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An Interview With:

OKLAHOMA

CHARLIE FISS: I'd like to welcome everyone to San Antonio, the official kick-off of the 2007 college football season, Big 12 Conference. We'll start off with our defending champions, the Oklahoma Sooners.

Coach Stoops, welcome to San Antonio. Your thoughts on the Sooners.

COACH BOB STOOPS: We're excited to be back here getting ready to start another season. Really believe overall everyone's had a great summer and really at this point in the summer you get anxious to get back and get in the fire again, start working.

And I know in our staff that's the case. And really looking forward to this season. The guys I brought with me today Joe Jon Finley, senior tightend from Dallas area; Marcus Walker, starting senior corner for us from Waco, Texas; and Malcolm Kelly from Longview, Texas, junior wide receiver big play guy for us as well.

But really just feel we've got a really -- we should have an overall stronger team than a year ago. The guys that have been young players, played with us the last couple of years as freshmen and sophomores will continue to make improvements and play with more experience, play with more maturity than they have and keep making the improvement you expect.

Now as juniors and seniors we feel have a chance to have a really strong team. I think the big issues I'll address right off the bat is everyone wants to talk about are quarterback situation and everyone wants to know who the guy is.

We don't have a timetable. That position, as I keep saying, needs to be earned. I want that position. And we've been fairly successful. I've said this before. We've had four different quarterbacks win four different Big 12 championships. So this isn't anything new to us.

We believe that that position needs to have the confidence of the team. Needs to have the respect of the team in the huddle, in the locker room, and you only get that through your time on the field. And they haven't had the time yet.

As we go through our summer camp, whoever's starting to earn that confidence of the team and respect of the team the most, all of them will have it to some degree but whoever we feel is doing the best and earning it the most eventually we'll say, all right, it's time to make that decision, we're going to make it.

So we'll see when that happens. The other aspect of our offense is losing Adrian Peterson. How will we handle that? But I believe for the most part everyone saw us do that a year ago. We average rushing the ball actually more yards per game without him than we did with him.

And with several guys. Between Allen Patrick, Chris Brown, DeMarco Murray coming up, there's a group of guys there that we feel great about.

And I believe in the last two years we've had eight games without Adrian Peterson and we've won all eight games in the last two years. I think we're 8-0 without him. So in the end we're used to that. That won't be a factor for us in how we run our offense.

Defensively I'm excited about the group of guys that are back. I feel overall the biggest question I think everyone will have will be at linebacker, but with guys like Curtis Lofton, Ryan Reynolds is healing great in a great way, will be set to play. And Demarrio Pleasant was a starter last year. Lewis Baker as well. We have guys in there that can be every bit as good or actually better than what we've had in the last couple of years.

So, anyway, it's that along with special teams. The entire special teams group is back and returning. We just feel positive about the season. Got an exciting non-conference schedule and then like always a great Big 12 Conference to compete in. Just excited to get going.

CHARLIE FISS: Let's go to questions.

Q. I know you're not much on reflection, but considering all the things that you went through last year, is it a welcome thing for you guys, your guys and staff to be finally looking ahead rather than backwards?

COACH BOB STOOPS: Sure, it is and so many things last year that the way the season started to injuries to some official decisions. I mean, there was a lot there. And no question. But I believe our team learned a lot from it, too. We fought our way through it. Everybody kept their focus on what they should, and that was the game in front of us.

And I'll be honest, by the end of the season it's probably one of the more rewarding and fun ones that we as a staff, as you look back on it, by winning the Big 12 Championship, it really makes it pretty special just because you were able to overcome so much.

Q. Bob, there's a sense that maybe the Big 12 as a whole is a year away, do you get the sense that Big 12 can compete for a national championship this season?

COACH BOB STOOPS: Sure. I'm not much into that kind of discussion or mind set. I don't know what that would mean. I think it's been fair to say we've been competitive virtually every year. And so I anticipate Big 12 being strong again this year.

Q. Bob, back -- I know you like to get past the NCAA bid. You had your day. But has the appeals process -- are you concerned that it's opened you up to greater sanctions, more indecision?

COACH BOB STOOPS: Appeals don't do that. The sanctions are already set. So, no, there won't be other sanctions. It will either be what it said or we will maybe -- what we've appealed maybe get some wins back.

Q. You have not -- you've been told they can't possibly give you --

COACH BOB STOOPS: You can check with them. But, yes, that's the appeal process, there won't be any other sanctions, no.

