more attention, do you pay more attention to forms of your point guards? Because you look at all your really good Siena teams, you have guys like Ronald Moore running the show who are just terrific players. They kind of got a run?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think that's a good point. I've been really lucky. I can tell you all my point guards. Courtney Eldridge, his jersey's retired. That tells you there. There are three numbers retired at Greensboro and that is one of them, Eldridge.

So Ronald Moore led the nation in assists and he'll probably get his number retired. So we've become a lot smarter when we have point guards whose numbers are retired.

I can tell you, I mean, Ronnie Taylor was another one. He was terrific. Kojo Mensah was terrific.

So the one year Ronnie Taylor broke his leg, we had a freshman point guard. He was a nightmare. We had the two-guard who was playing the point, and we were out of sync pretty much the entire season.

So it's, in my experience, absolutely critical that our point guards be absolutely rock solid. I think Cully Payne has been phenomenally impressive. So has Bryce for that matter. We've been using Bryce to take advantage of his scoring ability.

But Cully has really tried to do everything we've asked him to do. He comes in, he watches film, he studies it. He thinks it through. Like I said, we're going faster. For him, that's music to his ears.

But at the same time, sometimes it goes too fast. So we've got to break that down. We show him film every day of himself, and he just keeps getting better.

So I've really been impressed with both of those guys. As you all know that when I got this job, we felt that getting somebody that could help him was absolutely critical in recruiting. We just couldn't -- we couldn't go with what we did last year with one point guard.

Quite frankly, Ben wasn't a point guard, so he wasn't going to help us in that regard. We needed a point guard. Bryce Cartwright has been exactly what we hoped he would be.

Q. Speaking of recruiting, what was it like to come in late? How difficult was that to get in recruiting mode?

COACH McCAFFERY: It's always difficult. Sometimes you get lucky. Sometimes your connections really help you. Most of the good players sign early. There are a number of junior college players or some who will wait that are high school players.

So occasionally you'll have some real good players who have some academic issues. But you can always find a Kenny Hasbrouck. We signed Kenny Hasbrouck almost June. Ended up making the Miami heat and he's got his number retired.

So you never know. Sometimes you get lucky, and sometimes you sign a guy that you think is going to be great. But the beauty of spring recruiting is you have, as I said the other day, a real chance to evaluate your team and address specific needs.

We signed Ronald Moore late. We were not even looking at that position in the summertime. We weren't looking at that position in the fall. As we got a month and a half, two months into our season, we said we better get a point guard. Got Ronald Moore and he ended up being a four-year starter, won 97 games with him.

So it's difficult when you get a job late to scramble. What I did was I just didn't go assign bodies. You know, Melsahn I knew would be an impact player. And Bryce Cartwright I knew would be an impact player.

If I wasn't 100% certain they were going to be impact players, we weren't offering them a scholarship, and I had plenty. I could have gone in and tried to sign a couple. I know we need a big guy. But I wasn't going to sign a big guy that I didn't think could be a good player in the Big Ten just to sign a big body. I was willing to wait.

Q. Are you still not at liberty to talk about the signings?

COACH McCAFFERY: No, I'm not.

Q. I hoped to get something. I'm being honest with you here. What about signing kids from Iowa, is that important to get some Iowa players signed?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think for a lot of reasons, I think getting in-state recruit is important. But it's more important that that person can be able to play. I think sometimes it can be a negative if you're signing kids that don't end up being as good as we had hoped. I don't think that will be the case here.

Q. Have you noticed any kind of bad habits recurring? And if there are, how have you tried to break them?

COACH McCAFFERY: I haven't seen a ton of bad habits that have just persisted. I would say that we work on offense. We work on defense. We work on transition, and we try to sharpen up what we have. These guys have really been concentrated in their effort and that's pretty much it.

Q. Cully Payne got rid of the jump pass though, right?

COACH McCAFFERY: Not completely, but it's a lot better than it was. He was doing that -- that's probably one of the things. He was doing that, well, he wasn't the only one. He was doing it, and Eric May was doing it a little bit, jumping.

It seems more logical that Cully would be doing it than Eric because of his size, but you don't have to jump to pass. You need to stay on the floor. And they've been getting real really good with that.

Q. To clarify something you said on Sunday about Stokes. The plan is to redshirt him unless there is an injury or something like that where you need him?

COACH McCAFFERY: Unless we need him. He has a chance to be pretty good, I think. Now he's got to maintain his energy level. He's an energy guy. I tell him he's like Rodman. That's how he has to play, all over the offensive glass.

He's got phenomenal speed and quickness at 6'7". He's only 192 pounds right now. So I look at him and say what about when he's 222? Because he can jump and he understands how to play. He's not just an athlete that's running around. He's running around with a purpose.

He can score -- he can't really shoot, but he can score. So I won't ask him. I'm not going to run any down screens or flairs for him. He's just going to have to go get it off the glass and attack

the rim, and put pressure on the ball, play the point of the press.

I mean, he's learning all of this and taking it all in, and he's been impressive. He's lifting, he's on an accelerated lifting program. He lifts more than anybody else.

So if he wants it, he could be a good player here, there is not a doubt in my mind. Because there are very few people at 6'7" that are that athletic.

Q. I think you mentioned before that his dad came in around 6'7, 6'8, and then grew to 6'10, or 6'11, would that be a hope too at some point?

COACH McCAFFERY: We'd definitely put him on scholarship then.

Q. I don't know if you noticed in the huddle, but there were a few standing ovations during an exhibition game. If you did notice, was that a pretty special feeling knowing that there are people that appreciate it?

COACH McCAFFERY: I didn't notice that, so that's great. As I've said on numerous occasions that I think I have a pretty good feel for our fan base and what they want to see. I knew that before I took the job.

But I think my conversations in the last seven months have been pretty clear that people want to see a little faster pace. But at the same time when you're talking about fans who understand the game, it's not enough just to play fast.

You've got to know what you're doing. You want to see some fast breaks and some dunks, absolutely. But they want to see the game played the right way, and I think that's what they saw.

Wasn't perfect. But for the most part, I think if you studied our team that day, the man was open, we threw the ball to him. If he had a driving angle, we drove it.

We covered for each other when we made mistakes and we played with an energy level that you need to play with to be successful at this level. I think there was a true enjoyment that our players felt when they were out there. They were having fun.

And I think that's one thing that is absolutely critical. We're going to work them hard. We're going to be demanding on them on a year-round basis. But when that game starts, they need to be enjoying themselves out there. To be

truthful, the only way you're enjoying yourself if you're playing the game the right way.

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