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Auburn – 59
Missouri – 42

An Interview With:

COACH MALZAHN TRE MASON

THE MODERATOR: We're ready to continue with Auburn. We'll begin, and we'll ask Coach Malzahn for some general comments on the game, and then as you can see, Tre Mason is the MVP, and we'll ask him for some general comments, and then we'll take your questions.

COACH MALZAHN: First of all, just very proud of our team, finding a way to win against a very good Missouri team. I'd just like to congratulate them for getting here.

I knew that they were going to play their tail off. They're a top five team. And we're tickled to death to get the victory.

THE MODERATOR: Tre, your general thoughts on the game?

TRE MASON: We had a great team win. We couldn't do without Coach Malzahn. Our O-line played great, and the Lord blessed us with a great win.

Q. Gus, could you just talk a minute about the incredible journey from the moment you took over at Auburn. You told a bunch of us you had to do a lot of Dr. Phil'ing, but just the journey from there till now, in one year, and how improbable it really is.

COACH MALZAHN: That first team meeting, we came a long way, Tre, didn't we?

TRE MASON: Yes, sir.

COACH MALZAHN: You know, it's just been very unique. It's been one of the more unique experiences I've ever been a part of. Our staff deserves a lot of credit. They came in; they

developed relationships with our players. We developed trust with each other.

We had some growing pains, had some tough times. We strained the dog out of our players in the spring. In the fall camp, we were very physical, and this bunch came together. They found a way to improve each practice and each game, and we're playing our best football right now.

Q. Tre, I was going to ask you, it looked like there were sometimes when you had -- you could have driven a truck through the holes your offensive line was opening for you. Are you surprised at how good you guys blocked and how big the holes were and how much success you guys had against a run defense that had really been pretty good all season?

TRE MASON: I haven't been that much surprised in those guys. They work their tails off every day. Those guys open up some of the biggest holes that I've ever seen, that I've ever ran through.

This is a blessing to have those guys in front of me, you know, the players around me, and having a coach like Coach Malzahn.

Q. This is for both Tre and for Gus. Tre, I saw you strike the Heisman pose at least once tonight. Was that a message? Gus, all this talk about Heisman and everything, they say that one game can lose a Heisman. Can one game win a Heisman?

COACH MALZAHN: Well, I'll just say this, first of all. You're looking at one of the top running backs in college football, and he proved it again today. So usually, the best players on the best teams have a chance at it, and you're looking at one of those guys right here.

Q. Tre, same question.

TRE MASON: This is a personal goal of mine. Everyone has goals of their own. It was always a dream, you know, growing up, wanting to

win the Heisman. I'm sure that every kid that played football, that's one of their dreams.

It's hard to describe, the feelings that I'm having right now.

Q. Tre, what did you have left on the 46th carry?

TRE MASON: Just my mindset of flipping the switch. Now is the time to move on to the next. Hopefully, we get to play in the National Championship. I feel that we should, but now it's time to work on getting better.

Q. Did you ever feel tired?

TRE MASON: Not at all. I didn't even think about fatigue at that point in time. Just not quitting until the clock said zero.

Q. Tre, can you explain how your offense has gone from an offense that scored 16 rushing touchdowns last year to one that now it seems like it scores as many points as it wants.

TRE MASON: A lot of those guys, they're back. They're playing with us now. And we used last season as motivation, thinking about all the hard times that we went through last year and being one of the worst teams in college football to now being one of the best. We use that as motivation every day, in every practice, in every game.

Q. Coach, you didn't want to talk about whether or not a 12-1 SEC team should play for a BCS title coming into this game. Now that you've done it, you've won, can you make your case for why you think you guys deserve the right to play in the BCS title game?

COACH MALZAHN: Yeah, we're the SEC champ. I believe we won it the last seven years. We play the toughest schedule of any of the teams there, and we're playing our best football.

A lot of teams aren't getting better each week. This team is.

Q. Tre, as a running back, what's the biggest difference for you about what Coach Malzahn's offense does scheme-wise, compared to maybe what you played in last season?

