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An Interview With:

OKLAHOMA COACH BOB STOOPS

PETER IRWIN: We'd like to welcome Bob Stoops from Oklahoma. If you'd like to make some opening comments about your great season, then we'll take questions.

COACH BOB STOOPS: Thank you. Just as a team we're really excited to be here in this position, ready to try and compete for another Big 12 Championship. They're all incredibly special.

We're excited to be playing an excellent Missouri football team, and it's also earning their way here. Great venue. I haven't been down here in the Alamodome so I'm looking really forward to the venue being here. I know we've got a great number of players, of course, in the state of Texas that are on our team that all coming down here to compete in Texas is exciting.

We don't have to worry about what the weather conditions are going to be tomorrow. It's going to be perfect. I think both teams, we would prefer that.

So we're just excited about the opportunity and looking forward to competing tomorrow in the Big 12 Championship game.

PETER IRWIN: Questions.

Q. I think a lot of people that don't know you look at you say, boy, he's really young to have done this.

COACH BOB STOOPS: I'm pretty old.

Q. But how do you react? Just personally to the success that you've had relatively early in your career?

COACH BOB STOOPS: I don't really reflect on it personally. I'm just not that way by nature. The success we've had as a program at Oklahoma has been the product of a great number of people. And I feel incredibly fortunate, I guess,

would be the right way to say it, fortunate to have been in the position I am surrounded by and have worked with the people that I have, that have all helped establish this and have been a part of all this success.

So I'm a piece of it, but I've been supported in an amazing way by a great administration, a great school, great tradition and a group of assistant coaches and players that have really put forth great effort.

So, anyway, but personally I just don't feel it's right. I think football is the ultimate team sport, and there isn't any one guy, whether it's coach or player, that's -- I get a lot of the credit, but, believe me, I'm very aware of all the pieces and all the people that have been a part of it.

Q. This is your sixth trip to a Big 12 championship game. What advantage does having all that experience go into tomorrow's game?

COACH BOB STOOPS: Well, I don't know to what degree, how you quantify that. I know it doesn't hurt. And I know our players really more than anything, maybe the four or so ago doesn't matter as much as last year. This is a good number of guys that were in this situation last year. So maybe that part of it, I think, gives you a degree of advantage.

But in the end I think you win and lose on its own merit, on what we do tomorrow. And what we did last year isn't going to matter. But I do believe they'll come in with a great attitude having been there and also having competed, there's familiarity I think with both teams having competed against each other the last two years as opposed to coming in when you haven't played.

Like last year we didn't play Nebraska last year, so there's a little bit of catching up to do.

Q. Missouri kind of used their loss to you to kind of be a motivator to step it up a notch and finish out the season. When you look at them, their last few games, what do you see different than when you prepared for them

the first time this year?

COACH BOB STOOPS: Maybe a little more emphasis running the football. They run the football I think a lot better than any of you give them credit for, or maybe you do. I'm just saying that sometimes it's not talked about as much. They do a great job running the ball. Tony Temple. And they get a great number of plays off of play action and getting you to maybe get uncomfortable with the run and then they sneak some plays in behind you and they get some big plays that way.

So we have definitely worked really hard and diligently all week defensively to be great and strong on the run game and to try and to be sure that we can take that part of -- to really control and it be great tackling and support and run to begin with.

Outside of that, we thought, really, just in the last two times we've played in the last two years, we thought they're really excellent players. Excellent and well coached. And we've got to match that by doing the same thing ourselves.

Q. Talk a little bit about your thoughts about watching Chase Daniel. You've of course had to prepare for him once before, what he brings to the table. Then talk a bit about Sam Bradford and has he surprised you at all being as young as he is to play at the level he's at?

COACH BOB STOOPS: Yes, Chase is just an exceptional competitor. You watch everything that he does. He runs the ball well. He scrambles well. But before that when he sees a receiver open, he's got a quick release, gets the ball there. He's accurate. So they use his talents all the right ways by getting the ball out quick, using him to run.

He scrambles to make plays when really you've got him played well and then all of a sudden he's got something back there and you have to hold it another three seconds. So he does all those things. So it's important that we can get to him and contain him and make our plays.

But Sam Bradford has been -- there's no other word. All the praise I believe has been due to Chase. I've said it as well. Then you look at Sam and think he's only one touchdown behind him and two interceptions less than him and our offense is averaging 44 points a game, theirs is averaging 42. So our guys have done pretty well. For a first time being out there as a redshirt freshman, obviously we couldn't have asked for much more. The guy is exceptional and has an

incredible future in front of him. He's doing everything we need him to do and more.

