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An interview with:

COACH MARK TURGEON

PETER IRWIN: We are now joined by Texas A&M Coach Mark Turgeon. Welcome and your opening comments?

COACH TURGEON: Thank you. It is always great to be back in Kansas City unless you are playing the Jayhawks in this building. It is a lot of fun to be here.

Excited about the team, we all are as coaches this time of year. Have some good talent. Just have to mesh it together.

I have been pleased so far. I think we have a chance to, like last year's team, just continue to get better and better and have a lot of pieces. It is just putting them all together. Had pretty good leadership so far out of our seniors.

And, once again, it is a fun team to be around. I got a lot of high-character kids, and I enjoy being around them and going to practice every day.

Q. In the leadership category, I'm assuming that falls to Dash and B.J. Would you talk about what you have seen there and also Dash's bouncing back from the wrist surgery.

COACH TURGEON: I think Dash and B.J. have been our leaders. We have had a lot of people at practice early season, and they always come up to me and say, Boy, your guards do a great job leading, talking about Dash and B.J.

And I think Nate Walkup has taken a leadership role, played a lot of minutes, has a lot of respect among his teammates. And so he's doing it.

Dash's injury, it has been a long haul. He tore a ligament. Took a while to figure it out. Had surgery in June, and actually was just cleared to play and start shooting about two weeks ago. So he had been out since the season ended last year.

But he is a young man that is never out of shape. He is just a little bit rusty dribbling the ball and passing. But defensively he is at a high level. By the time we start playing games, he will be 100%.

Q. Talk about any of the freshmen -- it has been only a week -- but any of the freshmen jump out of you that say this guy is going to contribute at this point?

COACH TURGEON: Yeah, all three freshmen are really good players for us.

Kourtney Roberson is probably the furthest along at 6' 9", 245 pounds, really skilled. Offensively, really has a great feel. He can score in a variety of ways. So I think he's probably the first long and ready. He has a long ways to go defensively, but in our six, seven, eight practices, however many we have, he has come a long ways defensively.

Keith Davis, you know, almost 6' 10" now, continues to grow, has a great understanding defensively and a great teammate and a great player. I think he is a young man that as the season goes on will play more and more for us and has a chance to be good.

And then our last freshman, Daniel Alexander from your area, he is a weapon. The kid can just flat out shoot it from deep. His biggest thing is physically he has got to put on more weight and get stronger. But in time he is going to be a tremendous player for us.

Q. Can you just talk about -- because for four years Bryan Davis upfront as kind of a stabilizing influence. How do you see the guys upfront kind of filling that role that Bryan had for you guys?

COACH TURGEON: Bryan had a great career and had a great senior year. We will do it by committee. We went out and signed four 6' 8" or taller players last year. Three made it to campus. I see David Loubeau, much improved player.

Ray Turner really came on last year. Ray has gotten a lot better. I see him being a lot like

Bryan. I think that Bryan -- Bryan was such an intelligent player on top of it, especially on the defensive end. And then you had Kourtney, 6' 9", 245 and you have Keith Davis, 6' 10", we got some pretty good size. We have great length at the guard with Khris Middleton about 6' 8 1/2". Naji about 6' 5". I think we will do it by committee.

We could put Bryan on a guy and say, Shut him down, and Bryan could do it and not foul. These young kids probably won't be able to do that without fouling for a while, but we will do it by committee.

I like our inside presence. I think it has a chance to be pretty good. I think it is definitely a Big 12 presence, and we will get better as the year goes on.

Q. Talk a little bit about B.J. Holmes and how he's developed for you over these years. He seems like a guy that has been there for a long time and just every year it gets a little bit better.

COACH TURGEON: Yeah, he has. That's what players need to do. You know, I have said this many times to local media. When I first started coaching B.J., I wasn't sure he was big enough to play in the Big 12 and obviously he has proven me wrong.

Made the biggest improvement from his freshman to sophomore year and made a lot of big shots for us. Now, I didn't think he could play point guard when he first came into our program. Now he plays two positions. B.J. is a security blanket for us. He is always in the right spot. He is always doing the right thing and understands how to play. So the kid -- he is 5' 10" and he's not overly fast and athletic. He has had a great career. He's real smart.

He has gotten so much better defensively. He has always been a great team defender, but he has become a better individual defender. We played in this building last year and Dash was hurt and he had to guard Sherron and did a great job for 30 minutes until we made Sherron mad and he made a few shots. A lot of those weren't on B.J. It was in transition and different things.

He has become a much better defender. He is just a great kid, fun to be around. I think he is going to be a great coach some day.

Q. When you reset in terms of talent as much as you did this offseason and also leadership, do you sort of reset expectations

going into the year and what are your expectations going into the season?

COACH TURGEON: Well, yeah, I think you kind of reset every year. Personally our expectation is to be really good again. I think we have built a program that has been really consistent. We won a lot of games every year and we expect to do it again this year. We have talent. It is just bringing it all together. We will be a little bit different than last year's team. We will be a little bit longer, a little bit taller.

But, no, our expectations are to be good. We realize there are good teams in our league, but we expect to have another great year. We expect to be a part of the NCAA tournament and hopefully go a little further than we did last year.

Q. You mentioned David Loubeau who probably improved from start to finish last year as much as anybody in the league. Where do you see his game going now?

COACH TURGEON: It continues to get better. He was just dominant in practice yesterday. His game is expanding. We are trying to get him to shoot more jump shots, make it harder for us to be guarded. Even stretch it out to the three-point line. He is one of our better shooters, which sounds crazy because he is so good on the low block.

But he has improved a lot. He really worked on his body this summer, stretching. He is more athletic, stronger, and he is just a tremendous scorer and left, right hand, 15 feet, even stretch it to three.

And he made the most improvement defensively and will challenge defensively. His biggest problem when he got here is he couldn't guard the post or he couldn't guard a perimeter guy. Now I think he can guard both. Just great, great improvement. We are expecting David to -- if not, he should be our best player this year.

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