

## Head Coach Bruce Pearl

### *Opening Statement ...*

"First off, I just want to thank all of our fans and the Auburn Family. We had a great crowd for being on break. I also want to thank everyone for the continued support of AURLIVE, Auburn Men's Basketball's fight against cancer awareness detection. We are going to be keeping the funds at home. We are going to be supporting about five hospitals in Alabama and one in Tennessee, because we were playing Tennessee. It was a great event from that standpoint. The program obviously means a lot to me. It has been a long time since we have beaten Tennessee and I guess the last time that Auburn beat them, I was coaching at Tennessee and we lost the battle of the boards that night too. That one we had to have. I thought we defended extremely well. I thought that Tennessee could beat us from three and not the two and whether we challenged their shots at three or they just missed a lot, I don't know. That was part of our game plan. I thought we did a pretty good job executing to be able to shoot 53%."

### *On doing well even though Tennessee had a lot of offensive rebounds ...*

"They had 19 second chance points and we had five, so they beat us by 14 there. They are a very athletic team and they lead the league in blocked shots. Some of those offensive rebounds were in the same possession. We have to do a better job ourselves of competing on the boards. Those are two of the smaller teams in the league. We aren't very big and they aren't either. They just fly around and they played with great energy. We are just going to have to improve in that area."

### *On Bryce Brown in the second half ...*

"He was great. Bryce was the only guy who could cover (Kevin) Punter. That is even a stretch. What is exciting about Bryce Brown is that he is not only a great shooter but he is also an excellent defender. To be a young player and be able to do those two things, he is going to play a lot of basketball here at Auburn and he is going to put up a lot of numbers. He is now going to get a different scouting report. This is back-to-back games without T.J. Dunans where he is obviously a guy that I needed to go to. We have gone to him and he has delivered."

### *On the injury situation of the guards ...*

"TJ Lang took a pretty good hit and has concussion symptoms. We will go through all of the protocol and see where he is at. We are obviously pretty down in the back court as far as numbers are concerned, but other guys have stepped up. Patrick Keim stepped up in a big way. He brought us great energy and great effort. One thing about Pat is that I know he will defend and when you have a guy out there defending like he does, it's contagious. He does for us, in that regard, what Tahj Shamsid-Deen does. Offensively I thought he was a little more relaxed and he gave Kareem (Canty) some good spells out there."

### *On if this game was more emotional than last year's return to Knoxville ...*

"It was more emotional in Knoxville for sure. If you have worked anywhere for an extended period of time, worked the kind of hours that we worked and went on the emotional highs and lows, it's hard to drive up to the arena. It is hard to go through the same doors that you went

through in victory and defeat and I get pretty attached. From our standpoint that was more difficult, but it was a meaningful game and it was one that we had to have.”

*On Bryce Brown gaining more trust ...*

“I would say that this is what I expected when I recruited him. There was a delay in him showing me this in the preseason. I thought he had a great summer and then this fall he had some setbacks and didn’t show this. I wasn’t going to give it to him. I was going to make him show me and he has, so I am excited. Like I said, I saw it in recruiting, saw it in the summer and I didn’t see it in the fall and that is why it has taken him a long time to get his role.”

*On the learning process of Horace Spencer playing with fouls ...*

“Horace played 18 minutes for us tonight. I believe the plus/minus chart will have him at about a plus 8 or maybe even a plus 10. We are a better team with him on the floor. Offensively, there are times he will turn it over and not be at the right place at the right time, but he is active. When he was not out there on the floor, we had a tough time rebounding. When he was out there early, all those Tennessee misses were his rebounds and then when he wasn’t out there they were killing us on the glass. Horace is making progress, but he and Bryce Brown are both freshman starters in that rotation right now.”

*On Cinmeon Bowers struggling ...*

“One of the things that I try to do is to expect more out of my best players and try to take pressure off of guys that are able to contribute, but not dominate. I believe that Cinmeon is one of those guys that can dominate games and he has been inconsistent. When I say that, I say it with great praise in that he can dominate games. For us to be able to win, we obviously need him to. For example, tonight Armani Moore is a guy that you can count on every night at 6’4 or 6’5. For whatever reason, he didn’t have it, Admiral Schofield had it and he played a more dominant role. So, for Tennessee if they almost beat us here on the road, without Armani doing the things that he does, that’s a good sign. If we can win without Cinmeon Bowers doing to things that he does, that’s a good sign also.”

