December 4, 2010

Auburn – 56
South Carolina – 17

An Interview With:

AUBURN
COACH GENE CHIZIK
CAM NEWTON

THE MODERATOR: If everyone will retake your seats we'll continue on with Auburn. Coach Chizik will have an opening statement, his comments on the game, Cam will do the same, and we'll take questions for both Coach and Cam.

Coach, begin with your thoughts on the game, please.

COACH CHIZIK: I couldn't be more proud of our football team, and our fans deserve this. The Auburn family deserves it. Our football team has been probably one of the most resilient group of young men I've seen in 25 years of doing this.

Everything they got tonight they deserved. They worked extremely hard over the last four months to be able to get to this point. It's a team that again, as I've said before, they're brothers and they have a lot of love in that locker room between them. I think that's one of the huge reasons we're sitting where we're at.

I feel like -- as I told them before the game, I felt like this was going to be our finest hour tonight. I felt like we were going to play great. They were prepared. They were focused. They were locked in.

And I think they played like it. So, again, very proud of our football team. Very proud for the Auburn family and everything that I feel like they deserve.

And when we get done with this, obviously we'll take questions that have to do with this football game and any of the previous games. And, again, we'd like this to stay football related.

THE MODERATOR: Cam, comments from you.

CAM NEWTON: All right. I want to thank my teammates, my family, my coaches, and my Auburn family for their support. It means a lot to me to be on this team and be a part of the Auburn family. As I said before, I've done nothing wrong.

I'm only going to answer questions about football in this game. So I ask that you please respect that, and thank you so much.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

Q. Coach, you're 13-0 now. I'm wondering if you remember now two years ago when the guy had the video running on YouTube about we need a winner here, we don't -- Cam, sounds like you remember that -- where that guy is, what message you would have for him and how amazing it is, the path you've had since that video? And maybe Cam wants to talk about it too.

COACH CHIZIK: I don't know exactly what you're talking about. But I know this: We're the SEC champions.

Q. Cam, have you seen it?

CAM NEWTON: Nope. (Laughter).

Q. Cam, could you describe that pass play, the hail Mary, at the end of the half, did you feel pretty good about it when you let it fly?

CAM NEWTON: No. We've been in that situation before in practice, and repetition is the key to success. Coach Malzahn, Brian watches us in what we're supposed to do in different situations, and when the time came for us to make a play for that, Darvin did an excellent job in kicking the ball in the air. The offensive line did an excellent job protecting, so it gave me time to throw the football.

Q. Cam, a year ago junior college and you're the SEC champion and you won it in your hometown. How does that feel?

CAM NEWTON: It feels -- words can't explain how I feel right now. 365 days ago from this date I was at Blinn College, winning a junior college national championship. It's a wonder what God can do in a person's life, in such quick fashion.

I thank him every single day before I -- as soon as my feet touch, my knees touch, thanking him and blessing me with so many guys that's influential in my life, directing me in the right ways. And I can't even be more happier than I am right now.

Q. You seem to utilize the fan support a lot today. Could you describe how much that meant to you today?

COACH CHIZIK: It meant a lot. Anything that I could do to show my gratitude to these fans, I'm willing to do. And at the time I felt like, you know, nobody was going around the field and giving those fans that was on the other side their credit and what they've done today, because without those fans, it's no wonder where we would be right now.

Because, as we say as a team, that's our edge, having the Auburn Nation right behind us and screaming fans, that's what we build off of.

Q. Cam, you guys could talk about the difference between converting nine of 12 third downs and holding them to five of 12, I believe.

COACH CHIZIK: Are you talking to me? Are you talking about third down conversions? I couldn't hear you. I think the third down conversions were huge today. And they're one of the tops in the leagues in being able to convert third downs. That was one of our goals going in.

I thought Coach Roof did a good job third down planning tonight. Always the key is to get pressure on the quarterback. I thought he did a great job mixing in different blends of blitzes and four-man pressures, and I think that was a huge part of the ballgame.

And then, conversely, I think offensively we were big in the third down arena. So, again, it was a great team deal.

Q. Cam, talk a little bit about Darvin Adams, just the night he had.

CAM NEWTON: Darvin is the definition of a complete football player. He blocks. He catches. And whatever Coach asks him to do, he's willing to do it. And that just goes to show you what he did today, just the little things that we see every single day out of Darvin Adams.

Q. Coach, your thoughts when that pass on the last play of the half, when it was in the air, did you think there was a chance? And, also, how important was that and swinging the momentum back to you for the rest of the game?

COACH CHIZIK: I think that was a huge -- it was a huge turning point in the game. We had two plays left when we got the ball back. The only way we were going to do that is if we felt like position field-wise we could take one shot, try to eat up 10, 12 yards, get in range where Cam could throw it.

