

**March 14, 2015**



Arkansas - 60  
Georgia - 49

AN INTERVIEW WITH:

## ARKANSAS

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

COACH ANDERSON: Well, first I was proud of our guys. I thought seemed like we were playing on empty there to start the game off. I'm sure that with Mark and his team, it was the same. It was a probably a defensive struggle. Offensive struggle to score the ball.

But I thought our defense was pretty good, when you give up 17 points. Our offense was not that entertaining. Then, of course, we injected a freshman by the name of Nick Babb, and I thought he really gave us an injection of energy. That really just trickled over into the second half.

So it was a defensive game, and 60-49, that's what Georgia, they like that tempo.

But I still thought our pressure defense was effective in this game. They were short-handed without Gaines. And we had a young man Anton Beard, he twisted his ankle a little bit last night, but played on a lot of guts.

But it was a hard fought game. We get a chance to go to the championship game. That's what we came up here for, and our guys are looking forward to the opportunity and the challenge of playing a great Kentucky team.

THE MODERATOR: Take questions for the student-athletes, please.

**Q. For both you guys, Bobby went 1-14. Obviously he never plays like that. What do you think of the way you guys responded to his struggles and still win the game?**

MICHAEL QUALLS: Just Wee Hogs, you know this is exactly what we were talking about yesterday. This team is bigger than me and Bob, anybody. Everybody can step up in any given time. Like coach said, Nick Babb stepped up, played some big time minutes.

It's tough. You get a very good player like Bob is, everybody is going to throw their best shot at you. So they did a good job of trying to contain him, but was glad to see the other players on our team very step up and fill his role.

ANTHLON BELL: Coach, always says our team is built for tournament play. So just need the bench to step up and players step up and get big time minutes, it was big for us.

**Q. For either or both of you, when the brackets came out, how much were you guys looking forward to possibly another chance of playing Kentucky?**

MICHAEL QUALLS: We don't really worry about other teams, just worry about bettering ourselves. Of course, they left a bad taste in our mouths, so we're not shying away from the moment, we're not shying away from playing them. It just it happens like that. You just got to come out and focus on us and how we can be better and just play Arkansas-brand basketball.

**Q. It's funny, you mentioned Arkansas-brand basketball you're the only member of the starting five who isn't from the great state of Arkansas. I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about the bond that the Arkansas players have and also how does for you coming from a different state, what that experience is like for you?**

MICHAEL QUALLS: Arkansas showed me lots of love from the fans, to the coaches, to the team, to the university. Ever since I've been here, I felt welcome. Like you say, I was from LSU, I mean, Louisiana, so I was kind of a LSU fan, coming up.

Actually, watching Georgia, I don't know if y'all remember him, but Travis Leslie. I ain't really watched basketball too much, but he was a high flier, so I kind of knew about Georgia back then.

So, you know, it's cool playing against Mark and just being able to be a part of the SEC.

**Q. For either player, obviously Kentucky's got a whole lot of fans here. It almost seems like a home game for them. Is it important for either one of you guys or does it matter to go into this looking as an underdog and a road game and that sort of mentality, us against the world, or have you thought about it in that way?**

ANTHLON BELL: We just want to come in and play basketball. We always play each game with a chip on our shoulder. Like coach says, a log on our shoulder. So we just come in and play hard. We know we can get a good chance to beat them.

**Q. For the both players, Arkansas only has one SEC tournament title in its history and that was 15 years ago. What would it mean for you guys to bring home another tournament title?**

MICHAEL QUALLS: Major. That will be a great accomplishment for the state and this team. It just shows the hard work that we put in in the offseason, waking up 5 a.m., running, working hard every day. Every day we put into this, the losses, the tough losses that we have taken, and, yet we're still in this situation that we're in right now.

So, it shows you the growth and the expansion that we have had, that coach has had since he's been here. Every year we get a little bit better. So he's doing the right things and we just are trying to move in the right direction.

ANTHLON BELL: Yeah, it will be big. Coming in and just getting the opportunity to play in a championship game. But if we get a chance to win that game, it will be big for the university and even the state. So we come in and play hard, we know what we can do.

**Q. For both guys, what do you guys have to do tomorrow that you weren't able to do at Lexington to have a shot to beat Kentucky?**

ANTHLON BELL: We got to make them uncomfortable. We got to make them big guys run and just play our brand of basketball. Down in

Lexington we played kind of on our heels. We know we just got to come in and just play hard.

MICHAEL QUALLS: Not kind of, we did play on our heels. We didn't play tenacious. We get after it. That's how we play. We're supposed to be a tough-nosed team. We turned the ball over. We just didn't play like how we can play, and we're capable of playing.

