

**February 14, 2012**



An Interview With:

## **COACH McCAFFERY**

**Q. Matt Gatens is leading free throw shooting two years in a row, a pretty remarkable stat. When you have a guy that solid, are you surprised at the misses?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Really surprised when he misses. We try to put him in as many situations where he's going to get fouled as possible. You know, go to him when we are in the bonus, things of that nature; late game, want to get the ball in his hands.

A lot of times teams go the other way and they double him to make us throw it to somebody else, but that's still a great weapon to have, because then that guy's open.

**Q. What are your thoughts on just having a game like this where you're playing a team that you just played weeks ago, and you basically have two games against them in the span of less than two weeks.**

COACH McCAFFERY: I don't really think about it too much. It's one of those things that seems like it happens every once in awhile. I think most people would prefer to have some time between, but you've got to play them twice, you play them twice.

**Q. When you first saw Aaron White play were you sold or was it an acquired taste?**

COACH McCAFFERY: No, to me it was an easy one. But I just got here, and you know, he's from Ohio; okay, is he going to be interested; what is he looking for. As you get into it, you realize this is kind of what he wants, and it was a good fit, and then he had a great visit.

So everything sort of came together, but as you know in recruiting, it's a progression. He needed to get comfortable with me, I enjoyed getting to know him. He's an easy guy to like. And then you get to know his parents and his high school coach, and then you just go from there.

And then it just looked more and more like we had a pretty good shot. And then when he called to say he was coming, I thought, this is a big step for us, I felt.

**Q. Where did you first see him; do you recall?**

COACH McCAFFERY: It was on the AAU circuit. I'm trying to remember if it was in Indianapolis. I'm not sure but it was on the AAU circuit. He played for Mike Duncan's group.

And Sherman, also, really loved him. Sherman was a guy that said, hey, you've got to watch this kid. He loved him.

That was something that he felt strongly about, that maybe some others were unsure about, I don't know. But he was the one that was sold, so make sure you go see this kid. For us, it was easy at that point.

**Q. When you look at a kid like that who maybe has not had a lot of top-line offers, do you look at why doesn't he have any other offers?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, I look at it like this: I just want to put my eyes on him and decide if he can play. I don't care who else is recruiting him. I never do. I mean, some of the best players I've recruited didn't have much. And you know, sometimes we have gotten great recruits that didn't amount to much. That's just the nature of recruiting.

I've been doing this long enough. I feel pretty confident that if I go watch Aaron White play, I can tell that he can play in the Big Ten. I mean, he can play in the NBA. So he certainly can play in

the Big Ten.

**Q. What do you do differently with a week off between games?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, we gave them more rest. We gave them Friday off, then we practiced hard Saturday, hard and long. We gave them off Sunday and then we went hard yesterday. I think it was good.

**Q. When you are evaluating Aaron White or any of the other guys you signed, and you see them in the AAU, but do you have to see them in a high school setting?**

COACH McCAFFERY: I don't. I like to. I think in a perfect world, you would like to see him play for his high school team. And it's funny, because a lot of times, you see a completely different player depending upon what his role is, his high school team versus what it would be for his AAU team.

There's times when you know. I recruited a kid out of New Jersey, he was on an AAU team for guys who -- three of them were Player of the Year in the league, the leagues that they played, and the other one led in the league in scoring. They all were on the same AAU team. I loved him and nobody else really thought, oh, he's getting 12, 14 points a game; and next thing you know, we are retiring his jersey. It happens, there's a 2,000-point scorer for us. It happens that way sometimes.

So you have to be careful not to dismiss somebody that maybe has different role for his AAU team. So it's understandable sometimes when you look back and say, boy, how did you miss him. I remember we had the Player of the Year in our league when I was in the SoCon, and he was the eighth man or the ninth man for his prep school team. Kenny Hasbrouck, we retired his jersey; he averaged 11 points a game for his prep school; that was a guy playing 12 players.

