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**NATIONAL
CHAMPIONSHIP**
NORTH TEXAS 2015

Ohio State - 42
Oregon - 20

An Interview With:

**MARK HELFRICH
MARCUS MARIOTA
BYRON MARSHALL**

MARK HELFRICH: Well, first of all, congratulations to Ohio State and Gene Smith and Urban Meyer for a fantastic season, played extremely well tonight, played extremely hard tonight, and we knew we'd expect that and we'd have to play really well to win. Could not be prouder to be associated or could not be prouder to be associated with a greater group of guys than the guys in that locker room, two of them up here with me right now, and what these guys weathered and persevered through this season was amazing. The coaches, our entire staff, our entire administration, and everybody that contributed to us getting here, we've unfortunately had some experience in this spot, and it's not much fun because these guys had a great season, not a good season, a great season, and to end it like this is certainly not the way we wanted to do that. But again, could not be prouder to be associated with these guys.

Q. Coach, what do you think they did to your offense after that first drive?

MARK HELFRICH: Well, they're an outstanding defense. We knew that coming in, and they did some different things, both on that drive and throughout. Not different things completely schematically, but by kind of percentage of what they had done to that point. We had a couple opportunities to convert a couple huge 3rd downs and had some plays there to be

made, didn't execute in the red zone. That was on me, a couple of those things, and then third down. Third down was a big deal, and part of that was precipitated by not being great on 1st and 2nd down and getting in some third-and-longs which is not where you want to be against any defense along the lines of those guys.

Q. You were on the staff four years ago when you played Auburn in the championship game and lost. How does it feel different this time around?

MARK HELFRICH: Very similar. Not very good. But again, I think that the thing that it's always focused on tonight, there were a lot of great nights and great days with these guys that led up to tonight and caused tonight, and at some point we'll be able to relish those. I don't know when that happens anymore. But yeah, it's a tough, tough pill to swallow, knowing everything that these guys put into this season and how much we want these guys to be successful in the minds of everyone.

Q. Mark, four years ago in Arizona, Chip Kelly proclaimed we'll be back in a similar situation. How confident are you in the future of this program to be back on this stage?

MARK HELFRICH: Extremely confident. It's really hard, but Oregon, the University of Oregon, is a place that obviously that can happen and has happened. Everything is in place from a support standpoint and facilities standpoint and infrastructure standpoint, talent, our coaching staff is outstanding, and the leadership is outstanding. That's kind of all the ingredients.

Q. As a coach, can you appreciate the accomplishment of Urban Meyer winning three national titles? Obviously it's pretty elite company, but just as a fellow coach and now to have done it at two different schools?

MARK HELFRICH: Yeah, it's extremely impressive and I said that coming in. What he's

been able to accomplish on the field has been -- again, whatever those adjectives are or descriptions, an icon, a Hall of Famer, and Ohio State is a tremendous program with a very proud tradition, and he's added to it.

Q. I was wondering with the new quarterback coming in for Ohio State, did that make it more difficult to game plan against him if there was less tape, and is that how Ezekiel Elliott was able to have a standout game?

MARK HELFRICH: No, I think they're able to have standout games because they're exceptional athletes. Both those guys were very highly sought-after guys and very talented guys that do a lot of good things. As for the lack of film and all that stuff, I think, no, he just played really well, and they did a good job of kind of banging with their run game very well, as we knew coming in again, creating one-on-one situations, and those guys made some unbelievable plays in the first half. The one was pinned against our DB's back and he made that catch. The other catch, the other one down, I don't know what that was, about a 40-something yarder, our guy got his hand on it before the wideout did, and you're fractions of an inch from getting home in the pass rush, you're fractions of an inch from getting the play at DB. Those kind of wore on us.

Q. You talked about how proud you are of this team. You've overcome so many things this season with injuries and other items. Can you maybe give us an idea of how proud you are, again, of what this team has gone through this year and ending up here in the first-ever playoff and just how proud you are of this season overall?