TRE MASON: Our offense is very versatile. There's so many different ways we can get players the ball. Also, using our other weapons, our receivers. We have a lot of running

backs, talented running backs. He finds ways to get us the ball.

Q. Coach, we all pay attention to that moment in the play where the quarterback gets to either keep it or give it, but that's not just him. That's the tailback too, and it is uncanny how well Nick and Tre -- they're literally flawless at it.

COACH MALZAHN: They have something special, there's no doubt. It's hard to explain, and they work extremely well together. It's a thing of beauty to watch.

Q. Coach, was there a time this year where you found your offensive line coming together and playing as a cohesive unit like we saw tonight?

COACH MALZAHN: The first of the season, you always evaluate your team, and you try to figure out the strengths. We felt like our offensive line was our strength of our offense. So we kind of asked them to really carry us.

And then, of course, Tre, he was a 1,000-yard rusher last year. I knew exactly what we had. We recruited Tre. And they just got better and better. Like I said, they're running the football as good as anyone in the country.

Q. Coach, as far as Nick, he had a couple of early fumbles. I know Tre had the hot hand, but how much did him getting it as much as he did was a product of Nick's handling the ball earlier in the game?

COACH MALZAHN: Well, whoever has the hot hand, we go with. And Tre wanted the football. That's the thing about him. He's as tough as anybody, and you can see that look in his eye, keep giving me the football.

I was worried about him a few times on those long play drives, and we were giving it to him and giving it to him, and he was a warrior today. It was unbelievable.

Q. Tre, four touchdowns today. Were there any of those runs that were particularly special or stood out to you?

TRE MASON: We just wanted to keep fighting till the end. Find a way to put a nail in the coffin, as we say.

We've got to finish the game. We didn't get too ahead of ourselves. We played great when

the clock was winding down, and our team found a way to get in the end zone.

I just don't want to credit myself to getting that last touchdown because it was a team effort. Jay Prosch blocking, our O-line, our receivers -- everybody wanting to get in the end zone.

Q. Tre, and Coach Malzahn as well, can you speak to this team's will? Just the will to win, seems like ever since LSU, you all have gutted out and tried to almost will the victories.

TRE MASON: We learned from that game on the road, losing. We learned from how to play in bad weather and finding ways to win when the clock is winding down. We just learned every day and got better.

THE MODERATOR: Is that the same for Coach?

COACH MALZAHN: Yeah, there's no doubt. The unique thing from my standpoint is this team finds a way to win, and it's really bizarre that how they complement each other -- the offense, the defense, special teams. When the pressure's on, our team's at the best, and it's been really something to be a part of.

Q. Gus, talk a little bit about your defense. I know they gave up a lot of points and a lot of yards, but they made some critical stops when they had to, especially late in the game on the fourth down inside the 10.

COACH MALZAHN: First of all, you've got to give Missouri credit. They got really huge receivers that can run. Their quarterback's one of the best in the league. Their running back is a phenomenal running back.

But you're exactly right. When we needed it and the game was on the line, our defense stepped up in the fourth quarter, got us the ball back, stopped them on fourth down when they went for it, and helped us win. That's kind of been their MO.

Q. Was there anything schematically, Gus, different late in the game defensively? I know you talk about the will to win, but, I mean, schematically, it seemed like a track meet back and forth until you guys had to have it.

COACH MALZAHN: In the fourth quarter, our guys are playing their best ball. I know we switched up some man and zone, and coach brought a couple of extra pressures right there.

Bottom line, it was heart. It was heart when the game was on the line. Our guys really

believed and found a way to stretch it out right there where we could kind of enjoy that last couple of minutes.

Q. Gus, for someone who spent a big chunk of his career coaching high school football, and maybe your first college job in Arkansas didn't go like you wanted, how gratifying is it today the way this thing turned out and the way your offense performed in the system that you love?

COACH MALZAHN: Well, first of all, I'm blessed to be doing what I'm doing. Like I said before, there's a lot of really great high school coaches that just haven't got the opportunity that I have. I'm just living a dream. It's a true blessing for me to be the head coach at Auburn and a true blessing for me to be coaching these guys.

