

July 26, 2006



An Interview With:

## OKLAHOMA COACH BOB STOOPS

PETER IRWIN: Coach, welcome to the Big 12 Media Days. You're the last one up, but I'm sure they've still got plenty of questions for you.

COACH BOB STOOPS: Thank you, Peter. I know you can't wear these guys out, and ladies. But, anyway, I don't think our players are in here yet. I'll introduce them maybe at the end when they come in.

But excited to be back here with everybody starting the year off, really looking forward to the season like everybody.

I feel like we have a solid football team. But anyway, we have a lot to prove, I believe, looking at our year, year ago an 8-4 football team. We've got a lot of guys back from that football team. But hopefully we can be a more disciplined and tougher football team this year than we were a year ago.

And it's our job as coaches to demand that and to play that way, and it's the players' job to accept it and respond to it and to play that way hopefully so we have an opportunity to compete for a championship.

I'll open it up.

**Q. Bob, how valuable will the experience that this team went through last year going through those early season problems and then putting it together and then building a team, does that carry over to something?**

COACH BOB STOOPS: Hopefully we don't have to start the year that way to finish that way. You know, the bottom line is we need to be better earlier. And we need to be, as I said, a more disciplined and tougher football team to start the season. And we got to be better through the year, and we played that way as we got toward the end of the year.

This is a new season. It all begins again. And so hopefully there's a good number of guys that were young and inexperienced, gained

experience through the year, and hopefully it will carry over through the season. It's early for me to say. We haven't been out on the field for them. But that's what I want to see. It's easy to talk about it; it's easy for everyone to write about it; you've got to earn it on the field on the way you practice and prepare. We'll see if we can do that.

**Q. Coach, you talk about progress Rhett made over the course of last year and what you expect him to do this year?**

COACH BOB STOOPS: He made significant progress if you look at the first half of the season and compare it to the second half of the season and how he matured and how he -- the growth he made. And we expect him really to start the year in a good way, and continue to improve. Because he has -- he has so much skill and ability.

But as anyone knows, playing the quarterback position, there's so much growth and he has the potential to be awfully good if he'll just continue to manage the game. And when to take your chances, when to run with it, when to throw it away, when to just eat it and take the sack.

And, again, that experience can only be gained on the field, whether it's scrimmages, whether it's games, and I believe he'll continue to develop that way and do a really good job with it.

**Q. Bob, can you talk about the schemes, how they're going to change with a new offensive coordinator?**

COACH BOB STOOPS: Really our schemes for the most part won't change. Kevin has been with us for, what, five years now and has been involved. So the schemes really don't change and with Adrian back there. That's the focal point where it all begins, and it's been that way for the last two years.

So there's always different and subtle wrinkles, and then it gets down to, too, what's your quarterback able to handle, how much can you give him. But I have great confidence in Kevin Wilson running the offense. He's a guy that's done it. Had great success when he was the guy doing it at Northwestern. He's had a major influence on what we've been doing here the last five years, and so I'm excited about it. I think he's going to do

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a really good job.

**Q. Bob, talking about a better start, do you envision kind of like cracking the whip harder in August or pushing it any harder here at two-a-days?**

COACH BOB STOOPS: Well, I'd like to think we pushed them hard a year ago. The bottom line is we have to -- as coaches, have to accept the responsibility to get it done. And the players need to accept our coaching and guidance and to make sure that they're playing in a more disciplined and tougher and better way.

And so you could say it any way you want, but we need to get it done.

**Q. Coach, last year, the offensive line was shuffled around a little bit until you found the right appearance of people up front. What's the status of the offensive line based on how it's changed from last year?**

COACH BOB STOOPS: I think getting a couple guys back that missed a spring will make a major difference, guys like J.D. Quinn and Jon Cooper are going to make a big difference. Those guys have gained, again, played a lot last year and had a lot of experience last year. And then you throw them in with what the other guys that were competing in the spring, I believe in the end we'll have seven or eight guys we're used to having that have a chance to be really good.

That will be the key to which ones are starting and playing the most. It will depend on who does the best here through two-a-days. But what I like is there's really good potential there. Though we don't have 12 guys, in the end you can only play five at one time. I think every year we've been here maybe we've only had maybe seven or eight that we really relied on, and I believe in the end when we start we'll have seven, eight guys that we think we can be awfully good. And it's getting them in the right spots early on in two-a-days to have them, to get them to start blending and meshing together quickly. And there's great size and strength up there if those guys -- if they'll come together and we can get them as coaches to mesh in a quick way.

**Q. Looking at the conference here, a lot of teams starting quarterbacks, red-shirt freshmen, sophomores who played as true freshmen, is it more -- is the trend now, the new model for guys to go straight to red-shirt to the top of the depth chart?**

COACH BOB STOOPS: Well, it seems that way. But I don't know that that's a

trend we're all looking for. So I don't know that that's what anybody wants. In the end, it's just maybe how it's worked out here in this conference, you know, at this particular time.

**Q. Bob, a lot of anticipation about this defense, potentially how good could this group be?**

COACH BOB STOOPS: Has a great potential. With the guys, starts, to me, defense always begins with the guys up front, and we have a chance to be really good in our front four. And with depth. And then the linebacker position, we have a couple of seniors that play awfully well. And then I think the biggest jump we can make from a year ago is our secondary that was awfully young and inexperienced as we started the year finished playing awfully good through the season. And really I saw great improvement through the spring that we have a chance to be really good.

I think really good solid defense. So we'll see. It has to be -- we'll be more disciplined and physical. We've got a chance to be really good.