Q. Could we just get some specific impressions about the three quarterback candidates that you drew in the spring?

COACH BOB STOOPS: Joey Halzle, again, young guy that has maybe the most experience in that game preparations for the last

year or so and a little more maturity in age. But doesn't have a lot of time just on our campus.

And then you have Sam Bradford, a guy that's highly recruited guy, couple years ago, that's made great progress. Worked in a great way for us last year. He's got really great size. When you look at him 6-5, 220, 225. Worked really hard as well. They all worked hard. But again limited experience. But we like what we've seen.

And Keith Nichol, a young guy that was just there through winter and spring, graduated high school early but got great ability as well. He's a guy about 6-2, up to 205, 210. He's got great feet to run along with a strong arm, too.

So they all have really good potential. I'm excited about the group overall. I love the way they worked together in the winter and spring. I see them in and out of, whether it's coming in and out of a locker room, training here and there. I see them palling around together. And it's exciting to see guys working to make each other better.

Q. Coach, they've come through now, they've kind of reversed some of the rules as far as the game clock. First downs the clock will start after now and go back to the kick, when it's touched. What are your thoughts on that as far as -- reversed?

COACH BOB STOOPS: I like that we've gone back to more traditional clock management. I like some of the ways they're trying to save some time. I think is good. Still waiting for them to maybe shorten the half time a little bit. That's the worst part of the game for me sitting in there for 20 minutes.

But, anyway, I like what they've done. And I feel we've got a great game. I never heard any fans complaining that the game is too long.

In the end, you think of people who travel to our games. Not just us, but across the country, some people are in the car for half a day just coming to the game. They don't want to see a quick game. They're not looking to be out of there in two and a half, three hours.

So I think it's good for the game to keep it as much as we can the way it's been.

Q. Bob, can you just kind of take us through your back field and how you would foresee that? How would you like that to develop with Allen and what he did last year, maybe some of the other guys like Chris and

DeMarco?

COACH BOB STOOPS: Well, I'd like to see them rush the ball for a bunch of yards. I think in the end, the way we look at it, I don't feel any of those guys have the physical, maybe, prowess that Adrian had, that Adrian Peterson had.

The stamina and the strength that he had is very unusual. Adrian could play 60 snaps or more. These guys, I just don't feel their body types through hopefully 14 games will be able to -- so in the end we look to use them, each of them 20, 25 snaps in that kind of way.

And Allen Patrick, I think as much as anything they need to be able to take care of the football. And they did a year ago. But Allen Patrick, Chris Brown, had the bulk of the load last year when Adrian went down and did a great job for us. And I expect them to be every bit that good or better with another year.

And DeMarco Murray showed great excitement and promise through the spring. Probably showed through the spring to be our biggest play threat with DeMarco back there. And he's up to about 205, 210 pounds. He's put on muscle and looks good.

So we'll use him to complement one another. I think in the end it will be better because we'll be able to keep them fresh. A fresh set of legs hitting the defense in a different series I think helps.

Q. Wonder if you can talk about your front seven on defense, particularly the defensive ends and (indiscernible) those guys?

COACH BOB STOOPS: Well, those guys, Alonzo Dotson and John Williams are seniors that have played a lot of football for us for the last three years. And have played good football for us. Alonzo had an excellent year a year ago. And John had an injury to overcome, but he's past it now. And John has played well for us, too. Those guys have the most experience. And it's good experience.

And then some younger guys, Jeremy Beal, Auston English, a guy that played for us as a true freshman a couple of years ago we red shirted last year. And if you played for us as a true freshman, you're pretty good. He's that way. Auston's got a chance to be a really good player. Jeremy Beal, that move has looked good for us.

So we'll just see how some of the other guys come on and play. But I feel we'll be solid there.

Q. You played in the secondary. Yours is regarded one of the best in the country. Do you think that's an accurate assessment of your guys's D?

COACH BOB STOOPS: I think it has a chance to be. A year ago as the season started we started a little slow defensively but came on, I think by the end of the year we were first or second in the league in every single defensive category.

And we need to -- we have the potential to be really good back there. We've got to get those guys to step up and play that kind of way. Play with that kind of production. We've got a lot of guys back that have a lot of good experience and I was pleased that a year ago as we went through the year they got better and better as we went through the season.

And so hopefully they'll pick up where they left off and even be better as we start the year. But it has a chance to be really good, yes.

CHARLIE FISS: Thank you very much.

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