

March 3, 2011



An Interview with:

**COACH JACOBSON
JOHNNY MORAN
KWADZO AHELEGBE**

THE MODERATOR: The defending tournament champion Northern Iowa Panthers are with us. They have a date with Creighton tomorrow afternoon at 2:30. We'll start off with a statement from Ben Jacobson, and go to questions for all three participants. Coach?

COACH JACOBSON: Thanks, we've had a good week of preparation. The guys have worked extremely hard this week to make sure we're ready. I think for us that's certainly one of the keys. Then we play as hard as we can, and play as well as we can. I know these two guys and their teammates are looking forward to that.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

Q. How do you feel about rematching this team after they got the best of you last week?

COACH JACOBSON: You know, I don't know that that comes into play a whole lot. This obviously with that being a regular season game and the finish the of the regular season portion of the schedule and Friday being our first opportunity in the conference tournament, I don't know that that has a whole lot to do with our mindset or our preparation or the mentality of our guys.

Like I said, these guys have done a really good job this week. Kwadzo and Johnny's leadership have been great at practice this week, and we're looking forward to playing tomorrow.

Q. You guys have lost 6 of 7, where do you draw confidence from it at a time like this?

JOHNNY MORAN: Our confidence never waivers. That's just a key thing in sports in general, you can't get down on yourself. There is just a couple things we have to clean up. In some of those games where the outcome could have

been a little different. We watched it on film. Reviewed a lot of things. Our preparation once again has been great. So we're a confident bunch. That never waivers, ever.

Q. What role has Lucas played since he's been injured? I saw him out here sporting the mullet thing and hobbling around. Is he still with you guys spiritually?

KWADZO AHELEGBE: Yeah, he's a huge part of our team still. A lot of credit is owed to him to the things he's done. But just his leadership, his vocal voice for the bigs, that's most important. He's always on ship. Timing to me about ball screen situations and how can you use the ball screen a little better. He was the one laying the wood for me for most of the season. So he's been huge for me still.

Q. Kwadzo, Saturday both point guards got off to a slow start with foul trouble and all. How different do you think this game could be compared to Saturday?

KWADZO AHELEGBE: The intensity is going to be a whole lot different. You know, like Coach Jacobson said, it was a regular season game, and this game is for all the marbles, so to speak. So it will be a lot different from our side, from our vantage point, for sure.

Q. Coach, how does it feel when you go up against him? I know it's not the first time this year, but seeing him here at the valley tournament, and you guys both want the same thing?

COACH JACOBSON: It's not, for me personally, that I enjoy having to coach against Mac, and it's the fifth year in a row with him being at Iowa State, and I didn't enjoy it during those games and I haven't enjoyed it this year. But those feelings don't come into play during our preparation.

You know, when the game is being played, the competitiveness and obviously us working to



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win the basketball game, so haven't done it now five years in a row. It's a situation I don't enjoy personally, but that has nothing to do with my job as our head coach and what we're trying to get accomplished, whether it was during the regular season this year or this weekend.

Q. With Anthony James being named captain of the most improved team, I wonder if you could enumerate the many ways he has improved over the last year?

COACH JACOBSON: He's probably been our most consistent offensive player from Game 1 until, as we begin the tournament here tomorrow, his consistency at both ends of the floor. But maybe even more so at the offensive end, how far he's come from a year ago to this year in terms of the role he's playing on our team, that consistency has really been remarkable. For a guy who is just in his second year, and didn't play a lot of minutes last year.

I think it's happened really for two reasons. One, he's worked extremely hard; and two, he's very willing to be coached to look up to Johnny and Kerwin and Luke, and in particular Kwadzo. Kwadzo has done a terrific job bringing A.J. along, and helping him with his confidence, and with his work habits. Sometimes the older guys can be great at that. Doesn't mean the younger guys are going to improve. Doesn't mean the younger guys are going to listen. For that, I give A.J. a lot of credit. He really respects these two guys, and Kerwin and Luke, and because of that, he's made great strides.

Q. You've won six in a row in the building, does that make you the team to beat?

JOHNNY MORAN: I think we come in with a lot of confidence because of past experience here. Especially with Kwadzo being a senior leader, he's always played really well here. So, yeah, we're looking forward to getting another shot at it.

Q. Johnny, this seems to be the time of year when UNI turns it up, and of course the magical run last year. I know this year hasn't gone as well as you'd like, but do you feel this team could do something like last year's team did? And do you think the second part to that will help knowing that you guys have done that before?

JOHNNY MORAN: Yeah, I think our team is capable of coming together right now and



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playing really well down the stretch. I think that has a lot to do with the experience that we've gained from the two years prior.

Q. How important is playing in tournament back-to-back days? Do you think playing on Sunday, how much does that get into your legs and how much does that test your conditioning?

KWADZO AHELEGBE: I think at this point, our bodies are all beat up and everybody's pretty much feeling the same. One of my mentors told me that the game from this point on is 90% mental, 10% physical. So your mental capacity has to be top level to obviously make it on Sunday.

So we'll just take it one game at a time. Make sure we do the right things come tomorrow.

JOHNNY MORAN: Going off what Kwadzo said, at this point of the season, the games are so important, and there is so much on the line that you're not thinking about your fatigue. You're just trying to do everything you possibly can to win the game.

Q. Little change of pace, have you ever done the inner league dance, and what do you think of it?

COACH JACOBSON: I have not, I think it's great. And I'll pass it to these guys. I do think it is great. Our student body, the atmosphere in the McLeod Center has changed 100 times for the better. On most nights, it is a big time atmosphere in there right now. The student body is largely responsible for that. Certainly the four or five that invented the dance have been added to that. They've been terrific this year.

JOHNNY MORAN: I also have not done a dance, but I think it's pretty sweet. I've seen it on YouTube and stuff. It's pretty cool. Like coach said, it's added to the atmosphere. This year every game in McLeod was such a great atmosphere, and our fans were great the entire year. I think that had a large part down toward the end of the year.

KWADZO AHELEGBE: I have not done the dance. I haven't done the dance. I started it and I stopped. I was like I can't do this. But it's neat to have that. Maybe that could something that is a traditional thing for our university that everybody knows about. Just like the Rock Chalk, Jayhawk, something like that.

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