*On if Hunter is the best offensive player he has faced this season...*

“He is the best offensive guard we have faced so far for sure. He’s a really tough cover. Bryce Brown did a really good job against him, and he just he just took advantage of everybody else. Full advantage.”

*On if he thought Kareem did a good job at not trying to do too much...*

“Kareem did a really good job at trying to share the ball. Tennessee trapped the ball in his hands tonight more than we’ve seen. I think it’s a good strategy because he’s a guy that with the ball he can beat you. I thought we made shots to make them pay for that a little bit, but I will say that we did not respond as well as we’ll need to the next turn. First time that’s really happened with consistency. We can take better advantage of that the next time that we see them. Kareem does let the game come to him offensively. He is unselfish and obviously had a very quiet 20 points tonight.”

*On Jordan Granger...*

“He has a big role on the team right now and it’s in a completely different position than last year. Jordan is playing that guard spot because we are so banged up at the guard spot. Defensively, he’s quick enough to be able to defend his position and use his length to guard. Offensively, he doesn’t have the same mismatches that he had last year getting shots. If you remember, he was a pretty good four-man. When he’s being guarded by smaller players, he doesn’t get as many opportunities. Jordan’s focus this week, is ‘alright, this is SEC play’, as one of my very few returning guys that understand the difference between what we did to become battle-tested and some-what battle-worn, in our coverage portion, Jordan was like ‘alright, it’s time if we play.’ And we thought his leadership was big. From my stand point, we’ve won four of our five last SEC games. We’ve won four out of five.”

**Auburn Player Quotes**  
**#1 Kareem Canty G, Jr.**

*On how it feels to win a game that is important to Coach Pearl;*

"It felt good so he can relax a little. He was on our back about every little thing that usually he doesn't get mad about, but we kind of knew that was because it was a big game coming up. I'm happy we got that win for him."

*On what he and the other guys on the court think when Bryce Brown gets into a rhythm like he did today;*

"Find him until he misses. That's what I was thinking, because it's fun to see other guys get into a rhythm like that, especially a freshman. When he hit a couple in a row, it was like 'just keep finding him' until he misses. Like I told you all earlier, I wasn't going to put a lot of pressure on myself. As long he played well and everyone else played well we have a chance to win the league."

*On scoring 20 points on 12 shots;*

"I only took 12 shots? We one, but there is one thing I did bad: I had four turnovers. I don't like that, at all."

*On if turning the ball over so much was on Tennessee or them;*

"I'd say it's us. We try to take care of the ball. We try to value possession as much as we can. Try to get under the rim so our bigs can rebound it and we don't really try to make crazy passes as much as we did last year."

**#12 Tyler Harris F, Gr.**

*On how it feels to win a game that is important to Coach Pearl;*

"I wanted to beat them just as bad as Bruce wanted to beat them. It gives me something to talk about, to brag on to my brother. I'm just glad we were able to get the win and we got that one for BP because I know he wanted that."

*On finding a way to win the game despite being short-handed at guard;*

"I think this is a part of our team that we need to continue to build on, just picking each other up when one shoulder falls, and in the last couple of games from being in Hawaii and then today, you can see that we're improving with the guys stepping up for the guys that are hurt. Like Bryce and Jordon – they have more confidence as they have more minutes on the court, and it's really helping us a lot. It just shows that when we're healthy what we can really do."

*On what difference Horace Spencer's presence makes;*

"He brings that defensive presence. No one really wants to go into that paint and go up against Horace. His ability to block shots and being in the right places really helps us as a defensive team. He's going to continue to grow as a player and doing that role to help us out in the next couple of games."

*On how often he talks to his brother, Tobias, and what he tells him about Bruce Pearl;*  
“He’s just always talking about how Bruce is a good guy and always wants to help his players, wants his players to succeed and win. Me and my brother just talk about what to do in the game, what I can improve on. We just talk about basketball.”