**Q. Coach, back to your offensive line, can you talk specifically about Brandon Walker, what you see in him and how he's been coming along?**

COACH BOB STOOPS: Well, I haven't seen him. Unfortunately, I don't mean that to be funny. We're not allowed to watch them in the summer. I've seen him walk through my office or walking in the locker room once in a while. He looks good and he says he's worked hard. Feels like he's gained strength. So we're hoping that he's a guy, though, to be one of those seven or eight that can make an impact and we can count on and win with. So we're hoping that will be the case. But, again, we haven't -- I'm not allowed to be at workouts so I can't tell you what he's done in the summer.

**Q. Coach, what kind of effects mentally do those injuries have on Adrian last year being out for most of the year?**

COACH BOB STOOPS: I thought it was tough for him. I thought he handled it in a really good way. A lot of guys in that situation can be really frustrated selfishly just that they're not doing what they're used to doing. But I felt Adrian all along knew how much the team depended on him and that our offense begins with him back there. And I felt that he was fighting to get back all along to help the football team. And even when he

started out when our trainers said he's able to try it, he just didn't have the strength to really make the cuts he's used to making. It's one thing to warm up and feel like you're ready; it's another thing when it's live action. It's a whole different deal. And he fought through it. Even those games he tried to run a couple three times, realized he couldn't do it but he kept pushing himself to try to do that. And you appreciate that about a guy not worried about protecting himself but wants to get out there and help his teammates.

**Q. Talking about Adrian, can you talk about how much you're going to emphasize him (inaudible)?**

COACH BOB STOOPS: To whatever degree we can. He can't play every snap and he needs his breaks, but Adrian has good hands. I kid him all the time. How come they say you can't catch? He catches the ball really well. I'll tell you this too, he's not the easiest guy to sneak out on a screen. It's not like they're not watching him.

So, anyway, as much as we can and as much as he's able to, you know, he's got to be a great pass protector. He's got to be able to understand when we're checking at the line of scrimmage and who he's going to pick up on the blitz. That's the first part of it. And if he'll continue to do well that way and then we want to be able to keep him in there, of course, as much as he's able to handle.

He's a good guy to suck in the long to dump the ball down to if they sink off, and now he gets the ball out there with some space and gets a head start instead of having to work his way through the line all the time.

**Q. Bob, I know you guys lost Travis from last year, but you've got a lot of young wide receivers coming back, you've got playing time as freshmen and sophomores last year. Talk about the development they've made coming into this season?**

COACH BOB STOOPS: I saw -- I think guys have a chance to be, you know -- some of those young freshmen have a chance to be really good receivers. The way I saw them working the winter and spring, a guy like Juaquin Iglesias and Malcolm Kelly, those two guys have great ability and have shown you the willingness to work and to make themselves really good.

So I think I'm hoping those guys have a chance to make more big plays, definitely, this year.

**Q. Bob, you said in the past, your program has never shied away from expectations, but is the preseason number one talk, some of that stuff, are you okay with that?**

COACH BOB STOOPS: You know, I can't do anything about it. So I don't concern myself with it, to be honest. Like I said in my opening, I believe our team is smart enough. To me we've got a lot to prove. We're an 8-4 football team a year ago, and the bottom line is we need to be more disciplined, tougher and better football team if we're going to have a chance to compete for a Big 12 Championship first.

And to me I tell them I don't want to talk about it. Doesn't matter what anybody says about it. We need to do it. And we need to get on the field and show them we can do that.

**Q. You won a national title, do you see the pieces there that that could happen?**

COACH BOB STOOPS: Not yet, since I haven't been on the field with them. Spring ball is a long time ago, and to me the most important time is what we do when we get back to work here next week.

**Q. Do you have an idea of the wealth of riches on the defensive line, do you have any idea how you'll rotate them?**

COACH BOB STOOPS: Sure. I think to some degree we were always rotating those guys. We want them fresh and going hard. We always play in that front four at least eight guys. Last year we couldn't because of our injuries at defensive end. And I think that has a chance to really help us.

Two guys that had great years, Calvin Thibodeaux and C.J. Ah You as defensive ends, now have a chance to be spelled, and I think can be more productive because they'll be more fresh. And so we'll play eight, nine guys up there this year for sure. And just rotate them according to how tired they are and we want to make sure they're going, you know, at full speed every snap.

**Q. Coach, you've had a number of coaches move on to head jobs, other jobs, how have you seen that affect your staff, when you lose so many guys here year in, year out?**

COACH BOB STOOPS: It's a good thing. Our staff, what's been fortunate for us, that I've been able to hire quality coaches that, when a coordinator has moved on to become a head coach, we have had guys in place that have the ability to be leaders and to be coordinators and

have had good experience. So we hadn't had to change our system.

Again, we adjust and there's slight wrinkles from year to year and what you emphasize or what you're trying to do. But overall for the players, our philosophy and our schemes really for the most part have not changed. So players are able to gain experience, you know, as they're juniors and seniors have been in the same system for three and four years makes a difference.

And I feel that with our coaches on our staff. We've got guys that are coming up that will be in place if other guys move on.

PETER IRWIN: Coach, I believe your players have come in the back. Do you want to introduce them back there?

COACH BOB STOOPS: Sure.

Adrian Peterson everybody knows is back there in the corner, our running back junior. And Rufus Alexander is back in the left corner to my left. Rufus is our senior linebacker with his hand up in the air; big, personable guy, big smile on him. Two really great football players for us and proud to have them here with us.

PETER IRWIN: Thank you, Coach.  
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