

March 12, 2015



Auburn - 66
Texas A&M - 59

AN INTERVIEW WITH:

AUBURN

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from coach and then take questions for the student-athletes.

COACH PEARL: I told the players last night before the game that this game was not for them. This game was for our fans who have supported us all year long, for former players who watch us, and hope great things for us, and just for the people that didn't give up on us this year to be able to win a SEC tournament game.

But I told them before the game tonight, that this one was going to be for them because 1985 Auburn won four games Chuck Person was on that team. He's in our locker room. He won the SEC tournament championship.

Then in 2000, we had another team that won two ball games. I believe Chris Porter was on that team. He is here to be honored and recognized.

Now this becomes the third team in 30 years of Auburn basketball history to win a couple games and advance in the tournament.

Now maybe that's not something that you want to brag about, but those are the facts. And those facts matter to these guys right here.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll take your questions for any of the student-athletes.

Q. For any of the players, down 10 at halftime, what changed as you guys came out? You took control right there from the start and didn't seem to let Texas A&M get a chance to get back in that game.

CINMEON BOWERS: BP just came in the locker room mad, so when he get mad, it's time to

go. We can't back off. We got a steal and it got us going.

KT HARRELL: We just knew that we had to stay together. The first half we started arguing with each other and we had a lot of breakdowns. But in the halftime, we just talked and told each other that we need to stay together and stay focused. I think we did that and we came out with a lots of intensity.

MALCOLM CANADA: We just came back and we regrouped. We stayed together and we just decided to dictate the rest of the game and to play Auburn basketball, and that's to stay together and just play ball.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll excuse the student-athletes. You can return to the locker room.

We'll take questions for coach.

Q. Can you talk about anything you did defensively at halftime to shut them down in the second half? They made two field goals in the first 18 minutes.

COACH PEARL: Without House, Texas A&M is not as strong from the three. But in the first half, they made five, and they were playing pretty well.

Could they keep that up? We had said that in their 10 losses, in nine of those 10 losses, it was south of 64. And so we knew that if we could somehow keep them in that neighborhood, we talked about what we would need to do to do that. We would have to take care of the ball ourselves.

We only turned it over 10 times. We would have to sometimes be patient. I even thought sometimes we were impatient. We would have to rebound. That was the best rebounding team, rebound margin in the league against the worst team rebound margin. 1 versus 14.

There were 32 missed shots by Texas A&M. 32. We got 27 of those rebounds. I mean, it just boiled down to rebounding. It boiled down to Cinm, I don't know, getting seven defensive and

Jordon getting seven defensive. You look like up and down the stat sheet and with the exception of a couple guys, eight guys at least got a defensive board. That's what it really focused and boiled down to.

Q. After you cited that statistic that this is only the third Auburn team in 30 years to win multiple games in this event, I should ask you two questions. Do you believe in miracles and did you pack five suits?

COACH PEARL: I didn't pack five suits, but I did pack five shirts and ties, so I'm going to have to retread at least one of them, I hope.

You got to show them the road to the finals somehow. And you just got to break it down in small parts. We said, if Jones continues to do what he's done, and that is just dominate us, we got no chance. And Jordon Granger and Alex Thompson and the whole team did a really good job on him and stepped up.

He's a terrific player, Jalen Jones. I thought we did a good job of keeping his touches limited, doubling him when he got it, thought we rotated pretty well.

The other thing I think that can either drive you crazy as a coach or give you reason to be encouraged, it was a different cast of characters tonight. Last night it was Devin and Alex and K.C. The one constant is KT Harrell. He's the one constant. And it's amazing how consistent he has been.

Sort of like what happens. Sometimes all things aren't equal, all things aren't equal when we play because we're giving some things away. But we got number one, and you don't. And there are times when he plays like that on the floor. All of a sudden you look out there and go, Boy, this is really an interesting game. KT Harrell is taking it over. Particularly with his ability to score.

Q. You had said a couple weeks ago that you have had teams that have won more that you had less fun coaching. So, when this team does win, what does that do for you personally?

COACH PEARL: I think it does a couple things. First of all, this hasn't been fun. So I want to correct the word. I'm not correcting you, I have appreciated this team more than some others that I've had that won more, because of all the adversity they faced and they have just not quit. I've been telling everybody they have not quit and

most people believe me, but now you see the results of it. You see the results of it.

And so again, this one here, not about me at all, it's not. It's about these kids and just how they're trying to represent. We just want Auburn basketball to be somewhat relevant in the SEC again.

We weren't this year. We weren't. We're trying to, we're trying to be relevant now that we're in post-season.

Q. After the game, you went to the Auburn locker room and you happened to walk across to the Tennessee players and gave them some word of encouragement. I guess now that your game's, over do you get from being a coach to now being a fan?

COACH PEARL: Seeing Josh Richardson and just want continuing -- I do this with all players. I do this with all players. When I go through the line, win or lose, I try not to just do a drive-by. Sometimes I'll say something to a student-athlete that may, you know, encourage them. And I thought a lot of the year that Tennessee had and particularly Josh Richardson's development as a player. I didn't recruit Josh, never coached him, but obviously I'm a fan.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you.
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