*On if Kevin Punter is the best player that have seen this year;*  
“He had a great game. He’s a great player. We guarded him hard, and he’s definitely going to be a top contender in this conference.

*On how frustrating it was to see Tennessee making so many rebounds, particularly on offense;*  
“That’s what they do. They attack the glass, they get on the offensive glass and they did well against us today. We try to make up for that on offense and when it comes down to crunch time, like at the end. Just getting the ones that matter at the end of the game.”

## **#2 Bryce Brown G, Fr.**

*On what has helped him have three big games in a row;*  
“Really just trusting my teammates and letting things come to me. Getting everything on defense first and then the offense comes. Trusting my captains.”

*On what was going through his mind when he went on a big run in the second half;*  
“Really I was just feeling it at the moment. My point guard, my four-man, they hit me in the right spots. I just got open and knocked the shot down. The head coach trusted me and the assistant coaches trusted me to make shots and I did.”

*On if he feels like he is earning more of Bruce’s trust;*  
“It feels that way but I’m going to continue building that.”

*On what he thinks about having to step up since so many teammates are injured;*  
“I always feel like I can do it, but I just didn’t feel like it was my time. I had a few older guys in front of me, so when it was my time and my number was called I stepped up to the occasion.”

## Tennessee Head Coach Rick Barnes

### *Opening statement...*

"I'm disappointed in the way we played in the first half and even throughout the game we just don't execute the system really. We have to fight for everything we can get down on the defensive end and we gave away too much on the offensive end. When you take bad threes, I think it begins to put pressure on you where you're open and you're not sure whether you're supposed to take them. We started the game in a bad way, got back in it, then we came out in the second half and totally defensively weren't very good. When that happens, we just don't do what we need to do on the offensive end. What's most disappointing is we've played enough games now that guys should understand their roles, and what we should know we're going to get from night to night from certain guys. We're still not at that point."

### *On Armani Moore's performance...*

"You get to this time of year, and there's enough tape out there, people are going to scout certain things and do certain things against you. Defensively today I thought he had an off game today for as well as he played the other night. Come out for the start of the second half, he was the guy that was involved in most of those quick eight points. You can have some bad nights shooting the ball as an individual and as a team; you can't have bad nights defensively, and we just had too many breakdowns that way too. They obviously shot the ball well and they were comfortable with what they were doing. With all that said, we had some chances and still didn't execute the way we have to when we need to do it."

### *On offensive rebounds...*

"Rebound wise, we were there. I look at our 12 turnovers and I look at the guys who were turning it over, certain guys were trying to do too much there, but we just took some bad shots. We did go get some of those, but still Kevin (Punter Jr.), who does a good job, his free throws were big during that point in the game, we left some more points right there when we needed it. But, they beat us, and I think they did a better job of executing their offense. Defensively, we shoot 38% for the game; I think we're better than that. I think when you take bad shots and you get guys with a mindset that they have to score to make something happen in the game, I think it really throws a lot of things out of character."

### *On driving the ball because of shooting struggles...*

"We said that after the first timeout. We said that's what we wanted to do. Even with that, certain guys when they're open, we want them to shoot the ball. We know (Kevin) Punter and (Armani) Moore can shoot the ball too, like I said to him, I just want him to make his layups, forget the threes. He was 2-for-6. He missed two or three point blank layups that he's got to make. We got to make those baskets, and we were trying to do that, and they [Auburn] were backing off certain guys. If we take rhythm threes, I'll shoot them all when we're in rhythm, and we weren't. Like Reese's three at the start of the game, that can't happen. I think Shembari (Phillips) shot one in the second half, can't happen. Those are the ones, and it's a very fine line between winning and losing. I don't think we, as a team yet, understand what's winning and losing. Everybody talks about 'knowing what goes into winning', I think you've got to

understand what goes into losing first, and we don't do that yet because if we did, we wouldn't give away the opportunities we have on the offensive end, defensively we know we're going to have to scramble and do some things. Again, we were just terrible on the offensive end."

