

December 7, 2013



Auburn – 59
Missouri – 42

An Interview With:

COACH PINKEL

THE MODERATOR: We're ready to begin with Coach Pinkel. We'll ask Coach Pinkel just for some general thoughts on the game, and then we'll take questions.

COACH PINKEL: Congratulations to Auburn. I thought they played really well, certainly on both sides of the football. In the third quarter, it was a pretty tight game. They did the things necessary in the fourth quarter to win.

They have a very difficult scheme on offense, and we still had our struggles, and we had opportunities to score, and we didn't.

So hopefully, we'll learn things from this next time we're in this position. I didn't think we played our best game, but I think certainly they probably had a lot to do with it.

Q. Gary, just you talked all week about their running game. What did they do so well today, or was it something you guys didn't do very well?

COACH PINKEL: No, give them the credit, first of all. It's an offense, and they have skilled people, and they have a lot of cylinders. I certainly think they've got some momentum with it.

They didn't do anything different than we expected, nothing. We tried to make some adjustments also. It's assignment type -- you have to have guys in gaps, and if you get frustrated and you get one guy in a gap, and they happen to hit the right player in the right gap, you're in trouble.

I think you give them credit, but certainly we made a lot of errors. I think as their tempo kept cranking up, I think we probably didn't handle that very well either.

Q. How good was Tre Mason? Was he even more of a handful than you guys expected?

COACH PINKEL: No, I expected him to be a great player. But you let a guy go through a gap like that at full speed, then you've got problems on the other end. You're asking your safeties and other people to make plays with him in space, and that's difficult. He had a lot of big plays. Obviously, I'm a little disappointed in that.

Q. Coach, did this feel like a road game to you and your team?

COACH PINKEL: No, not at all. I don't think so. I don't think at all.

Q. Halftime, obviously, you guys have given up a lot of rushing yards already. What kind of adjustments did you guys try to make to be a little more successful in the second half?

COACH PINKEL: We did a few things, and obviously they didn't work. Again, they didn't do anything different than we expected. They did everything -- we had trouble with their unbalanced formation a little bit and moving our people.

We just weren't moving our people we needed to move, and then we're gap off, and we've got problems. Just things like that.

We tried to do it -- there's a real frustration that comes over you on defense when they're coming after you over and over and over again. We've been a pretty good run defense. Ole Miss ran this scheme, the running part of the scheme, but obviously without that quarterback. They did obviously some different things.

We just -- you know, it's disappointing. We had trouble stopping it, obviously, and couldn't get it fixed.

Q. Could you explain the pressure that Auburn's offense put on your own offense, because at times it seems like they were

tightened because they needed to score more because of what Auburn was doing offensively.

COACH PINKEL: We scored 42 points. What we have to do on -- how we handle our football team is, if the opponent's got 20, then our defense is responsible to hold our -- the offense to 19. And if we have -- we have to score. They had 45, then we have to score 46.

I went for it on fourth and two at that end of the field because, obviously, they run the football well, and there's four minutes left, and we're trying to win a game. Went for it and didn't get it, and obviously had a short drive for them.

Q. Defensively, did they maybe come after you guys and blitz you a little more than you anticipated? And maybe how did you guys -- how did you feel you did?

COACH PINKEL: I think we did a lot of good things. You score 42 points, you did something -- well, actually, 35. The defense scored one touchdown. But it wasn't good enough.

Q. James Franklin, over 300 yards passing. What did you make of his performance tonight?

COACH PINKEL: He did a lot of good things. You go back to every play. There's every player that you ever coached could have done something better or different when you lose a football game. Certainly did some good things.

There were some real positive things that happened. Again, we were battling right in there until the fourth quarter, and then we just -- we didn't do well on either side of the football, and they finished the game.

Q. Gary, how long does it kind of take to -- for the guys to realize still the season they had and get past this a little bit?

COACH PINKEL: They're crushed. I mean, they are absolutely crushed. And that's good. I mean, that's okay. They're used to winning, and this game was real important to them.

Hopefully, we get in the position again, and we'll play better. Maybe we'll handle it a little bit better. But I thought we did all right things. I'm proud of them, proud how they competed and battled.

But at the end of the day, you're playing a real good football team, and you've got to make plays, and you also can't make mistakes, and you can't -- on either side of the ball. We made a lot of mistakes too.

I think, obviously, give them credit too.

Q. What does it take to stop that offense? It doesn't look like there's a way to.

COACH PINKEL: Everybody has problems with it. You know what, I'm the wrong person to ask because I'd have stopped it if I could have.

It's a great scheme. More people are going to use it probably. Gus does a great job with it and a great quarterback. He has a lot of good people that can damage you. They have a lot of talent. You put that with a good scheme, and you've got problems. So obviously, I'm not the coach to ask that.

Q. From the press box, it looked pretty difficult sometimes with Nick Marshall's option reads, making late decisions to pull the ball back and keep it. How much of a factor was it in their run success?

COACH PINKEL: He does a good job. I give him all the credit in the world. Nick is a really good player, and they have really good players. It's difficult. And the fast tempo. And they were executing, you know, at a very high -- at a pretty high level.

I think what happens too is they try to really get going fast, get the fastball rolling, and your defense gets a little frustrated because you're giving up ten yards, nine yards. And then guess what? You start making mistakes. You don't get the gaps. You don't get to do things you need to do. That's just not a very good situation to be in.

But that's the kind of -- the problems that you cause, and you've got to make sure you maintain your poise and your focus when you go through that, and that's difficult to do sometimes.

Q. Back to your offense briefly, Dorial, another big game for him. He's kind of had a breakout season. You also had the shoulder injury. Can you just talk about his game today and coming back in and getting that 55-yard touchdown, just what he brought.

COACH PINKEL: Yeah, he really does a lot of good things. I think we see things that he can do. He's gotten better and better. Just need to see that and make plays. That's what he does, he's a play maker. Try to get the ball to him a few other times. That fourth down call, we tried to give him another inside screen and didn't execute those

quite as well.

But obviously, he played very, very well. A lot of big play potential, as we all know.

Q. (Off microphone)

COACH PINKEL: Everybody's fine. The guys are really emotionally hurt. They're competitors. They should be. Henry's one of them. So that's part of the deal.

Q. Coach, how good of a football team is Auburn? What do you make of people saying an SEC team should play for a national championship?

COACH PINKEL: I really think, with the strength of schedule the SEC is, from a guy coming from the Big 12, I think it certainly has to be considered without question. I would hope that it is.

Q. Coach, what did the season tell you about Mizzou's place in the SEC, and how do you feel about Mizzou's plan moving forward?

COACH PINKEL: Well, we win the east championship, and I felt good about that, and then I felt bad about because we lost the championship. We wanted the SEC championship. We got to do better to win this game, and we didn't do that. I feel responsible about that.

I was excited about our program a year ago. We do what we do, and I'm excited to keep building it.

Q. Coach, where do you go from here looking forward to the bowl game, your last game of the season?

COACH PINKEL: That's what you do. You get a chance. We'll feel better in a couple of days, and there will be a lot out there, and we'll have a great opportunity to finish the season the right way.

Everyone played in this game today. Half of them won, and half of them lost. It's not a whole lot of fun being up here. But there will be another day, and I'm very proud of our football team. I think we've got a really good team and played well in a great conference. Just didn't play our best game today, and I'm responsible for that.

Q. You have, it looks like, Outback, Cotton, Capital One are all in play. Do you have a preference? Is there any place you'd like to go?

COACH PINKEL: Honestly, I haven't thought about that at all. All of my focus is on this game. We'll see where it goes. Wherever we go, we'll be excited about being there.

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