

# Maui Jim Maui Invitational

Tuesday, November 20, 2018

## Bruce Pearl

## Austin Wiley

## Jared Harper

Auburn Tigers

Duke - 78, Auburn - 72

MEGAN GODFREY: Coach, can you give an opening statement on tonight's game.

BRUCE PEARL: Well, I thought our kids played really hard. We didn't quit, we didn't play very well, we didn't execute. There were some, Duke's athleticism and their ability to protect the rim, some of the things that they did defensively to keep us out of our ball screen action was effective. We're very disappointed that we weren't able to take advantage of the opportunity and our great strength is our balance and I think when we continue to become a little bit more balanced in many ways we'll continue to become a better team.

MEGAN GODFREY: Questions for the players.

**Q. Austin how surprised were you by Marques Bolden and just how he played inside today for them?**

AUSTIN WILEY: I really wasn't surprised, I know he's a very good player. I remember playing against him in the past, so, yeah, he's a good player, it wasn't any surprise.

**Q. For both players, obviously this was a big time game, what do you think even in this loss that you kind of learned about your own team?**

JARED HARPER: I would just say that just learn that we can fight to the end, we were in the game the whole time, I think, but we had some crucial plays, some crucial turnovers during the game, I personally had two crucial turnovers I thought could have swung the game a different way. But I guess use it as a learning experience just getting us ready we have to play another game tomorrow, so just getting prepared for that.

AUSTIN WILEY: Yeah, going off what Jared said we had some crucial turnovers, but rebounds me myself personally I gave up some, we just got to get back in the lab when we get back to Auburn and just get better.

MEGAN GODFREY: Questions for coach.



**Q. When you look back it's just how they started and how they got in your guards, I mean how much did that sort of set the tone for how things unfolded the rest of the way?**

BRUCE PEARL: I thought that we let them get middle and turn corners and that was a big part of our game plan to not let them do it. Once we solved that a little bit I thought we kept them on the sides and gave us a fighting chance. We fouled them way too much, and you got to play aggressively without fouling, but Duke got whatever they wanted early. Now our kids kept on battling and obviously we got some dangerous players that can make shots and we try to give them some freedom. I thought our second chance points were terrific and but, yeah, Duke's start says something about the fact that those four freshmen are a lot more mature than -- those four guys are really good now. It's a special group. So I think Coach K got out of this what he wanted, he wanted to get tested a little bit. I don't think -- we threatened them but they were never scared. If we could have got off to a better start we might have had a much better chance to win the game.

**Q. In your opening press conference for the tournament you talked about your back court who battled. What did you learn about them? You saw them under the lights with this team, they seemed to come down the stretch and compete. How did you, how were you reacting with that?**

BRUCE PEARL: Those two guys can play, offensively and defensively. And I trust them, try to put them in positions where they can do what they can do and you got to give them some freedom. But we're dangerous because of that. We didn't shoot the ball well outside of those two guys and typically our stretch 5's and 4's will knock down shots and Chuma just hasn't shot it well yet, here Anfernee didn't and we were 0-5 between Chuma and Anfernee. Those guys make a couple shots, which they typically do, all of a sudden we're in a little different position.

**Q. You hear so much about the four freshmen and how dangerous they are. But when you get Marques Bolden playing the way that he played today, how does that change the dynamic of this team?**

BRUCE PEARL: Well, their size and their length at the rim was significant. 11 blocked shots, we got, we, they

blocked more shots than we shot free throws. I mean -- and they do a great job of changing shots. So that rim protection allows them to kind of use their length on the perimeter and the length on the inside. So look, Bolden is a great example, in this era of the one and done, it's terrific. But without the Marques Boldens that stick around for two, three and four years and grow and develop -- he's becoming a pro now. He was a highly recruited kid, but he was a prospect, everybody knew it was going take a little time. A lot of times with bigs that's the case. You rarely find bigs that are ready to go one and done. Duke's done a terrific job, Marques has done a terrific job and stayed patient. So many times, if he wasn't getting his minutes early in his career as a very promising player, he's transferring, go someplace else and go find playing time. He stuck it out and I'm glad he's being rewarded with this team.

**Q. I guess I wanted to follow that up because no one's ever going to question Harper's heart, I mean he's got a lot of guts of the. But when you're trying to counter size and length sometimes with your back court what are some of the ways you're going to be able to counter that in the future when you face teams with that kind of size?**

BRUCE PEARL: Well, you know, those guys were still able to squeeze off 36 shots between the two of them, so sometimes they over shoot over, sometimes they over shoot through, a little better job of getting some more inside stuff. I got to do a better job of taking change of Chuma Okeke. He's a really good player and I don't take advantage of him enough. I did a little better job of it last night and I should have done a much better job of it today. We should have gone at Zion a little bit more and made him cover and if I had to do it over again that's what I would do.

**Q. Speaking of Jared, he had that drive end to end on the court to go into half and he went up to -- he almost dunked it and it seemed like that would have been a huge energy play for you guys going into half. Would that have potentially --**

BRUCE PEARL: No, you know, they came out second half played well again early. Don't forget. It wasn't like -- they jumped on us right away again at the start of the second half. So I don't necessarily think that would have been the key, the key would have been the starting both halves better. That would have been the key to having a chance to win the game.