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AN INTERVIEW WITH:

AUBURN

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

COACH PEARL: Kentucky is a great basketball team. They're a very complete team. They have got everything it takes. They make shots. They can do things inside and outside. They're dominating from the foul line, both in attempts and finishing. They're unselfish. They defend. I mean, it's the best team I've ever coached against.

So we obviously knew we had our hands full. For our guys we were undersized and undermanned, but we have been that way all along. I'm just proud of the way my guys competed.

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

Q. Antoine, can you talk about what this week was like for you coming back from what you had to deal with and then having this long run in the tournament.

ANTOINE MASON: It was very emotional. I got to thank my teammates, because they kind of calmed me down just being around them, talking and laughing with them. It put me in a better place than I was.

Q. KT and Malcolm, can you talk about the need to shoot really well from three today and that's really something you guys didn't do.

KT HARRELL: We knew we had to knock down shots. We got good look, especially me, I

just couldn't knock them down. I got good looks. But coach always tells us, Take them, take them with confidence, even if you miss one.

So, we ran our stuff and we got good looks. Just couldn't knock them down.

MALCOLM CANADA: Same as KT said. We had good looks, I mean, we got to knock down them shots. But at the same time, we went out there and we played our best and we gave it our all. And like coach had confidence in us to knock down shots, we should have. We live another day. It's fine.

Q. Antoine, can you just talk about getting going today and getting your offense going, and I'm sure you feel like you did your dad proud. Could you just talk about that a little bit.

ANTOINE MASON: Just I think that it had something to do with the longer warm up. I was able to get loose and knock down shots.

Then going against Kentucky, they have size, so you got to play smart. If you're going to attack the bigs, you got to kind of throw your body at them and then finish or pull up in front of them.

So it was a couple of shots that went in early and it gave me confidence.

Q. For any of the three, does it seem at times that Kentucky has seven players on the court?

KT HARRELL: No, it seems like they had five.

Q. KT, how would you compare the atmosphere here today as compared to three weeks ago in Lexington?

KT HARRELL: It pretty much was like a home game for them, right?

I mean, we had some fans there. We're so appreciative for the fans that came and for the fans back at home. They have been around with us from day one. But, yeah, it was a nice crowd for

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Kentucky today.

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

Q. Could you just talk about Antoine and for him to put that behind him and come in and play such a good tournament. I would think that the hard part is now, that there's not basketball for him.

COACH PEARL: Yeah, he talked about it after the game in the sense that when he was back in North York, obviously going through a very difficult time both through his father's illness and then burying his dad, he didn't feel like he belonged there at that time, in the sense that he missed his Auburn family and his Auburn friends. Getting back to Auburn was like therapeutic for him.

When he first came back, his timing was off and he was trying to get things going and you could just see the third and fourth game actually helped him get himself going.

But he's very close to his father and there's no question that as you said in your question, his dad is very proud of him. He represented the family well.

Q. The strides that your program has taken this year, having some success here in Nashville at the SEC tournament and just overall, what kind of strides do you think your program made from start to finish?

COACH PEARL: Well, one of the things we talk about is the history of Auburn basketball. We talk about the 1985 team with Chuck Person and having won four games under Sonny Smith, and that's our SEC tournament championship.

Then you've got Charles Barkley that came in and had a great run and continues to represent Auburn in so many ways. There's some history there. Rex Frederick and John Mengelt and some really terrific players and coaches. It's just recently there hasn't been much success.

These guys here really wanted to try to do something to lay that foundation and feel like they were a part of something that was going to be building. Now it's easier said than done, you have to do it.

Our regular season had a lot to do with the quality of the league. When you look at three double-digit seeds winning in that quarter finals, there just wasn't a break all year long. And yet in spite of getting beat 20 times now, these guys

never quit. They never fell apart. They continued to buy in.

So there were four teams left on Saturday, Kentucky, Arkansas, Georgia, and Auburn. The foundation is laid.

Q. If you had to construct the perfect team to beat Kentucky, what would that team look like and what would a game plan look like? I know that's obviously a total hypothetical.

COACH PEARL: Well, I think it would need to be a team that would be a big physical club that could be able to withstand their size and their dominance. It would have to be a great team.

Wisconsin played against them last year and Wisconsin returns everybody. It's just that Kentucky returns almost everybody and then added to that.

But the teams like Texas A&M or Ole Miss or a Georgia, bigger, stronger more physical teams, could hang with Kentucky. When I was in the league at Tennessee, Kentucky had great players, but always there's something there. Maybe they weren't a great free-throw shooting team one year or they weren't a great 3-point shooting team. There was something that you could go -- weren't good in transition or something. There's nothing there that I can think of.

The other thing, too, is John is running great stuff. The stuff they run is as good as there is in college basketball. It's hard to guard. So even if he didn't have very good players, what he's running is really good. Then when you run it with great players, it's hard to beat.

Q. When did you find out about Bowers? Was it last night or in the afternoon? What was your reaction to that?

COACH PEARL: Well, the decision was made this morning. And I hope that when we complete the investigation that we're okay.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you very much.

COACH PEARL: Thank you.

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