MARK HELFRICH: Well, I think that's just it. Again, people talk, which I think is -- and I talked about this last week a little bit. It's unfortunate and a little bit insulting in a lot of ways that whoever loses this game, the word failure comes up as a descriptive for the season, and as I told these guys in the locker room, that will never exist in these guys' vocabulary, the way that they've persevered through what they've done and the assistant coaches, everybody in our program, every player to a tee has just battled and gutted this thing out for each other and with each other and wanting to put the right finishing touch on it and that not happening is gutting to me, for them. But yeah, this was an unbelievable journey, and to

get to this point with this group of guys is something that none of us will ever forget.

Q. Elliott's game was amazing. Can you talk a little bit about the troubles you guys had stopping him?

MARK HELFRICH: Yeah, I mean, he's, again, a tremendous player. When you have him being as fast and physical as he is and then you trump that with a 200 whatever he is, 55, 60-pound quarterback, those are three pretty good hammers when you add in the fly sweep game and some of the other stuff that they're able to do. But he is an exceptional player, as is their offensive line. Their offensive line did a really nice job. Again, our defense created some turnovers, and we needed to complement one another a little bit better tonight. But again, a lot of credit to those guys.

Q. 2 of 12 on 3rd down. How much of that was execution or lack of execution, or did it have something to do with their defense, or a little of both?

MARK HELFRICH: Well, and even more importantly first and second down. If you're in third-and-mediums, third-and-shorts, you've got a lot more options and a lot more things that they have to defend, and we were in a ton of 3rd-and-six-pluses, seven-pluses that allows them to get after you up front and be a little bit more diverse in their coverage, so it's always kind of a combination of all those things.

Q. What's Marcus's legacy at Oregon, and could you put into context the kind of year he had?

MARK HELFRICH: Again, on the outside, a couple people mentioned leading up to this game, on the outside there's that thing that you have to win a National Championship to solidify everything, and I don't know if that's necessarily true. I think Dan Marino was a pretty good player and some of these other guys that have legacies and not have a National Championship, two or three bowl wins, depending on how you count it, and the stuff on the field, I think you could certainly argue that this was the best, if not certainly one of the top two or three greatest seasons in college football history. And then if you add in the person and the legacy that he has from that standpoint, there has never been one greater. None.

Q. Along those same lines, if this happens to be Marcus Mariota's last game as a Duck, what would you say he brought to the University of Oregon that has changed it forever?

MARK HELFRICH: You know, that's kind of -- I love this guy, and will forever. Absolutely couldn't be luckier to coach him and be around him every day. He's kind of one of those guys, around our neck of the woods, it's kind of like Madonna or Cher or whatever, it's Marcus. That's the kind his name has reached. He's an adjective, and definitely a very, very -- again, the impact that he's had on the field is extremely significant; off the field, probably even bigger.

Q. Can you explain to all of us the challenges for you and your young players for this new playoff format and the things you've gone through?

MARK HELFRICH: You know, if anything if it's the newness of it. Certainly you get to the point where you're playing for the Pac-12 championship and then it's one avenue, and then you're committed 100 percent to winning that game and then congratulations, and high fives, and you flip around and get ready for another outstanding team. Especially given the fact that we had the loss midway through the season, it was do or die, so to speak, from then on out for our football team. Again, to see these guys do what they did every single day in the face of some extreme adversity, it was just really impressive and something, again, all the lessons that they used to get to this point will be with them forever.

Q. Marcus, have you made a decision about the NFL?

MARCUS MARIOTA: I have not. I'll take the next couple days with my family to make that decision.

Q. Marcus, obviously this loss hurts for you and your whole team, your coach especially, but after everything sinks in, what are you going to be the most proud of this season?

MARCUS MARIOTA: I mean, what we were able to accomplish this year, nobody will be able to take that away from us. Being the champions of the Pac-12, being Rose Bowl champions, that says a lot about what we were able to do this year. Proud of the guys. We fought through a lot of stuff and just ended up short

tonight, but it shouldn't take away from what we were able to do this year.

Q. Marcus, you heard coach talk about your -- what he thinks your legacy is going to be. What do you want your legacy to be?

MARCUS MARIOTA: I don't care about legacies. That's other people's opinions. My main focus was to be a great teammate. That's all I hoped to accomplish. Yeah, I mean, I don't really care about legacies.

