

**March 6, 2010**



Northern Iowa – 57  
Bradley – 40

An interview with:



COACH LES: I guess I'll start by telling you what I told the team. Sometimes, you've just got to take your hats off to them. They were the better team tonight. I thought they played extremely well. Doesn't mean we have to like it, but I thought they were aggressor from the git-go. And they played well. I thought the contributions in the first half from their bench was huge.

If you had told me going into the game that Farokhmanesh and Moran were going to go 6 for 28, I probably would have liked our chances. But I thought Sonnen and James coming off the bench in the first half. They made shots and really did a nice job for them.

In the second half, I thought we came out a little more intensity on the defensive end of the floor. We got some stops and turnovers. It seemed that we had a lid on the basket because we had four point blank opportunities to score the ball. Which I thought would have cut the lead into the single digits or around there to get us going. But we couldn't seem to get it down. But hat's off to Northern Iowa for being a very good basketball team.

**Q. How did they defend you differently today and how did it affect you?**

SAM MANISCALCO: I thought they hugged me. We knew that was going to happen. We watched that in film. It's just unfortunate the ball didn't drop for me. The ball didn't drop for any of us. I thought we let that affect us on the defensive end.

When shots aren't falling, you can still always play defense, I thought they out-toughed us today and got the 50-50 balls. That was kind of the story at the end.

**Q. Andrew, the beating in the second half of the first five minutes, they couldn't get any shots to fall. Kind of looked like that was going to be the time you guys could make a come back. Take me through that period a little bit.**

ANDREW WARREN: Yeah, it was somewhat the game we played them at our place. We were down at the half, and got them back in the game with our defense. And if we wanted to turn this thing around, we had to get some stops, and we did that. But like coach said, we couldn't get any shots to fall.

But if you stop them and you can't score, you're down, and the team has more points than you do. It's harder to strengthen that lead, and we couldn't do that today.

**Q. Sam, did you believe that maybe it was cold shooting or just their defense that held you from scoring?**

SAM MANISCALCO: I thought it was a little bit of both. Their record shows they're a great defensive team, sometimes they force you into taking some off-balance, tough shots. But those are shots that some of the time we normally make.

Like I said, unfortunately, they didn't fall for us tonight and that was kind of the story of the game.

**Q. Andrew, you guys started the second half with a lot more intensity than you started the game. Could you take me through maybe why that was?**

ANDREW WARREN: Well, we were down. We were down in the score, but we had to do something. So, you control what you do defensively and that's what we had to do to try to force some turnovers. We had had to get stops.

We did that, we just couldn't score, you know. I think we held them in the 50's going through the game. We talked about how we're going to win, keeping teams in the 50's, maybe low 60's to give ourselves a chance to win. We did that but didn't convert and make plays.

Like Sammy said, they got a lot of offensive rebounds and loose balls and things like that that we needed to come up with to give ourselves a better chance to win.

**Q. Can you speak to this season as a whole and how it's gone for you guys?**

ANDREW WARREN: Like a roller coaster, very up-and-down. We've had good stretches; we've had bad stretches. And to have a good season, you have to be consistent. And we weren't very consistent this year. I think that's something to look forward to and working towards for next year.

But you never want to say the season was a bad season, there are a lot of good things that you can pick and choose. There were some highlights that we can definitely take for next year with the core group of guys we have coming back. Definitely take this summer and build upon it.

Sammy's back, Taylor's back, the young freshmen that gave us great contributions throughout the season, they're all back we can work together and be healthy this summer.

I think Coach is excited and looking forward to really helping us come together and work on some of the things that we need to correct that we learned from this past season.

**Q. Talk about the second half in terms of you had some good looks. You shut them down defensively. Can you just take us through that?**

COACH LES: You know, I can't fault the effort to start the second half. You know, we just talked about guys stepping up and making plays

and getting their hands on balls and making them miss and imposing their will on the defensive end. Then, using that energy to get us going in transition.

It played out exactly the way I wanted it to, we just couldn't complete some of those point-blank shots. And I think that got a little frustrating for them also. I wish I could explain it, but it almost seemed like there was a lid on the basket.

