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An Interview With:

COACH FRAN McCAFFERY

Q. Have you gotten a better feel for kind of combinations that you want to work with and different groups?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Yeah. It's been interesting because that second group is real close, and there's guys on that second group that want to be on the first group, and that's what makes everybody better. I mean, the practices are more competitive as we discussed, and that's been a reality.

It's not like it's going to be that necessarily every game, but those guys have stepped up and done really well, but the second group went on a 23-0 run in that game. There's probably going to be times where you're really not sure who the first group and the second group is, and I think that's a good thing.

Q. Have you ever had a 10-man rotation in your career?

FRAN McCAFFERY: No, we haven't.

Q. Do you see that happening here?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Oh, yeah, we're going to play 10, no question.

Q. Last year McCabe, White, Basabe all finished right around 20, 21 minutes a game. Do you anticipate the same thing or down a little bit because you have a few more people?

FRAN McCAFFERY: It'll be interesting because some of these guys might get some more minutes at the 3-spot. Last year, they were pretty much all posts, but Zach and Aaron both are going to play some at the 3, Aaron is starting there, so that'll be interesting to see.

Q. Are these five starters your best five players or are they the best five who play together at the same time?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, I think some of them are our best players. Some of them give us the chance best to win at that position in my opinion at this time. But in certain situations there might be a better fit on the floor, whether it be a combination on our side or match-ups versus the opposition. Sometimes you'll go small, for example, and Adam won't be on the floor, or Gabe. But there's times we want to be big, and most of the times in the Big Ten you want to be bigger, bigger than we've been because we've been a small Big Ten team. But out of conference it could be different, depending upon who we're playing.

Q. In your career the most guys you've had in the rotation, do you recall when that was or where that was?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, I've typically been a short bench guy if you look at my track record. Partly a function of the places where I've coached. There have been seven or eight players that were a cut above the next group. So it was much simpler. This has been a much more complicated thing to manage when you look at players that deserve to play and players who are expecting to play, and they've done nothing to suggest that they shouldn't play more. There's only so many minutes to go around, and they just have to be ready and they have to be confident in their role and accepting of their role and then understand that they might actually be on the floor at the end of the game, which is actually most important.

Q. How difficult is that for Melsahn, for instance? He started his first 50 games, you really touted him in the off-season.

FRAN McCAFFERY: He's played well. He played well Sunday. I think he's played well in

practice. He's gotten himself in shape. It could be more problematic for a guy like him who is right there. I mean, he would be the next guy probably to start, there's no question about that. He would probably be No. 6, and it's hard when you can only start five. But he's been terrific, and he's just been productive when I put him in, and I leave him in, and he's getting it done for us.

Q. Have you had your red shirt discussion with your player?

FRAN McCAFFERY: I have not. Probably happen today. You know, it really doesn't have to happen today. I can wait. I just can't play him. But I'll probably do it this week.

Q. Can you talk about Adam Woodbury? I think some people have a misconception it's going to be Cody Zeller revisited, coming in as a highly touted seven-footer. Obviously, he has some work to do on the offensive end, but talk about where you see him.

FRAN McCAFFERY: Adam Woodbury has been phenomenal in the early going. He's picking up what we're doing. He's in great shape physically. He's running the floor. I mean, he's a very good passer out of the post. At times he brings it down and at times he's trying to gather and get it perfect. He just needs to go up, just get it and go up. That's what he's been doing the last two days, and he's been really good at it.

But I've said from the beginning, he's a guy that runs the floor, really defends, rebounds, and he's going to have some scoring nights where he's really good and some where he's not as evolved. But you can still run your offense through him because of his ability to pass and catch, and he's very comfortable in that role.

So I think in time he'll score more. His jumper is okay if he's on the baseline or if he's at the foul line. But I think the more comfortable he gets just being out there, and I do think the college game will be better for him. I think it's hard to be a seven-footer in high school frankly; everybody is chopping at you, everybody is leaning on you, you don't get the calls. And at the college level it's more physical; they let you bang more because you're going against guys your own size, and I think he'll have more space because they're going to be guarding other people. In high school they're all around him.

So I think it's going to be a lot easier for him as we move forward.

Q. He's obviously struggled with his free throw shooting. How have you approached that?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, it's interesting, he's making his free throws, he's just got to make them in the games now. He's shooting 80 percent. We chart free throws, we shoot a ton, and he's making them in practice, not only when we're on the side charting, when we shoot maybe 30 at the end of practice, in live segments in practice he's making them. So he just has to get up there and make a few.

Q. You talked in the postgame on Sunday about how you didn't get Adam quite as many minutes as you wanted to because he picked up a couple fouls. As a freshman how does he find that balance to be aggressive and be in the post and not pick up fouls?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, I think what I probably should have done on Sunday is just left him out there with two fouls and let him keep playing. I anticipated putting him back in, but it was his turn to go back in with 11 minutes to go and we were up 40-something at that point. I played the other guys who I hadn't played at all. Probably should have just put him back in for four or five minutes just to help him, but at that point I felt like I needed to get Kyle and Patrick in the game with Darius Stokes. Those guys deserved to play some. Fortunately, they were able to play 10 minutes. Normally you don't get that much.