So I believe if we come out and we play how we're capable of playing, then everything else will fall into place. That's just hands down.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll excuse you to the locker room and take questions for coach.

**Q. This was the lowest scoring point total you've had in a win all season. Does this show that this team can win in a variety of ways, it doesn't have to just outgun and outshoot everybody?**

COACH ANDERSON: I think if you watch our team throughout the course of the year, you've seen that. You've seen last night, you saw the tale of two halves. Tonight, you saw a team that was struggling offensively.

But I think that the constant denominator was our defense. I thought our defense was really good. So, offense comes and goes. You win championships with defense.

So, that's what I poured into these guys since day one. It seemed like they're starting to really pick up on it and they're really taking it to heart.

**Q. Can you take anything away from that last game at Kentucky and does it translate into what will happen tomorrow?**

COACH ANDERSON: I think our guys, it was a learning experience for our guys to go in that environment. I had some guys that never been in that environment. The year before, we took some guys in there that had a pretty good experience, so going in there different year, different team.

But number one, we didn't shoot the ball well. And as our guys said, we played on our heels. I thought Kentucky did most of the attacking. Before you know it, it just went like that.

For the first half, it just seemed like it was a Kentucky, do what you want to do. In the second half, I thought it was a little bit better. But at the same time, they had the game well in hand.

It's going to be a great opportunity, but it's a tremendous challenge to play against the best team in the country. And they happen to be in our conference, so...

But it tells me that we're playing in the championship game. They want to get to that championship game, we're in the championship game and our guys are going to go out there and leave it on the floor. I feel we're a much better team than when we played them early in the year.

**Q. You always talk about your bench, you're made for March because of that. Tonight the bench played 72 minutes. It's the most minutes the bench has played since Auburn. How important was it?**

COACH ANDERSON: I thought that was a big key. If you talk about the difference in that game, I thought our bench play was very critical in that game, whether it be Babb, whether it be Anthlon Bell, I thought he came out and just really, really got going, knocked down shots for us. I thought Jacorey Williams and Moses Kingsley in the second half, they settled down. They had a lot of thinking going on in that first half.

But this was a game I admired. And I told the guys, I said, We're going to need you because those guys, Bobby and Mike and Ky, Ky didn't play as much yesterday, but Beard and Alandise they played a lot of minutes last night. And they played really hard.

So it's hard to come back and bounce right back the next day and to play the way we want to play. So it was great to see our guys come out and play with that edge, play with that energy, and specifically in the second half.

But I thought they did a good job in the first half until we can get some offense going. Offense wasn't going, then all of a sudden our offense picked it up.

**Q. Bobby's been so consistent this year, 31 out of 32 games in double figures. Then he has a game like today. What were you thinking? And you guys still won by 11.**

COACH ANDERSON: He's human. That's what I said. He's human. The guy's been so consistent. He's been like a machine. But Bobby, the beauty of it is, look at the all the other things he did. He didn't score now, it wasn't because he wasn't trying. So I thought he was pressing a little bit early on.

But when you look at his numbers, the rebounding, the contested shots, his activeness

out there, it just tells me he's the ultimate team player. I keep saying that. That's pretty good when you can have a guy that's your leading scorer, the Player of the Year in your league. I think he had one field goal today, right? One field goal. 1 for 14, but he still impacts the game in a mighty way.

**Q. You mentioned Babb. He hadn't scored against an SEC team all year, 19 games including the last night game. He scores five for you in five minutes at a time when the offense is struggling. How surprised were you at him and just how big a lift was that?**

COACH ANDERSON: I just had a gut about it. I told him earlier at the hotel when we were leaving, I said, You got to step it up tonight, you're going to have to play. Be ready. I'm going to call you today.

So he was ready. He went out and did all the things I thought he was capable of doing. He played with confidence. But you got to remember now, in practice, he does this every single day. So he's ready to take that next step. So what better opportunity to do it than the SEC championship or in the SEC semi-finals to get to the championship game. We needed an injection. Somebody with some energy. Somebody that could go out and really spark our team, and he was that spark today.

**Q. Kentucky obviously had a pretty good history in the tournament, but it's been a long time since Arkansas played them. Does this feel like old times to you, Arkansas, Kentucky playing for the championship?**

COACH ANDERSON: We'll see after the game. But, no, just, it's like I said, we want to be one of the best teams in the country, and obviously Kentucky is one of the best. So that's how you want to get measured, where we are with our program, with our basketball team.

So, you're right, there's been a tremendous history with Arkansas and Kentucky. And, of course, they're playing at another level right now. So we look forward to the opportunity. We look forward to the challenge. We are just going to go and be who we are. It's a quick turnaround, so our bench will continue to be a big part of what we do tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

COACH ANDERSON: Thank you.

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