That intensity that they came out with, I thought was encouraging. Like you said, if we dropped three or four of those maybe it cuts them to single digits and gives us a second life.

**Q. Can you talk about what your seniors meant to your program?**

COACH LES: They've been great. I think in the locker room for their contributions of the program, they're great young men. Excellent student-athletes, they represented our program in a first-class light. We talk about being a family and that doesn't end when the playing days end, that continues on.

So we're proud of all their contributions and thankful. And I think they've had a good student-athlete experience at Bradley because of the way Bradley treats our student-athletes.

**Q. What are some of the things that you could have done to turn this game around today?**

COACH LES: I think initially we had some impatience offensively which plays into a good defensive team's hands. And I think Sammy said it in that, you know, it was a little bit of both. We missed some shots, so you have to give credit where credit is due. And their defense is awfully good. It speeds you up.

As they were making shots and getting separation, we tried to kind of put our head down and take matters into our own hands without being patient. That plays right into their tough, solid, gap defense so they led us down the trail that allowed them to get some separation.

**Q. Yesterday's win seemed like it was such a kind of leave-it-all-on-the-floor-emotional-type win. Then, getting down early today. Was there any running-out-of-gas type feeling on or anything like that?**

COACH LES: You know, we might have been a little low on energy. But I don't want to make excuses other than that was an awfully good basketball team, and we were going to have to play well to win, and we didn't.

**Q. I know you're disappointed with today, but can you talk about now we sit again waiting with the CBI or CIT possibly. Can you talk about the possibility of extending your season, and would you like to play in one of those tournaments again?**

COACH LES: I think with the emotion of the game and the aftermath of it, no decisions have been made. After this weekend, I'm sure Dr. Cross and President Glasser and I will sit down and talk about what's best for the university and the basketball program, this basketball team, and make a decision going forward of what we're going to do.

But we haven't talked about it, thought about it, and I hate to make any decisions right now after the emotion of a game.

**Q. This tournament seemed to present the Bradley season in a microcosm. Great win yesterday followed by today's effort. Could you just kind of speak to that statement and how frustrating it must be for the program?**

COACH LES: Well, with youth comes immaturity and inconsistency. I think all year that's reared its head at different times. Today, probably in the first half it reared its head in different instances. And that's a product of growing up and the growth process you need to make as a player and just getting experience.

So that is something that -- one of the things I told them is just getting a year older doesn't make us better. There are some things we need to work on and get better at. And they're not all just physical, some of those are mental.

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THE MODERATOR: The regular season champions are with us. We'll have Coach Ben Jacobson give us a brief synopsis of the game, then questions for the two student-athletes.

COACH JACOBSON: We were sharper today to start the game. I thought our offense was quite a bit sharper. Our cutting was better, our movement was better, and our screening was better. And that, obviously, was going to be important today with the way that Bradley defends. Their man-to-man has been good. They have the ability to switch their defenses. That really helped us. Our offense was much sharper today than it was early yesterday.

I thought the guys defended pretty well. I thought they did a good job of defending. Didn't rebound well enough in the first half, but I think they rebounded better in the second half.

**Q. What does it mean to you to go to the championship game tomorrow?**

ALI FAROKHMANESH: It means a lot. I mean we've been working towards that goal the entire year. Just finally to realize that we're going to be playing in the game tomorrow means a whole lot to me and our whole team. We set our goals

from the beginning of the year, and I think we're starting to reach a couple of them.

**Q. There was a stretch there early in the second half where you guys weren't shooting particularly well and could have let Bradley back into the game. What were you saying during timeouts and in the huddle that kept your spirits high and got you back on track?**

MARC SONNEN: Good thing we did, we had to pick up and play defense hard and guard the ball. Try to get into the post and outside shots when we were working as well. So we tried to do that more and guard the ball and not give them any easy looks.

**Q. There was a point at 8 minutes in the game where you had a 7 or 8 point lead. How big of a stretch was that and talk about the overall bench effort from those five guys?**

ALI FAROKHMANESH: It was amazing. It's nice to know when you come out of the game that most of the time they're going to keep the lead or increase it by five or six or seven points. It's a huge difference in a basketball game where on three days, you're playing a ton of basketball and to have a bench like that that can score eight, nine points with four different people, that's huge.