Q. Tre, how will you follow the action tonight on the other two games, the ACC and the Big Ten game, just to see who wins those games and if you guys are in or not?

TRE MASON: We're going to find a way to see the scores of those games, but we're just looking forward to our team getting better, how we're going to get better each and every day.

God willing, we get into the National Championship.

Q. Coach, Tre scored with about 11 minutes to go in the game, and I think you guys took a ten-point lead at that point. Did you think, ah, it's finally time to stop the madness here and we've got it under control?

COACH MALZAHN: The way games have ended the last few weeks, we didn't want to take anything for granted. We're up by ten, and we just keep playing, just keep fighting, keep playing.

So really that didn't really go through my mind other than, hey, let's be ready if they score again. I mean, they're a great team. They're a top five team. They're one of the better teams we played all year.

So we were happy to win the way that we did.

Q. Gus, in the last eight years, there's been two SEC champions who had defenses finish outside the top ten nationally. That was 2010 Auburn and this team. Obviously, the common team being you. How do you explain

the success of your offense in a conference that's really been predicated by defense?

COACH MALZAHN: I just want to say this. We're a true team. And there's been times, especially early in the year when our offense didn't play well and our defense helped us win, and the unique thing has been the way they've complemented each other.

But offensively right now, we're playing very good. Any time you can run the football, especially in this league, good things are going to happen. Right now we can run the football on anybody.

Q. This is for Tre. Three gutsy wins by this team and these players in a row. How much of this turnaround can you attribute to Coach Malzahn?

TRE MASON: You know, instilling the will to win and play until the clock says zero. A lot of guys last year didn't believe. You've got to weather the storm. And Coach has instilled that in us as players.

We're going to ride with that all the way until the end of things. And the way games unfolded these past several games, I told the guys on the sideline, the game's not over. You see how we win, so it's also possible. We're playing a great team. So we've got to stay locked in and stay ready because they can still find a way to win the games because we've been winning in crazy situations.

Q. Tre, I saw after your fourth touchdown there, Bo Jackson was giving you a hug on the sideline. After the game, he told me, "He's a bad man." What was he telling you in that huddle? What were you saying to each other?

TRE MASON: He was just telling me how much he loves me and how hard I ran and how he's proud of me.

Q. How does zero wins to SEC champions happen in one year? Can you explain that?

COACH MALZAHN: All I can explain is, since I got there, how our team bought into what we asked them to do and have gotten better and better and better. Like I said, it's very hard to explain.

After the season we'll look back, and there's a lot of things to be proud of, but our players have found a way to improve. Like I said,



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we're playing our best football right now. I don't know if a lot of teams around the country could say that.

Q. Tre, that last rush takes you over 300 yards for the game and puts you in a position to take a couple kneel downs to end this one. What was going through your mind during that last play when you went down?

TRE MASON: Let's seal the deal. The game's not over, but we can find a way to make it be over. Put the nail in the coffin. That's all that was going through my head.

COACH MALZAHN: And he did.

Q. This one's for Tre. Tre, your name is now above names like Cam Newton and Bo Jackson in terms of rushing touchdowns for a single season for Auburn. Has that sunk in yet? What do you think about that, having this kind of season and that transpiring right now for you?

TRE MASON: It's just a blessing. Words can't even describe how I feel. To be put in the same conversation as those guys is a blessing from the Lord above.

Q. What do you think about that, him surpassing Cam Newton? What do you think about Tre Mason surpassing Cam Newton and Bo Jackson on that list in terms of all-time Auburn rushing touchdown records?

COACH MALZAHN: I'd say he's one of the better players to ever wear an Auburn helmet.

TRE MASON: Thanks, Coach.

Q. Tre, can you just speak to what you told the team, kind of the whole mentality going into this one, how you wanted the ball and it was going to be your game.

TRE MASON: Before the game, I told everyone it's time for us to take over. Last year we'd been blown up. You've got to think about those things. Stay motivated, stay humble, stay hungry through the whole game. Have the will to win, have the want to win.

I told guys, I'm not leaving Atlanta without a ring. I told them, I'm not leaving without being a champion. That sunk into those guys. They took it to heart and performed well tonight.

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