For Adam, he'll be fine. I mean, he'll be ready to go on Friday night.

Q. What do you know about your opponent for Friday, and how much do you really want to know at this point?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, I've been impressed with them. I watched them last year. They had some really good performances. They had St. John's beat at St. John's, they were up four with just a couple minutes to go, and he does -- Ryan does a really good job with what they run, how he utilizes personnel. He's a very good coach. He'll come in here prepared.

They also have got a pretty substantial number of people back. They've got three starters back and two other guys that contributed a lot, but then they've got 10 new players. They've got a lot of junior college transfers. So I think they're

deeper than they were last year. They're more athletic than they were last year with some experience back.

In that sense, I think it will be a very good game for us to be challenged in a way. We're going to have to game plan. They've got some guys that make shots, they've got some athletes, he's got a go-to guy, got a really good point guard, and he's got some junior college kids that aren't freshmen. They've been around and they've put up numbers and they can score. It'll be a good game for us.

Q. Going back to Basabe, do you think maybe he was just always supposed to be sort of a sixth man and he was kind of thrust into that starting role due to lack of depth?

FRAN McCAFFERY: No, I don't look at it that way at all. He started as a freshman, he deserved to start, was second in the league in 20-point, 10-rebound games; that's pretty good as a freshman in that league. Aaron White came here and was one of the best players -- certainly one of the best freshmen in the country and I think right now one of the best players in the country. Adam Woodbury comes, he gives us a legitimate 7'1" presence, and McCabe has consistently improved.

It's probably a better fit for Woodbury and White because of the way he shoots the three ball. I think Melsahn is better -- Melsahn plays really well with Gabe and plays real well with Eric. So that combination has played well together. I'm not saying that I wouldn't mix those six players up; I would. But I do think just the way it's unfolded, those groups play well together.

Q. While 10 players might be tough for you to get them all on the floor, talk about the upside of in practice those guys going against each other, how they're going to make each other better as you go through the season.

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, I think in particular when you look at Mike Gesell's development, Anthony Clemmons guards him every day in practice incredibly tough. He's coming after his job every day, and it keeps Mike at a point where he really has to focus and concentrate on everything he does at every moment that he's out there. And that's the only way you get ready to play point guard at this level.

If you're coasting through practice and putting up numbers, then all of a sudden you get in a game and you realize it's a lot harder. But when you're challenged every day, it's not quite the same

difference, and I think you just take that across the board, whether it's Basabe going after McCabe and Aaron White, I've got -- Aaron White and Jared Uthoff going at it yesterday it was one of the best one-on-one match-ups I've seen since I've been here. They were just really testing each other. Both are talented, both are competitors, and it was good for both of them, and I think that's what we're talking about here, what's better for our team.

I think personally a lot of guys would prefer to just be able to show up and get their starting job. But the reality in life is you've got to keep working, you've got to keep preparing, and you've got to understand that every time you take the floor somebody is coming after you. Well, if you're dealing with that every day, you'll be much better able to handle it twice a week.

Q. How much of that competition in practice would you say has factored into what you guys were able to do this past Sunday at exhibition in terms of being able to utilize that full court press and be aggressive?

FRAN McCAFFERY: Well, I think most importantly when you look at the pressure on Sunday, it was way more intense than anything we were able to do last year, because if you remember, just the start of the game we were running around and getting up in them, and obviously jumped them 22-0 or whatever it was. But those guys came off the floor at the 16-minute mark, and the next group came in and did the same thing, and that's harder to play against. And ironically, the second unit when I first put them in didn't score the ball as well as the first unit did, but defensively they were -- Eric May makes the steal and the dunk and just they were up and in people's faces and running around and blocking shots and contesting and contesting passes.

Then I put the other group back in, and they were ready to go, and then ironically in the second half they go on a 10-0 run against our first group and then our second group goes on a 23-0 run because they were fresh and they were anxious to get back on the floor and produce.

I think that was fun for me to watch, and hopefully it will stay that way. We won't ever get in a situation where some guy is saying I should be playing more. They're going to be playing and they're going to be exhausted, so whenever I took anybody out on Sunday, nobody was upset. Everybody was tired when I took them out.

Q. Is it almost like line changes in hockey?

FRAN McCAFFERY: You know, I've never been that kind of coach. I've never thought that that was productive. But this is an interesting group, and it very well could be like that at times. I think there's still going to be times when we're going to pick the better of the two point guards and they'll play a little bit more, and if White is going, well, we're going to play him a little bit more.

Marble would normally have played a lot more minutes than he played on Sunday. He's been playing too well. Against Creighton he was on the floor most of the time. I didn't start him in the second half, and that's probably one of the reasons we lost the game.

But you don't worry about that, you worry about just getting people in and looking at different things when it's that early.

For me it'll be an interesting challenge all season long to make sure we manage these 10 players effectively.

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