**Q. You're one of the guys that's been through this and went through it last year. Going through the regular season and getting to this point in the title game, was it harder this year because of everybody last year a little out of nowhere with a 6 and 6 start, was it harder to get to this point than maybe a year ago?**

ALI FAROKHMANESH: It's hard every year to get to this point. I don't think it was any different than last year. Everybody gives their

best. In this league you have to come night in and night out. I don't think it was harder this year than last year. It's been that hard every single year.

**Q. Other than the North Dakota game where I think you had 20 points, is this one of the first times all year as a freshman that you were just out there playing, you weren't thinking and you were totally comfortable out there?**

MARC SONNEN: It could be, but I feel comfortable with my teammates. And having the coaches in the game, we have a lot of leaders on our team. So, they always make you feel comfortable. In this game, I hit a few more shots, so it made me feel comfortable. But having teammates like that, they're always encouraging you to shoot the next one and get the ball on post. They're always encouraging, so I'm always comfortable out there.

**Q. Yesterday, you had a sluggish start in the game. Today, it was just the opposite. What made the difference?**

ALI FAROKHMANESH: I think it really helped us when we jumped off to that good start right away when we scored a couple baskets in the beginning. That was probably one of the biggest things. When we start off good, with a couple of baskets in the beginning of the game. That definitely jump starts our offense. When one guy makes a shot, the next guy makes a shot, and that's kind of contagious I guess.

MARC SONNEN: It's contagious when you have players that are hitting shots. And after the two games we played against them before we wanted to come out strong against them and play as hard as we can. We wanted to do the best we can to have teammates out there hitting shots, playing defense hard. I think they boost how we play, our toughness and things like that.

**Q. Both your games with Bradley this year were tight games. If you could point to a couple things today that were different, what would they be?**

ALI FAROKHMANESH: Probably just our overall defense and rebounding. They're extremely athletic. They get a lot of offensive rebounds and leave easy baskets for them. We didn't give up that many easy baskets tonight. Also, I think Sam is a great player and he's so tough to guard and does so many great things for

them, he was one of our main focuses tonight to kind of slow him down a little bit.

**Q. What does it mean to this team to be the top seed in this tournament?**

MARC SONNEN: It means a lot. We have a lot of seniors that have been working so hard. Our whole team's doing so good and working so hard together. Having leaders like that it helps our No. 1 seed to give us encouragement to do good. We want to do it for all of us. Like the coaching staff and the fans. To be able to come out and help them do the best we can.

**Q. How much fun is it to play with Lucas?**

ALI FAROKHMANESH: It's really fun to play with Lucas. You know if you're setting up a ball screen, you're probably going to get open. So it's always fun to play with a guy like that. Also, you know he's going to give his A-effort every single night. Night in and night out. Doesn't matter what's going on, he's always going to be there. He's a guy you can definitely trust on the basketball court.

**Q. You talked about the quick turn around. How much of a factor does fatigue play with a quick turn around for the Championship game tomorrow?**

MARC SONNEN: Well, that was the first time for me. It's hard playing after another game after having won last night. But I think playing the earlier game helped us out get a little bit relaxed. Just us relaxing and spending time with each other. That and just stretching after the game especially, and getting the ice that we need. We can relax and get fluids. That helps us out with the fatigue.

**Q. Before the season, Coach had always talked about your conditioning and how you've kind of upped that this year. Now you're down the road in tournament play, how much does that focus on conditioning help you guys out down the road?**

ALI FAROKHMANESH: It's definitely helped us. Can you tell with almost all our players that we were more conditioned than we were in previous years. But, also having the bench behind us. I mean, we only have to play 20 minutes a game. You have other guys stepping up playing 15



or 16 minutes and making big plays for us. It makes it a whole lot easier and we don't need as much rest now.