*On teaching understanding losing...*

"We've talked about it over and over, and some of the plays I'll think about, simple plays, things I don't know if you can simulate like Derek Reese and Detrick Mostella throwing the ball away in the back-court. Shembari (Phillips) was at the point and he didn't come back and get the ball, so those are the plays that are tough because we don't need to help anybody, because there's a very small margin of error, and we don't need to help anybody. We just keep hurting ourselves some, and again I don't want to take anything away from Auburn, because you get into conference play and you got to win games, and they won the game. You got to win them any way you can, and they found a way to get it done and we didn't."

*On what facing Bruce Pearl meant to Tennessee...*

"Honestly, I didn't think about it at all. I like Bruce, I think he works hard, I think he's a good coach, but that never crossed my mind one way or the other. I've coached against other coaches that coached at other places, but I never thought about it."

*On offensive struggles...*

"We scored 40 points in the paint, and you can do it different ways, and that gets down to execution. It's not like we're going to be able to throw the ball in there with someone's back to the basket maybe. But there's different ways to do it. We think that if we can get (Kevin) Punter into the middle of the lane, he's going to score some baskets. There's different ways to get in there and go towards the basket and we did do some of those things okay today but overall, when we shoot and get a rebound we have too many people stand around like 'what are we doing next', well take charge and say 'okay let's get reset'. I think KP (Kevin Punter Jr.) worked his rear off for us to run the point position, and that's a hard thing to do if you've never done it, and he's still struggling to run a team and it's something he'll battle with all day long. I look at those 28 threes and I don't think we should've shot, I know in the first half, six of them. That gives us a chance to do something else but we just settled. There's a very fine line there where we need to shoot threes and we got guys that are capable. If it's not a rhythm three, we can't do it."

*On Kareem Canty...*

"I thought he made a couple of tough shots, and they made some tough threes, and we contested a number of them throughout the game. I think with the no five second rule that makes it tough with a guy that can do that. We've coached against guys like that through the years. He definitely got the green light, maybe the greenest of the green. He's capable of making tough shots and he does."

*On bouncing back from tough start to season...*

“I really do like this team but I think the biggest key though is we have to understand exactly who we are. I think we have to understand exactly what we have to do with roles every single night, can be no surprises. We got to become a more cohesive team. We try to spend time defensively and I think it’s hardest on the offensive end because we know we weren’t guarding at all. When a team shoots 46% from three, and our big deal is trying to guard guys inside, we worked a lot on doubling the post, which they didn’t put it in there very much today and the fact is I do like these guys but I want to win, and I want them to want to win, and they’ve got to take a good hard look at themselves and know what they’ve got to do to help their team do that.”



## Tennessee Player Quotes

### Kevin Punter Jr., Guard, Sr.

#### *On overcoming offensive struggles...*

"It's hard, especially shots we work on and we know we're ahead and we're missing, it's a big deal."

#### *On offensive struggles rattling confidence...*

"We try not to let it mentally mess with you. Just try and come back the second half and try to play clean and focus in on everything we're doing."

#### *On scoring streak in the first half...*

"Just being aggressive, [Coach Barnes] said something to me that kind of got me going a little bit. That was really it, just tried to hit my spots, and just tried my best to let the game come to me."

#### *On consistency with new coaching staff...*

"At this point, everything we've been doing all year, all summer, should be down-packed."

#### *On team doing the little things right to win...*

"It's a transition for young guys who've been playing more than usual, they're definitely learning on the fly."

#### *On overcoming team's struggles with height...*

"Coach gives us a game plan, and we try to go out there and execute it as good as possible. We may get a little tired, and that's when I really focus in, when I get a little winded. Other than that, just try to do everything coach says."

#### *On telling younger guys about importance of conference games...*

"It's still basketball, even though it's conference play, it's still basketball. Guys still put their jerseys on and there's whistles blowing, it's just like non-conference."

#### *On being surprised by teammate Admiral Schofield's play so far...*

"Not at all. Once he came in, I already knew that he was a tough dude. He's not afraid of contact."