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An interview with:

COACH FRANK MARTIN

PETER IRWIN: We are now joined by Kansas State Coach Frank Martin. Coach, welcome. And your opening comments.

COACH MARTIN: Just great to be here. Excited to know where I'm at every single day at 3:30 in the afternoon for once, just around our players, our team and doing my job of trying to get our guys better to compete in another crazy Big 12 season. That's what it's all about.

We're excited. We've made progress every year we've been there, and we look forward to trying to do the same this year.

Q. Tell us about the new guys you got on the team this year.

COACH MARTIN: Well, the first one -- I'll start with who is the oldest one of the crew, which is Fred Asprilla. Freddy, he is a grown man. He has played college basketball before at the Division I level and he understands a lot of things about the game at the collegiate level. And he gives us something that we haven't had offensively. If he can learn to defend like Colon did for us and play with the nonstop energy Luis played for us, then he can become a heck of a player, because offensively he's real good.

We need him to learn the other side of the floor and nonstop, relentless attack we ask our players to have.

Shane Southwell, Nino Williams, two athletic, long perimeter guys who just -- I'm extremely pleased with right now. I couldn't be happier with those two kids, where they are at after six practices.

And then Will Spradling. Will just -- you can tell that he was raised by a father who was a coach, understands. When you explain things to him, he picks them up. He has an understanding for the game and absolutely shoots the cover off

the ball. So those guys, we are excited about them.

Q. Fred has been away from the four-year level for a couple years. How is he doing in terms of making the transition from being in a junior college environment back to a four-year school environment?

COACH MARTIN: I think it's been easier for him because he experienced a four-year environment before the junior college environment. So it made him thirsty to get back to Division I basketball. But he has been great. He's lost somewhere in the vicinity of 55 to 57 pounds, depends what time of the day it's at. But since he got on campus back in June, I mean, he looks completely different. He is definitely working his way into someone that should be able to help our basketball team this year.

Q. Can you just talk a little bit about handling the expectations, picked first in the league, Jacob is conference player of the year.

COACH MARTIN: I think that's what anyone that has pride works toward, is to try to be good. I don't like working to hide behind doors. I mean, if we are going to do this, let's do it right.

And Jacob has been unbelievable in the commitment he has made to grow as a human being, as a player, to lead our program. He's embraced that -- a lot of players won't embrace those responsibilities. They don't want to work to take a chance to be special because you can't guarantee people that you are going to succeed if you work. But Jacob was willing to take that chance. And he has worked, understanding that there is no guarantee for a reward at the end of the day.

And we're still not there. I mean, all the preseason stuff is great, especially when it comes from the coaches that you compete against. That means that the people that you have to go beat respect your players and the way they play where they vote you number 1. They don't do that because you are a nice guy. So that's a

compliment to our kids.

But, still, we got a ways to go before any of that can become reality.

Q. How would you describe your coaching style/philosophy?

COACH MARTIN: I don't know. Probably fun for you to watch. I don't know. I try to teach kids, and I demand that people maximize who they are. I don't accept people not striving to be the best that they can be. That's kind of what I have been doing my whole life. I just -- I don't accept people doing less than what they are capable of. And I demand that they maximize who they can be so they can take advantage of every opportunity that comes their way the rest of their life.

So I think a lot of people make the mistake that they put the wagon ahead of the horse. What do I mean by that? Well, that you put all the importance on winning "the" game. It is all about winning, but the importance should be on all the things that happen before the game, you know, all the experiences, the conversations, the practice time, the preparation, the weight room sessions, everything that takes place before the game, that's where you put in the time.

You either prepare to go win that game or you don't, we will try and win. We don't line up to just have fun. We line up to win. But I just know this, winning is a heck of a lot more fun than losing. So I'd rather do the work and take a chance to win.

Q. I know that you preached all last season and talked to your players about how tough it is to make a run in the NCAA tournament. Curious to see how the expectations match what you thought it was going to be like in getting to the Elite 8 and maybe what you guys learned along the way.

COACH MARTIN: You line up and you win your first game and then you are down 10-0 at the 17-minute mark of your second game, it kind of makes you understand that there's not a free minute in the NCAA tournament.

So, the difference between the NCAA tournament and the rest of the season is that when you are in that tournament, everyone is good. There's not a free pass in that tournament.

Number two, every team that is good there understands that the next time they don't succeed, their year is over. So everyone is more willing to play every possession of the game. So you don't have free possessions because no one wants their season to end.

So if you don't play at your best every game, you are not going to win. That's what makes it so hard to make a run in that tournament.

When you watch the people that win in that tournament every year -- and I'm talking about the teams with different players -- that's what is so impressive, that they can continue to go in that tournament, continue to win because it is so hard to win once you get in that thing.

Q. Just talk about how you have seen Curt grow since he has joined your program from UConn, both in his body and physically.

COACH MARTIN: First of all, when we decided to recruit him and offer him a scholarship, the thing that was refreshing is that he never once blamed UConn or anyone else for his lack of success there. He accepted every bit of responsibility for him not having success there, and that was refreshing to me. That gave me the belief that he has been humbled and now he was looking to do better.

And then since he has been on campus, he has been great. I mean, he has got a college degree. I mean, he got a college degree last June. If you would have asked anyone if he had ever -- when he entered school as a freshman that he would have a college degree in four years, they would say that's not happening. He went out and had a heck of a year for us.

Everyone talks that we were a one-dimensional team, that we were the two little guys shooting every three. Truth be told, Curt gave us an unbelievable presence at the rim, that as he continued to feel comfortable with who he was and continued to mature and understand what we wanted, you know, set a school record in blocked shots, shot a high percentage from the field, rebounded over six a game. He has got to do that better. But given the inconsistencies early in the year, that's not that bad of a number.

But I couldn't be prouder. I couldn't be prouder. Now he has got a big responsibility on his shoulders now. He has got to be a leader for this team. He has got to embrace that, and he has got to go do it every day. We can't have the inconsistencies from him that we had early last year and expect to be good. He has got to be good from day one.

Q. I wanted to talk to you about, what is the feeling like -- how different is it from maybe

a few years ago around Kansas State right now? And how are your players adjusting to that?

COACH MARTIN: I don't -- I think it is the same. I remember the first day I was on campus. I was eating dinner, Coach Huggins, myself, Dalonte Hill, who had just flown in to accept the job, we were at a restaurant in Aggieville and there was a herd of people standing outside taking pictures of the restaurant. And the first time we went out for Midnight Madness, we were finishing up our first practice ever at K-State and they opened them doors and then, I mean, 10,000 people body surfing down the bleachers to get to the front row and it hasn't stopped since.

Our fans have been phenomenal. And that's why you have seen the bond that you see between our fans and players. It has been great. And it gets back to what I have said. On the outside, people might think we weren't going to be any good or whatever it may be, which is fine. We understand that's part of it. But internally, our people have believed in us from day one and that makes it a whole lot of fun.

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