**Q. Talk about playing in the Championship game as well as you played defense today. Do you have a preference for who you play tomorrow? Does it matter who you play if you guys play this well?**

ALI FAROKHMANESH: We're just excited to be in the championship game. Either team's going to be a battle. It's always tough with Illinois State. They haven't had a single game in the double digits. Wichita's always tough. They play a lot like us. It's going to be hard in those games either way. It's just exciting to know that we're in the championship game already.

MARC SONNEN: Same thing. I'm just glad to be there and so is our team for how hard we played. The defense has to play the same for either team we play against. Both have really good players.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much. We'll dismiss you and stay with Coach Jacobson a while longer.

**Q. Did Marc Sonnen and Anthony change so today that your guard court's going to be in good shape here for the future?**

COACH JACOBSON: I tell you what I like most, they're into the seniors, they're into the older guys. They do a great job of listening and great job of learning. When their number is called, they've responded this year. And when you're in that situation and you're not playing the same minutes every night or he they really fluctuate, it's hard to be ready hard to perform your number. When Johnny missed a couple of games with the ankle injury, both of those guys played very well. Tonight, I felt that Anthony James could give us defensive presence against Maniscalco. He was ready to do that and he did a good job.

I think both guys are just really into their teammates right now.

**Q. Maniscalco had a huge game yesterday for 31 points. Did you guys do anything differently today?**

COACH JACOBSON: We felt we had to get the ball out of his hands as soon as we could. We kept the ball screen a little longer than we normally do because we wanted the ball out of his hands. He was terrific yesterday and he really does a great job with his presence. We made it

possible for him without leaving a bunch of open shots for the rest of the guys.

**Q. Can you talk about Marc's development offensively? And specifically defensively. A couple of strips he had early. And your trust in him in big games like this down the stretch?**

COACH JACOBSON: He came in as a good defender, and I think he's made some improvements there. And he's playing against juniors and seniors as a freshman, and they turn the corner on you. Now, he's able to guard them without fouling.

That's certainly helped him. He's a little farther along offensively, mostly in terms of making three-point shots. He's always been very good with the ball in his hands. He's always been able to drive it. He's done those things very well throughout his career.

But he's shot the three-point shot well at times when we've needed it. At Missouri State when we needed it, today when we needed it. He was really good in that first half. He was terrific. I just think -- he mentioned it. His teammates have a lot of confidence in him.

When the older guys, the seniors and juniors have confidence in those freshmen, whether those freshmen will admit it or not, that's the biggest key. It doesn't matter what I think. If those juniors and seniors have confidence in them, that's the difference.

**Q. Talk about how this year's tournament and the approach your team's taking is different than last year? And would you say your team's playing the best basketball of the year right now?**

COACH JACOBSON: I don't know that our approach has been any different coming into this tournament. They approach things the same way. We came down here with the same mindset. Wanted to do everything we could to be playing tomorrow afternoon on CBS. So, really not doing things differently. I guess just the overall experience that we've got on this basketball team is probably the difference in what we had last year at this time.

**Q. You pride yourself on your defense with this team. But you came out and shot almost 50% in the first half with just two**

**turnovers. When your on fence is playing that well, it's got to make the Panthers a tough outing in any tournament?**

COACH JACOBSON: Yeah, I felt we had some good looks in the second half. Now I do recall thinking halfway through the first half that Bradley had missed some open shots as well. Usually when your defense is going really good, the other team is missing a couple of looks for you, and Bradley had some stuff around the basket. We were fortunate they missed some of those shots.

Again, our movement was better on offense, our spacing was better offensively. Because of that we were able to get some easy stuff around the rim. Open jump shots and when you can do that and you make a couple, both guys touched on that. You make a couple shots early, you set a good screen and get a guy freed up for a lay-up, when those things happen, that helps your confidence. That happened in the first half and that was the case.

**Q. Could you just say a little something to preview both Wichita State and Illinois State? What do you see in them having played them twice already this year?**

COACH JACOBSON: Illinois State has played their best basketball over the course of the last month. And I think that for two reasons. Their seniors have played great, and Tim has brought their team along. They've got good guys, junior college guys and freshmen that are playing great basketball right now. They're playing their best basketball over the course of the last month and present a number of challenges. We all know where they start with Eldridge and Odiakosa.

