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An Interview With:

OKLAHOMA COACH BOB STOOPS

PETER IRWIN: Coach Bob Stoops has joined us from Oklahoma. Coach, welcome. Your thoughts about the summer and the upcoming season.

COACH STOOPS: Thank you, Peter. It's been a great summer, I guess, for me personally. It's always good to get away a little bit, get with your family and friends.

Hopefully, our players have been working well. I think most all of them have been on campus for the most part, going to summer school and hopefully working out.

But we had a good spring, winter and spring leading up to the summer. Excited about the team that we have back, feel that we have a good, strong nucleus of players that we hope we'll get great leadership out of. Not just the three or four that everyone's talked about, but guys like Brody Eldridge, Matt Clapp, guys like Chris Brown and DeMarco Murray, Auston English, Jeremy Beal. A lot of these guys, Keenan Clayton, Travis Lewis. A lot of these guys have played a lot of good football for us.

And an order of guys that hopefully we can expect good and strong leadership out of and hopefully really guide our team to hopefully another year where we can pursue championships once again.

PETER IRWIN: Coach, thank you. We'll take a question here on the front left.

Q. Obvious question, Bob. Would you talk about what looks to be an unprecedented return of three potential number one draft choices in one year, if you think there was a common theme there and the obvious impact of having those three guys back.

COACH STOOPS: Well, I think those guys all coming back, I think, says a lot about the overall program that they're pleased and excited to be in and want to participate in one more year and then maybe give up some fortune for a year to have that opportunity to be here one more year with their teammates, with their coaches.

But also I think there's value that they see in graduating and/or if you're not graduating, you're within a class or two, so it's real manageable and easy to finish. There is value in that. There's value in being more prepared for that situation when it comes, to being a year stronger, more seasoned, more prepared for that situation. And a value in being with their teammates another year.

So it is pretty special. I think it says a lot about the quality of individuals they are too. Just that they see the value in all those things.

Q. Two-part question. First, Bob, wonder how you feel about asterisk. Second question is can you be as good as you were last year?

COACH STOOPS: That's not for me to -- I know you guys would love for me to have a little quip about that and throw it all over the place. I don't want to take away from the players and the programs and do that. I don't have anything to say about that.

And the other was how do we feel about --

Q. Could you be as good as you were last year.

COACH STOOPS: I hope so. Hopefully we can be a game or two better. You have to go and earn all of that. You have to get back with your team, get back out on the field and start competing and working to see truly where you're at.

It's going to be another week or so before we can do that. But we have a chance to be every bit as good or hopefully maybe a little better.

Q. Coach, can you talk about your defensive line and the expectation level you

have for them coming into the season.

COACH STOOPS: I really believe it has a chance to be a true, true strength of our team. The guys up front there on the D-line, you look at three D-ends that really have been productive in Jeremy Beal, Frank Alexander, Auston English. We really love those guys and how they play. And you've got Gerald McCoy and Adrian Taylor inside that were mainstays a year ago and played at such a high level, in particular with Gerald. You know how special he is.

Those guys have a chance. We need to get a few more guys. We've got a number of guys, D-ends coming on, R.J. Washington coming on some also and some other young inside guys. We'll see. Hopefully those guys can be a real strength for us.

I think our defense has a chance to be quite a bit better than we were a year ago. You know, hopefully that will be the case.

Q. Can you talk about your men coming back, but you did lose two quality receivers outside. Talk about the adjustment to the receivers you'll have and the new guys you do have coming in.

COACH STOOPS: I think Sam will have a good number of targets. I think the best thing -- one of the best things that Kevin Wilson has done as our offensive coordinator is to be able to play more team strengths.

You see us out there sometimes in some special tight end sets because those guys are such good players. Jermaine can split out and be a wide receiver, or we came in with a big set with he and Brody Eldridge side by side and put Matt Clapp right behind him. He's a 250-pound fullback. And then you can spread them out and put Jermaine outside.

Along with other guys -- and Mossis Madu is a guy we're going to work at receiver. Ryan Broyles was a big player for us last year. He'll have to step up and do more. Adron Tennell had a really good spring. We're hoping he can field some of those -- catch some of those balls that we lost with those guys graduating.

Q. Bob, how big of a concern is your offensive line, and potentially how good can it be?

COACH STOOPS: Well, obviously it's a concern because those guys have played a limited amount. And so what you want to see is some kind of consistency and how they work here

through two-a-days and how they work through the season. A level of discipline you expect, a level of toughness in how they work.