So you have got to be able to see them and make a decision, and sometimes you've got to go back. Sometimes you can see a kid play very poorly and write him off and he ends up being really good. It's certainly not a perfect world when you are in the recruiting arena. It's difficult sometimes.

**Q. In Aaron's case, you probably helped him because in his high school team, he was probably playing more back-to-the-basket kind of thing.**

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, the one thing that happened, they used him correctly. But what happens in the AAU circuit is you can see him four or five times in a weekend, and if he has a stinker, you don't write him off.

How many high school games are really going to go to? You have a limited number of days; I'm coaching my own team, and I get to as many as I can, but it's one game or one practice. In an AAU tournament, you might see him play three times on Saturday and twice on Sunday. And then you'll see -- sometimes you go to a game, and the team wins or loses, by a lot. How much do you really get out of it?

But if you see them play five times, you're going to see him in close games, see if he can play under pressure; see if he can go against athleticism; see if he can play against the zone; see if he can play against the press. They were there, and he has the complete skill-set, so that was easy.

**Q. You've done scheduling at every level, a lot of the mid-major schools are trying to get a number for guaranteed games to almost six figures now. Do you understand that, why that is, and is it tougher being at Iowa, trying to fill a schedule and all that money is on the line?**

COACH McCAFFERY: It's just kind of how it works. I remember when I was at Greensboro, I had a certain number I had to bring it in; so can you bring it in in three games, four games, five games, things of that nature. You prefer to bring it in in small a number games of as possible and the negotiation begins and that's how it works.

For us, a little different. Some will take less money; some will want more. A lot of times you have to pay more when you need a certain game on a certain date. And you just start communicating. I think it's the worst part of this profession, it's unfortunate. I would prefer they put it into a computer and say, this is who you're playing and be done with it, but that's not going to happen.

The one year where we had a really good team, when I was at Siena, we decided, we'd better rev it up. We had the No. 1 ranked non-conference schedule in the country, because I was trying to get an at-large bid if we didn't win the conference tournament.

We won the conference tournament. But I do think we would have gotten an at-large bid because we took everybody on, and I think our RPI was 31; so it would have happened, but you don't know.

**Q. Would it be fair to say as we see this program progress that the non-conference schedule will get a bit tougher?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Absolutely. I think there's a couple components to it. We are always going to play Iowa State who is going to be good. We are always going to play the ACC, and now we have the Pac 12 situation. You're typically going to play in a tournament of some sort, whether it's Maui or the Paradise Jam where there's always going to be good teams.

We are going to play the other game in Des Moines. Okay, after that how much does that leave you well, you've got a little bit of flexibility now, and, okay, if we are really, really good, let's play Kansas, Arizona, teams like that. If not, then you back it down a little bit and give yourself a chance to get some momentum, get some wins and develop your young guys.

It's great to take them all on, but if you have a lot of young players, you know, sometimes you can ruin confidence early. So there's a lot of components that go into it when you're thinking it through.

**Q. Are you playing a Pac 12 team next year?**

COACH McCAFFERY: We don't have one scheduled. But I don't know that -- it hasn't been indicated that we have to. We are talking to some teams in the Pac 12, though.

**Q. Any of the other majors that you are locked into?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Not locked into, but we are talking to, yeah.

**Q. Big 12 or the SEC?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Yeah, all of those. We don't have anything done.

**Q. Can you talk about your upcoming game at Penn State?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Absolutely. They played an incredibly good game against Nebraska. Shot the ball extremely well. I think the thing about Penn State that's been impressive to me is how hard they have continued to compete night-in and

night-out, and how well they play at home. They have got three league wins at home, and they have played really well. They shoot it better, they defend well. I think Pat's got them playing really hard.

You look at the Michigan State game, the very next game after ours, they couldn't score for a while. They get down by 23, cut it to six three different times. They just keep coming. They don't go away.

So that's what happened in our game when we shot the ball so well early. So we are going to have to play really well when we go up there Thursday night.