And it really all started with a squib kick that we were able to get the ball out to decent field position. We took one shot. We knew we only had two left on the clock. We took one shot. We knew Cameron can throw that ball 70 yards in the air or whatever the case may have been at that point. And he's done it in practice. So we said let's throw that up and see if we can't get a big play out of it. I think it was a huge momentum swing before the half.

Q. I ask this knowing you were part of a team that had Vince Young on it and won a national championship. But have you ever seen a better college football player than Cameron Newton?

COACH CHIZIK: No. It's that simple. No. If you look over a 13-game span, I've never seen anything like it, to be honest with you. And it's running the ball, it's throwing the ball. Usually great quarterbacks usually do one or the other better, meaning throw the ball or run the ball.

I think what Cam -- what God's blessed Cameron with is the ability to be really, really good at both. And I can say this -- well, we have one game left, so he can't get too big of a head with one game left, but I can say he's probably the best football player I've ever seen.

Q. Cam, Coach Chizik has talked about this before and complimented you on it. Your focus specifically down the stretch, how have you done that? How have you maintained that focus because it's been so incredible?

CAM NEWTON: It's easy for me. A lot of people don't realize or recognize my supporting

cast. And you can believe that Coach Chizik is a part of that supporting cast. People behind the scenes that's helping me to do the right thing and keeping my head clear and free of any distractions leading up and to the games.

With this team, with my teammates, with my coaches, with my family and friends, you know, it's been an honor just to be a player and to have that type of support going in game in, game out, day after day.

Q. Coach, did you think you'd be here in the springtime, here in December?

COACH CHIZIK: You know, we really kind of live by the mantra of one game at a time, one play at a time, one day at a time and one game at a time.

I felt like there was enough in place where if the chemistry of the team unfolded correctly, I felt like that we had a chance to have a really good football team. How good, I did not know.

How they had the ability to overcome a lot of adversities and the things that they've done wasn't really sure about that, because you never know. But as the season went on, it became very apparent to me and all of our coaches and our players that we could definitely be sitting here on December 4th.

Q. Cam, with the Heisman trophy next week, is your dad going to be allowed to go to the ceremony with you with him being disassociated with the program?

COACH CHIZIK: We're going to stay away from those questions right now and stay football related, please, with all due respect.

Q. You guys literally exploded out there today. Was it because there was so much on the line with the BCS championship and undefeated season, Cam's Heisman trophy, did that play into it a lot?

COACH CHIZIK: You know, when we started -- when we won a very tough road game last Friday, we came back and we went right back to work. I'm not sure it wasn't the best week of practice we've had in terms of focus and preparation.

We always talk about the last six inches of everything we do is the most important thing that we can do. And literally we were down to the last six inches of our season with the possibility of accomplishing a lot of goals.

So they were focused. Can't tell you, you know, all the reasons why they played X, Y and Z, but it was probably the most complete football game we've played as a football team in the last month or so.

And they were focused. And there was no way that -- if you looked in our guys' eyes before we left the hotel for this stadium, there was no way in 60 minutes that someone was going to take it away from them. I saw it in their eye and I told them it was going to be their finest hour, and they played really good.

Q. Cam, you had a lot of second half drama this year, where you brought the team back. Today you guys just got clicking right off the bat, scored the first three possessions. Is that the best you guys have played coming out of the gates? And how good did you all feel during that first half?

CAM NEWTON: We felt great going into the second half. Our focus was to finish and focus. For this team, we have so many times we had to pay attention on striving to come back in games, but now we were tested to try to put a team away.

And coaches stressed the fact that we need to finish and we need to execute, because the first half, yeah, we scored points, but that wasn't the best that we had in our arsenal, and we just had to come out and finish.

Q. Cam, people obviously like to talk about how you like to beat teams with your legs and your ability to do that. Talk about your passing game, how much you worked on the passing game.

CAM NEWTON: Could you rephrase it, please.

Q. A lot of people talk about how you have the ability to beat people -- teams with your legs. Talk about your passing game, how much you worked on the passing game for this particular game.

CAM NEWTON: I'm a quarterback, and that's a football player, as simple as that. I train with excellent weight training guys and excellent coaching staff that tries to attack the defense in every single way, whether it be running, whether it be passing, and I feel as an athlete, as a football player as a whole, you know I want to attack the defense and not be one-dimensional and just take

what the defense gives me.

Q. Cam, could you talk about what it's like when you think about playing for the whole thing here in about a month and playing in that big game on that stage?

CAM NEWTON: Honestly, it hasn't even sunk in right now. I just been living the dream this whole year I've just been living the dream, and I thank God for putting people in my life that has my best interests. And I can't stress it enough how blessed I truly am.

And I just thank the people that's in my corner.