Wichita State has a very balanced team. They have depth that is productive. They have a great point guard. They've got size up front and they can bang you. Their two wings, Murry and Hatch, are two guys, Hatch for sure very underrated. Murry not as underrated, but I still don't think people give Murry enough credit for how good he is at both ends of the floor.

**Q. A key stretch seemed to be the first five minutes of the second half. Bradley had a chance. You started off kind of slow offensively. They had a chance to mount a comeback, but your defense wouldn't allow them to do that. Can you speak to how your kids -- even though they weren't getting their shots -- were able to buckle down defensively?**

COACH JACOBSON: That was key. I thought we had a couple of good looks. They were jump shots, but I felt they were good looks from Ali and Johnny. When you make a couple of those, it balloons to 20. You have a chance to keep it from getting really interesting.

Now we miss those shots -- and we were fortunate on a couple of layup opportunities. A couple of transition opportunities to run out and stay ahead 13 to 16 points. If it gets under 10, there was still 14 or 15 minutes left. Bradley feels that they can win the basketball game. After we got through that five or six minutes, I think our defense settled in again. We were able to make a couple of baskets.

So between getting a couple of rebounds, we were able to do that in the second half.

**Q. Your second team has had a lot of success. How much is that attributed to Lucas and the way he plays and his unselfish attitude?**

COACH JACOBSON: I think it gives the rest of the bench a lot of confidence. Because he played so hard and without any fear. All the way down to A.J. and Marc, they play that same way. Because of the way Lucas approaches everything, that has certainly helped the three freshmen coming off the bench.

You know, Kerwin's terrific. He's had two great years. Because of our personnel and the way things shake out with our team, he has had two perfect seasons he's played here. But Luke's biggest impact has been on the three freshmen that came off the bench. Just giving those guys that energy and toughness that helps them as freshmen.

**Q. Two games you held your opponent to 40 points. Does a little more go into that other than a couple of shooting performances?**

COACH JACOBSON: I felt like today that we did defend. Bradley missed a couple early and they missed a couple early in the second half.

Other than those three or four minute stretches, I felt we defended well. We did a good job with Maniscalco today. Obviously a hard guy to contain. I thought our guys did a good job of changing things. Every four or five minutes we changed things in the way we defended our ball screen. Our players were able to do it. Go out and execute it. So I felt like we defended well both

days.

**Q. What is your substitution philosophy? You had four or five subs in early in every game I've seen you play this year. What is your line of thinking?**

COACH JACOBSON: I'd like to get the four guys in before that first media timeout. I wanted them to get started before that 16 and under timeout if we can. I want them on the floor.

Then tonight with A.J., again, I felt like he was the guy that could help us defensively. Those four guys have gone in around that 16 minute mark, sometimes it's the 17 and a half minute mark, depending on how the start of the game goes. But I want them in early so they can get moving around.

If that starting group is playing great and we've got it rolling, I'll wait until after the timeout. But most of the time, I want them in before that first media timeout so they can get things going.

**Q. Going back to Lucas, did you get any sense from him that there is extra motivation for him playing an hour away from his hometown in Nashville and friends and family?**

COACH JACOBSON: I don't know. I don't know if I know everything that motivates that guy. He's got it going all the time. He really does. He's extremely close with his family and his friends. He's that kind of kid. I'm sure that's added to his motivation.

But he's tuned in all the time and cranked up all the time. I do know he enjoys being around his family and friends though.

**Q. Scoring 25 points off the bench today, is that going to change the starting lineup tomorrow or how you use your bench at all?**

COACH JACOBSON: I think we'll stay with the same starting lineup. The guys on the bench, they have been really good all year, they have. And I just like the confidence that they play with. I think again they gain a lot of that confidence from the older guys on our team. There isn't anything with those five guys that are starting the basketball game, they know what their job is.

They take a lot of pride in that. The guys on the bench are going to play well and be productive. If they aren't playing well, that's why

we use our bench. They take a lot of pride in those five guys coming in and playing good basketball. It's really been a team deal. So we'll continue with that rotation again tomorrow.

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