**Q. What did you learn when you played them earlier this month that you can expect to help you later this week?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, you've got to defend them, because they are not going to quit, and they are at some point going to get going. They did it against us, they did it against Michigan State, because they have got some guys that can score other than Tim Frazier. We have got to do a good job on him; he's a first team All-League player, we have to make sure he doesn't get away from us.

**Q. Coach Chambers talked the other day about because of his team's record, Tim doesn't get the attention he maybe deserves on TV. Can guys on your team identify with that a little bit?**

COACH McCAFFERY: I kind of thought he was getting the recognition he deserved. Because when we watched the games, I mean, we hear what the commentators are saying. Seems like he's getting pumped up pretty good.

When we played Indiana, they picked the first team -- the newspaper picked an All Big-Ten team, he was on it. When the guy is leading the league in scoring, I think he's going to be on the All Big-10 team. When you lead the league in scoring, you're first in rebounding, assists, steals. What else do you have to do.

**Q. You talk about guys being marked, and obviously he's marked on that team; the fact that he's putting up those numbers, even though he's a marked player, doesn't that just make --**

COACH McCAFFERY: That's not easy to

do because he's getting a lot of attention on ball screens. People were getting back and trying to corral him in transition, things of that nature, give him less space than he would like.

But he's gotten an in-between game and he can make a three and get to the rim and finish. He's better at going right but he can go left. He makes his free throws. So he's one of those guys that's going to have the ball a lot. So at the end of the game, he's going to have some numbers. You just hope that his percentage is less than he would like it to be.

**Q. Is his floater as good as you've seen in college?**

COACH McCAFFERY: Yeah, I said this before. I mean, think about anybody, college basketball, how many guys make the floater consistently? I mean, come up with five. I can't. I've got Tony Parker and Ben Gordon and Tim Frazier and that's about it. Who makes the floater consistently? He does.

**Q. Having a short prep after a long stretch like this, when you have a week off, playing Penn State, only two days in between, playing Indiana, how much of that time do you spend looking at Indiana?**

COACH McCAFFERY: We are not thinking about Indiana at all.

**Q. Just one scout --**

COACH McCAFFERY: Maybe I shouldn't have said that. I have my staff working on Indiana exclusively. But I won't look at them and the team won't think about them until after we play Penn State.

**Q. The last Penn State game, you guys were really sharp at the start -- how do you avoid the reverse happening when you go to Penn State?**

COACH McCAFFERY: The reason we got the lead was we played defense and we rebounded. Ultimately you have to put the ball in the basket and we did that, too.

We are going to have to play at the same level of intensity at the defensive end of the glass. We out-rebounded them and got after them pretty good, and that's what they are going to try to do to us.

**Q. Would you break down when the defense was an issue -- several times, I'm sure**

**you break it down with your team on film, but at some point, do you scrape your head and wonder, is it ever going to sink in?**

COACH McCAFFERY: I do. And at some level it's frustrating with a couple guys, only because -- I always say, I never ask anybody to do for me what they are incapable of doing.

So I'm going to require you to do what you are capable of doing. And we have got some guys that have the ability to be better defenders than they are. That's where the frustration level comes in.

And they are, at times, but they are not consistently. And you look and say, okay, well what can I do differently. Can I stumble earlier. Are they making fatigue-oriented defensive mistakes as opposed to they are just not doing it. And there was a little bit of that I guess with Northwestern. We kept our offensive group out there probably longer than I should have and then that got them going a little bit.

And I also had Aaron White guarding the two, because of the lineup that they started. That probably was a mistake on my part.

**Q. Eric May fine right now?**

COACH McCAFFERY: He was doing great. He tweaked it a little yesterday so we'll see how he's doing today.

**Q. 50/50 right now?**

COACH McCAFFERY: I think he'll play, but he's probably 50/50 for practice today.

**Q. What would it mean for Matt Gatens to play a postseason event --**

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, he's phenomenally focused on making that happen. I've seen very few players over the years that have worked that hard to finish the way he's finishing. He's having a spectacular year. I think as much as he wants it, I want it that much for him, as well.

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