Q. Coach, in '04 Auburn left this field undefeated but was denied a chance of playing the BCS championship game. With that in mind, how does it feel knowing you will get that chance now?

COACH CHIZIK: You know, as Cam said, the feeling of winning this game is really kind of where we're all at. I think obviously we just feel so blessed. And God's given us an opportunity to really, as a team, have so many great things and so many good things happen to us.

We know that we're excited about it. I'm like, Cam, it hasn't really set in yet. I know that's where we're going. Very proud, because there's a lot of people responsible for us getting there, meaning players and coaches, other than myself.

And feel very humbled, and I'm sure it will probably sink in a little bit later. A little bit more.

Q. Cam, a lot of the guys have been through this award circuit that you're about to go through, have said it's kind of a grind. How do you stay focused knowing that that big game is out there in about a month?

CAM NEWTON: I said it before, and it's the people in my corner, my supporting cast. And those guys -- I don't know who is going to talk to me. I don't know when they're going to talk to me, but come game time, I feel like I'm mentally ready for what I'm about to embark on, whether it be a coach, whether it be somebody around the program, whether it be a teammate or a family member. I just feel like every single game, every single -- whatever I'm about to -- the task I'm about to take at hand I feel I'm prepared for.

Q. Cam, talk a little bit about this is an exclamation point you put on the Heisman candidacy, talk about it and what you think your chances are.

CAM NEWTON: Well, I don't know. I leave that up to the voters. I really don't like to talk about any individual awards with me, because without that team, without the coaching staff having faith in me, trust in me to make the plays, without those guys I wouldn't be where I am right now.

So I'm going to leave that up to the voters and we just wait and see what happens.

Q. Cam, for those of us who didn't cover many of the Blinn Junior College games, did you ever get tackled in junior college?

CAM NEWTON: Yeah, I got tackled.

COACH CHIZIK: Not very often, probably.

CAM NEWTON: I got tackled. But, no, with Coach Brad Franchione, the head coach at Blinn right now, you know I have lasting relationships with my teammates then that I would take to my grave. I still try to keep in touch with those guys at Blinn. And I hope them the best.

Q. I saw your Q&A with Sports Illustrated. Talk about a defining moment that you've had as coaching. You talked about the fourth down play in the Rose Bowl. How does this stack up?

COACH CHIZIK: Well, you know, two different scenarios: one being an assistant and one being a head coach. And, again, I just feel so blessed to be the head coach of an organization that topdown has their priorities right. And Jay Jacobs and Dr. Googe (phonetic) and everybody in the administration, they've got it all right. They've got it right.

I think that's one of the reasons that we have the opportunity to be where we're at. I don't know what defining moment was the exact one in this season that maybe gave me the feeling that we would be able to be in Arizona. I think it was probably an accumulation of moments.

But I know that as the season went on, as I said earlier, we knew we had a chance.

Q. Cam, there were several opportunities today where it looked like you were going to get sacked or tackled and it's almost as if the Carolina defenders were trying to tackle smoke. Could you sense that they were maybe getting frustrated? Were they

talking amongst themselves?

CAM NEWTON: Going into this game, you know, we felt like it was going to be hard. It's a very cliche thing to say it's hard to beat a team twice. South Carolina played their heart out today. You could sense it from every snap they gave it their best.

And we were giving our best as well. When they tried to tackle me, for a player, I'm really honestly scared to get tackled so my defense mechanism went up and I just didn't want to hit the ground. And I closed my eyes and squinched it, and when I opened them I still wasn't down, so I tried to find an open receiver.

Q. Coach, could you talk a little bit about T'Sharvan Bell how he stepped up as a sophomore and made some huge plays for you guys defensively?

COACH CHIZIK: Right. Really proud of T-Bell. Really proud of him. In the last month or so, I think he's probably one of the most improved football players on our defensive side of the ball. Just a guy who has come into his own.

He was a little dinged up earlier in the year and missed about two or three weeks. He came back strong. He's healthy now. In the last two games made two huge plays for us that everybody could see. But there's a lot of plays he's made behind the scenes that nobody would probably notice.

But you can certainly tell he's on the field. He's made an impact for our defense and really proud of the way he's come on and really helped our defense in the last month.

Q. Cam, this is for you, can you put into words the feeling of being on your teammates' shoulders there at the end of the game?

CAM NEWTON: At first I really thought they had something up their sleeves because so many people were looking at me and so many people were coming at me. So I was just looking around.

But Mike Berry and Ice, those guys are some terrific teammates. And good human beings, to say the least. And when they told me they wanted to put me on their shoulders I thought it was a joke at first. But as I went up in the air, it hit a part of my heart that I will never take away.

I'm just blessed to be on this team with those type of teammates. And I wouldn't trade this in for nothing.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much.

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