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An Interview With:

TEXAS A&M COACH MARK TURGEON

PETER IRWIN: We're now joined by Mark Turgeon, Texas A&M University. Your opening comments.

COACH TURGEON: Happy to be here. I've been walking around here a little bit easier than the first year. I think I was kind of trying to figure everything out last year. I'm looking forward to this year. Everybody at this point likes the team. We've worked hard. We've stayed relatively healthy. To this point we've had a good spring, good summer, a good fall.

And we're still a little upset the way our season ended the last year. We thought we let one get away, so had a pretty good chip on our shoulder working throughout the summer.

PETER IRWIN: Questions.

Q. Wonder if you could talk about Josh Carter and what you've seen from him in terms of stepping up his leadership ability, because knowing the void that was left with Dominique Kirk, Joseph Jones and Beau leaving?

COACH TURGEON: If you know anything about Josh, he's a quiet person. To get him to say anything sometimes is difficult. But he's a smart kid. He's tried really hard. We've only had one practice so far that wasn't good.

And he really tried to get after the guys, encouraged him to practice harder. I think he's done a nice job in the locker room.

The thing Josh has done a tremendous job is with his work habits, work ethic. He's been really driven since the season ended last year. I think you'll see a big change in his game whether it's dribbling or passing or hopefully shooting the ball the way he did his sophomore season.

He's led in a couple of different ways. So I've been really pleased with Josh and his development over the summer.

Q. For a lot of years people said that the Big 12 needed a national championship in men's basketball got one last year with Kansas. Can that help the league or does that most benefit Kansas?

COACH TURGEON: Oh, no, it helps the league. There's a lot of things that have helped our league. Our television package increased with ESPN. I think that helps your recruiting. Kansas winning. We've had teams in the Final Four, quite a few teams.

That helps. One team in the league can do it, it lets everybody else think they can do it. So, no, I think it was great. I think it was great for the Big 12. Of course, we want to be the team, not just the Jayhawks. Of course, I was partial to them last year when they won it, it was great.

But it was tremendous. And it lets the rest of us know that we can get it done. And it will give us credibility, too, I think. If you look through all the things that the Big 12 has done in the last few years -- I'm not an expert because I'm new in the league -- but I think we've had the second-most teams in the Final Four, maybe the most over the last five or six years. We've had a lot of teams get in.

But when you have a national champion, coming off a great year, I do think it gives you more credibility going into the next season, which might help us as the season goes on and on Selection Sunday.

Q. Can you talk about the strength of the conference in general this season and then the depth of the Big 12 South in particular?

COACH TURGEON: I just thought that league was so good last year. Two teams in the Elite Eight. Some other teams that could have advanced further in the tournament. We had teams that got better as the season went on. I think the depth was pretty good last year. A team like Nebraska, the strides they made as a basketball program.

I thought it was a tremendous league. I

think this year's league, which will be exciting for the fans, will be more wide open. The only thing that's -- what you're getting at, the depth of the South, it's kind of scary. So if you win the league out of the South this year, you've had one heck of a year.

And Oklahoma obviously is going to be really good. Texas, I think, is going to be great again. Baylor's got everybody back but one guy, and they've tasted it now. So they're going to have a great season.

I don't want to forget somebody. Oklahoma State, new coach. Good players, really good players on their team. So I know they'll be excited. I know Pat's excited about his team and I'm excited about my team.

So the South is really tough. And I was looking through the commitments so far. I think 23 of the top 150 Rivals commitments in 2009 are going to the Big 12 and 17 are going to the South.

So South's going to continue to be good. So but with that said, I think the North's getting better too. I think Colorado second year is going to be better. I know Coach McDermott, I've watched him. I know he's going to build a great program. Doc has done a great job. Frank, K-State is going to do well. I think the whole league is going to be better, which should help things in the end.

Q. Can you elaborate on the adjustments you've referenced earlier from last season, what was difficult and how much more comfortable you feel in the position this year?

COACH TURGEON: Well, I'm used to being the most well-liked guy in town everywhere I've been. And it wasn't always the case last year. I followed a guy that did a heck of a job at Texas A&M. So that was different for me. And so I had to adjust to that.

I didn't know the players that well. They didn't know me that well. Now I feel like they know my personality and I know their personality. We know what to expect.

Last year I inherited some new coaches. I was teaching the coaches and players. I think where we are now in practice seven compared to where we were last year at practice seven, how much more comfortable we are with everything we're doing. And we had a heck of a year last year. Third most wins in our school history, and we're an eyelash from a Sweet 16.

But day-to-day just everything is better. Everything is better. Familiar faces, not walking up what's his name again. You know names, you

know people. It's just day-to-day life is so much happier. Family is happier, not in a rental house anymore. Things like that.

So whether we can have another great season remains to be seen. We have to stay healthy. But I just know day to day it's a lot more fun.

Q. Can you tell me what life -- how much better life can be with a seven-footer on your roster than without one, and this one in particular?

COACH TURGEON: Who are you talking about, I don't have any seven-footers. I've got 6'-11" guys. Which guy are you talking about?

Q. James.

COACH TURGEON: James Blasczyk. He's still growing. I just didn't know if anybody knew about him. We signed him so late. That's a good question. I think it all depends on the seven-footer. I've been pleased with James. James is a guy we took late. He's a local guy we took late when DeAndre decided to go pro.

Signed at TCU, they had a coaching change. Watched him in the spring and felt like he could help us. James' best days are still ahead of him. He's got a lot to learn about the game. He came in at 255. Got him down to 225. His body weight was all water.

And so we got that down. Now we're building him back up. The thing I like about James is he fights through fatigue. A lot of big guys will stop. He fights through it, which will give him a chance to be a player some day.

So he's got some skill. Like most freshmen he's got a long way to go defensively and a lot to learn, but eventually he'll help our program.

Q. Could you talk about the other two freshmen, you're about five practices in Dash Harris and David Loubeau?

COACH TURGEON: I think Dash is much further along than David right now. Dash is a pass-first point guard, really fast, very good defender, going to help us tremendously. Yesterday in practice alone he had 11 assists and one turnover.

We're trying to change the way we play. We're trying to play faster. We weren't able to do that last year, and Dash is going to help us do it.

We just have to have somebody to run with him. I love his decision-making. Great on-ball defender. He's just going to help us. He's going to help us and be a part of the rotation and he's a winner.

David Loubeau is a 6'-8", long wing span. Probably the thing he does best is he really rebounds the ball well. Offensively he's a 15- to 17-footer, face-up, knock down those shots and he has a good back to the basket game. Right now his head's spinning. It's going way too fast for him. And we need him to be part of our rotation this year but he's got a long ways to go right now as of today to do that.

But he's got a lot of pride and he gets a little bit better every day but he's got a chance to be a really good one for us down the road.

PETER IRWIN: Thank you, Coach.

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