

National Invitation Tournament

Wednesday, March 15, 2017

De Moines, Iowa

Fran McCaffery

Iowa Hawkeyes

Iowa - 87, South Dakota - 75

THE MODERATOR: Coach.

COACH McCAFFERY: I want to thank our fans for showing up the way they did. We had a couple days to sell tickets. I'm not surprised, they've always done this.

Had great impact on our energy level, our ability to keep coming. Just very thankful. I know the players and the coaches really appreciate that kind of support. That was an unbelievable atmosphere in here tonight, and we're very thankful.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. 59 points out of the freshmen tonight. When you get into a tournament like this, is this exactly what you're looking for, for them to get that experience in the post-season?

COACH McCAFFERY: What I'm looking for is to try to win the game. Truthfully I'm not thinking about who's scoring, what year they're in. I'm not trying to be disrespectful. That's the farthest thing from my thought process.

I go to those guys because they produce. I don't consider them freshmen any more anyway. Those guys have been through a lot.

Q. Is this the Tyler Cook you thought you would see all year? Injury kind of set him back.

COACH McCAFFERY: I think that set him back a little bit defensively. I wasn't seeing it defensively early. So consequently, he was in foul trouble. He was a little bit late on rotations, whether we were pressing or whether we were man or zone.

So as he's had a chance to mature through experience, he's affecting the game at both ends. You're also seeing it reflected in his rebounding totals, his rebounding numbers. At the beginning of the year he wasn't getting eight, ten rebounds like he is now.

Q. How important Isaiah?

COACH McCAFFERY: Especially because Pete was in foul trouble. I've been trying to get Isaiah to consistently play with that level of aggressiveness. When he does, we're a better team. And he does



more things. I mean, defensively he makes more plays. I want to see him keep playing like that.

Q. 21 assists in the last two games for Jordan. How much has he matured as a pure point guard?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think the great thing about him tonight was they really came after him. They were trapping him as much as they could. He really had to work, especially in the first half. But he just kept going. He's really smart.

They were up into him. He just would go. That's when you make plays for people. He got a few layups. We got him on the backdoor the one time.

So he's just going to keep coming. He's a tough guy. He's also really smart. He knows who's with him and how to get those guys the ball, what we need to be done.

It makes a difference for everybody out there when you have a guy that thinks like that.

Q. The pressure Peter gets when he was up top. Is that the most he faced all season, Jordan?

COACH McCAFFERY: No, he's faced that quite a few times. I don't know, they trapped him a lot. But he's been trapped before. Sometimes they switch. Sometimes they trap. Sometimes they shut out.

But he is a target. He has been a target for a while now.

Q. Seemed like Ahmad's energy was huge.

COACH McCAFFERY: Right when we needed it. You're absolutely right. He got on the glass defensively. Made a couple baskets. Transition basket was huge. Really got the crowd going.

When he's playing like that, we're a lot better.

Q. Anything special you told them at halftime?

COACH McCAFFERY: I don't think so. I really don't. I mean, we try to evaluate the first half. What worked? What didn't work? Did they do something we weren't expecting? Who is hurting us? Are we going to go man, zone, press? What are we going to run offensively? We just kind of reviewed some things that we thought needed to be reminded. Just wanted to

compete.

Q. The hustle plays that Ahmad made, one point he had two, going out of bounds, he saved one, scored off of it. You've talked a little bit about him, but...

COACH McCAFFERY: That's kind of what you expect from him. That's what his game is. He's smart. He's athletic. He can guard smaller guys, bigger guys.

You expect him to make that kind of impact. Especially if we're struggling offensively at any point in time, you want him to make those plays defensively and get us some second shots back.

There's nothing worse than having to play two or three possessions.

Q. How about the turnovers?

COACH McCAFFERY: I was more upset about the 10 turnovers in the first half than I was six in the second half. That's a reasonable number. Maybe one too many.

When a team is pressing, a team is doubling, you're going to turn it over a few times.

We had some chances in the first half, I thought, in transition. We jammed it in a few times, came up with nothing.

Q. Looked like you really controlled the boards in the second half.

COACH McCAFFERY: I think the first half was pretty even, if I'm not mistaken. The second half was a lot better.

Q. Is that one of the biggest keys for your success?

COACH McCAFFERY: Well, it has to be because, you know, that's going to trigger our break. We played a lot of zone in the second half. You got to rebound out of the zone, especially with this kind of team because they have slashing rebounders. Mooney is going to shoot, Burch-Manning, Flack, those guys are going to go, Hurst.

They're going to knife in from various parts in the floor. I thought we did a much better job. Then we got out and ran.

Q. After Indiana, did you challenge them specifically on the glass?

COACH McCAFFERY: I would say it was a lot more than that. I thought defensively we weren't where we needed to be against Indiana. We weren't connected at all. Obviously rebounding is a part of that.

So I just felt like we needed to be a little bit better in that area. We let Indiana do some things that they like to do. You've got to try to take that stuff away. We didn't do that. That's disappointing.

Again, it's another part of the journey where you learn, grow. Sometimes you have to fail to come back and get it right.

Q. TCU coming in Sunday. A little more time between games than in a normal tournament setting.

COACH McCAFFERY: I haven't seen anything. I'll watch them tonight. We'll get it figured out. I know this, they're very good. I know Coach Dixon. I know Jamie. I've coached against him in the past when he was at Pitt.

Really good team there, really good guards. Just beat Kansas in the Big 12 tournament, I know that. We got our hands full.

Q. Turnovers in the first half, were the guys pressing a little bit too much?

COACH McCAFFERY: I don't think they were pressing. I think you have to give credit to our opponent there. We talk all the time about what we don't do, what we should have done. But sometimes your opponent takes you out of some things. They knew some of our sets. They were trying to go after certain guys, make it hard for them.

So, yeah, I just respect them.

Q. You talk about the journey. If you can get a 20th win on Sunday, does that mean anything, or is that just a number?

COACH McCAFFERY: I think it's just a number. I mean, I just want our guys to keep winning. I want them to experience winning and success.

They really work hard. They're a terrific group of young men that have tremendous character. They bring it for me every day. There's no issues with this team. No selfishness at all. Those are the kind of teams you want to keep winning.

We're going to try to do everything we can as coaches to prepare them to play a really good team. In conjunction with our fans, hopefully get it done.

Q. Bubble teams have a history of coming out flat in the NIT. How proud are you of your guys playing hungry, hustling?

COACH McCAFFERY: I am very proud. I quite frankly would have been very shocked if they didn't do that. I

mean, just knowing this group the way that I do, I felt like they would come out and play this way with tremendous fight.

I think when we prepared for this team, they recognize, okay, this team won a championship, they won a regular-season championship. They're a 20-win team. They're a championship team, okay?

So what comes with that is an element of respect. So we respected our opponent. We fought. We got the job done. That's what you want to do.

Q. How much can a tournament run help a young roster?

COACH McCAFFERY: Oh, it helps it tremendously. But, again, we just look at we have to win Sunday. I'm not looking at, Let's get a long run. Everybody wants to have a long run. You can't have a long run if you don't win the next game.

All we were looking at is this game, then we'll look at TCU. Hopefully we can look back on a long run. If you start thinking about a long run now, you won't have one.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, coach.

COACH McCAFFERY: Thank you.