Q. Marcus and Byron, I know it just ended, but is there something that Ohio State did on the defensive end that maybe surprised you a little bit, or was there one thing that you think limited your offense tonight?

BYRON MARSHALL: Ohio State has a great defense. They have all season. Their front seven is unbelievable, so hats off to them. But no, not one thing specifically. I think they just played a great game. I think we kind of missed some opportunities. We had a couple red zone trips in the first half that we didn't capitalize on, whether it was a field goal or a touchdown. So yeah, I think we kind of missed some opportunities, and they played a great game.

Q. Marcus, you said on Saturday that outside of wins and losses, you just wanted to make Oregon proud, your home state proud. Things didn't work out the way you wanted them to tonight, but do you feel you and your team accomplished that?

MARCUS MARIOTA: I hope so. Again, we can't control that. All I know is that in that locker room, we're all proud of what we were able to do. Again, we just kind of came up short, proud of those guys in the locker room. Again, I truly believe we had a great season, and nobody can take that away from us.

Q. Marcus, I know it's difficult to talk after a loss like this, but what's your message to all the fans who came over here from the 808, from Hawai'i, who came on to support you and cheer you on today?

MARCUS MARIOTA: Thank you. I appreciate the support. It means a lot. I'm just sorry we came up a little short, but again, just thank you for everything. Thank you for all the support. Yeah.

Q. Marcus and Byron, you don't find yourselves on the losing end very much these last couple of seasons, including this season. Can you describe what your feelings were at the end of the game, about how much this one hurts, to come so far and lose it here?

MARCUS MARIOTA: I mean it hurts. You put so much work, you put so much effort into the year, and it's tough. It's tough to go out with a loss. That's just -- things happen. Ohio State played a great game today, great program. They just out-executed us for a couple more quarters, and just the way it happens.

Q. With both the Rose Bowl and now this game, two really of the highest profile events in college sports history, what's it been like to represent Hawai'i, and how has that felt to you and how have you taken extra steps to make it clear that you represent your home state?

MARCUS MARIOTA: I mean, I really haven't put much thought into it. I just try to be myself and be the best teammate that I can be. You know, I hope in the end that it does represent Hawai'i in the right light, but again, I just try to be myself.

Q. Marcus, how much will tonight's result affect or have bearing on your decision about going to the NFL from the standpoint of unfinished business, that sort of thing?

MARCUS MARIOTA: You know, obviously it hurts. I'm sure it will weigh in a little bit, but there's a lot of other things that have to play into that decision. There's starting grad school, coming back for another year to improve, there's a lot of other things that could bring me back. It's just not specifically this loss.

Q. Both of you or either of you, you guys are usually the team that pressure, pressure, pressure, wears opponents down, cashes in at the end. Did you think Ohio State -- did you get the sense that they flipped that on you tonight?

BYRON MARSHALL: I mean, I think they just played their game, to be honest. We tried to play ours. It didn't really work out as planned. But I mean, we can't really take credit away from Ohio State. They just came out ahead and they really just bought out and played an unbelievable game. They deserved to win this one. I think they just

went out and just tried to put as many points on the board in the first, second, third and fourth quarter, so I wouldn't say they tried to flip the script, but they just went out there and played their game.

Q. Marcus, do you have a most memorable moment from this season?

MARCUS MARIOTA: You know, winning the Rose Bowl and winning the Pac-12 championship was incredible feelings. That's something that I'll remember for the rest of my life. It's just a great accomplishment and just an awesome feeling.

Q. For both of you, Marcus, obviously you have a decision to make. Byron, you do, too. But if one or both of you guys come back, what will it take for this program to get back here next year?

MARCUS MARIOTA: Just keep working. You know, the process that Coach Helfrich and these coaches and the rest of the staff at the university have put in place has been successful, and just continue to trust that, take it one day at a time, find ways to always improve, and just take it from there.

Q. How much do you guys miss Darren and Devon tonight?

MARCUS MARIOTA: It's tough. You know, just -- it happens. It's part of football. But I thought the guys that played today stepped up and made plays. You know, we've just got to put the next guy out.

Q. Do you think that would have made a difference?

MARCUS MARIOTA: I don't think so. We rotate so many guys that each guy had experience and was prepared to play.

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