We've got to get out there and keep developing those guys. They had a pretty fair, pretty good spring going against a good D-line, but it needs to continue to happen.

It has a chance to be good. There's potential there. There's talent there and potential. I don't need to tell you guys what sometimes that can add up to. In the end, it can add up to something really pretty good, or it can be pretty fair depending on how they work and what kind of discipline they have working to get ready.

Q. Coach, you have Ryan Reynolds going. Can you talk about how important he is to your defense.

COACH STOOPS: Ryan is important. He's got a lot of experience. Though he's been injured some, he's still a guy that plays at a very consistent level for us. He's been fine. This injury was not nearly as complicated to come back from as his previous one.

There wasn't as much collateral damage around the particular injury in this case than there was in the first one. So talking to him, he feels great. He looks great. He's really trimmed up. My guess, again, just natural, being a senior, he looks great as far as physically, and he says he feels good running. He's been running and training and doing everything.

Q. Bob, on a scale of unlucky to injury-prone, where does DeMarco Murray fit in?

COACH STOOPS: I'd say unlucky because the injury is such -- it was so odd in how they happened. You know, he's a great worker. Same thing, you know, DeMarco looks great. He's strong. He's always so much bigger, I think, than people realize.

So he's excited to get back and get going again. He has been a little bit unlucky and how odd those injuries -- how odd they were that they happened. They're very unusual how they happened.

Q. Bob, how does Sam improve on last year, I mean, on those stats and stuff?

COACH STOOPS: Well, it's going to be hard to improve on those stats. It's just like

offensively they'll be hard to have that kind of production. You know, but hopefully with a better defense you don't have to.

So in the end, we're not always concerned about -- we're not concerned about statistics. It's doing what you need to do and manage the game to win. So to me, just to manage the game and avoid turnovers, make the smart plays, be consistent like he has been, and not to force things. You know, remind him you're not Superman. You don't need to remind Sam of that. He plays within the system.

Let things come to you. Avoid the really poor and turnover -- you know be, the bad plays. Here and there we can rely on the defense hopefully in certain situations. So it's just managing the game. That's all we want him to do.

How can he do it better than here? I don't know that you can. It's pretty hard to. Hopefully, he can do it in a similar way that hopefully will be good.

Q. Coach, have you taken a look at the new stadium yet in Arlington? How excited are you and your kids about opening your season here on the 5th?

COACH STOOPS: You know, I haven't had a chance to see it. I have seen pictures here and there what people have showed me when they have seen it. It looks fabulous. It looks really just really special.

We are excited to compete in there. I think it's safe to say, though, we don't want to -- we're not just excited about walking in and seeing it. We want to play well. We have a great fan base down here in Dallas. It's a huge recruiting base for us with the close proximity to Norman.

So there's a lot of great reasons to be down here in this game. I know our fans are excited to come down here for it.

But, ultimately, we realize we're playing an excellent team and a great tradition and a team that year in and year out is always good in BYU, and we need to really be ready to play a good game.

Q. Bob, you've always played a very competitive nonconference schedule since coming to Oklahoma. It seemed to be a day off for you last year when you got down to the BCS standings. Can you talk about the philosophy of playing difficult opponents in nonconference.

COACH STOOPS: I think you're correct in that Joe Castiglione, our athletic director, and I have made a point to play a challenging nonconference schedule. It's been Joe's philosophy.

Once we got over the hump and won the national championship in 2000 and felt we were building, and the program was back to where we felt it should be, if you're a top ten team, we felt you should play that type of schedule. Much as you can. It's not always easy to schedule, but if you're able to, to have those exciting games to play them.

And Joe is also very wise. He and I have always talked about, if all things are equal, the BCS ramifications are there. Even though they have devalued the reason to play a difficult schedule -- you don't get quite the credit you used to get for it -- it still matters to some degree.

Again, with all things being equal, I think Joe has done a great job, and I've agreed to it to play a tough schedule to hopefully get you in a better position that way. Otherwise, why play? If it isn't going to matter, then there's no need to go play the tough games.

Our philosophy also, too, to credit our fans, for our fan base, we felt they were good for them. Our people wanted to see these kind of games. It's challenging for our players. I've always felt it gets our players' attention early, that we need to be prepared early to play. You know, hopefully gives you big challenges early that hopefully can help you later.

PETER IRWIN: Coach, thank you for your comments.

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