Has he surprised us to some degree? It's probably fair to say that none of us saw this coming, to throw for what 32 touchdowns and seven interceptions is pretty exceptional for a first-year guy. And to average 44 points a game while doing it.

So we just choose to run the ball a little bit more in some ways that -- but it's been productive for us is the right way to say it.

Q. Can you give us an update on Auston English, and if he does not play, how will that affect your defense in preparing for this Missouri team?

COACH BOB STOOPS: Well, right now I would say it's a possibility that he plays. And I'm not being coy here. He was better yesterday than he has been in a couple of weeks. How effective that's going to be, we'll have to see how explosive he is and what he's doing when he warms up tomorrow. But he's going to give it -- he's going to try to.

But we've been playing without him now the last couple three weeks. The guys have played for him have really done well. We have Allen Davis back who has played a lot for us the last couple of years. Jeremy Beal had a real good game last week against Oklahoma State. Alonzo Dotson has been playing for us for four years. Those guys are all like always -- we used Cory Bennett last week against Oklahoma State, one of our inside linemen, who did a good job for us on the perimeter. Gives us a little more pop, a little more punch because he's just a little bigger, a little stronger, that really in some instances was a plus for us. So we'll work those guys like we always do.

Q. Looking at the tape of Missouri the last couple of weeks, are they much better than they were when they played you guys?

COACH BOB STOOPS: Again, that's one of those how do you quantify that? You're playing different people. I thought they were awfully good before we played them last time. They came in undefeated. Lighting the scoreboard up and playing good defense. And they're still doing that.

So I don't know how to say how much better or worse anybody is. In the end, they looked really good then. They look really good now. It's fair to say that I feel we're better overall.

And if we keep our quarterback healthy, he doesn't have to tackle anybody, we feel good about what he's done and what our team has done as well.

Q. What's been the biggest difference in your defense in the second half the last three games? I don't know if it's adjustments at halftime, but it's been a lot better.

COACH BOB STOOPS: Well, I think, again, the game is played through four quarters. Has everybody played perfectly through all four, not usually. Some of it is just execution. First half we were out of position, not by structure -- by structure, something we practiced all week a guy gets out of position, you get hurt. And the second half he was in position, made the tackle looks good. Coach Venables has done a good job. We've made some adjustments and I think at halftime he did a great job of making, there were a couple of formations we changed how we supported the run and what we were doing and I thought Brent did an excellent job in those cases of making some changes and how we were defending a couple of different formations and it worked.

Some of it, too, was that guys stayed in position and made the plays where they didn't make them in the first half.

Q. Bob, you've never played down here. You've never played in San Antonio. But Brent was talking the other night, he's been down here with that Alamodome?

COACH BOB STOOPS: I didn't ask him. I didn't want him to expound on it either.

Q. He was talking about how what a terrible night that was. What do you remember about that night?

COACH BOB STOOPS: Maybe we could do the same thing A&M did. (Laughter). He's talking about Brent being at K State at the time and going for a national championship. Of course I was just hired at Oklahoma. And I remember, it was paining me to watch it in the hotel room watching the game.

But, again, I didn't ask him feelings on it. I didn't ask him to talk about it. I didn't ask him anything outside of I like to think back on all our experiences in the Big 12 Championship game. So it was again having ties to K State was tough to watch, I guess, is the best way to say it.

Q. Over the last week, there's been a lot of talk in Missouri about how they blew that game, and there's been some responses out of your all's camp, you and Brent particularly saying, well, we made mistakes too. Is it really that big a deal?

COACH BOB STOOPS: Is what a big deal?

Q. Whether Missouri thinks they blew the game or whether you won it or what?

COACH BOB STOOPS: No, again, it's just whatever perspective you want to take. I mean, you can look at it different ways. The first interception we got the blitz on, pressure them. The ball goes right down the middle. Our guy makes a great cut right in front of the guy, intercepts the ball. Is that good defense or did they just give it to us? I don't know. Their running back Maclin, receiver, fabulous player, they run a quick sweep and they're going to throw the ball. Most people suck up. Makes for a great highlight if we're out of position and get fooled.

But we stay in position, we're over the top of them, underneath the receiver and intercept the ball, is that good defense, good reaction or is that them giving it to us. Depends on how you want to write your article. So in the end it doesn't really matter.

We had two turnovers too. They take the lead in the fourth quarter when we drop a kickoff return. We fumble the ball and give them the ball in the short field. So we made our share of mistakes as well. It's just how you want to tell your story. That's up to you to do.

Q. You just mentioned Maclin's name, did he turn out to be the player that you thought he could be?

COACH BOB STOOPS: Obviously why we tried to get him. We thought he was an excellent player, sure. He is. He does a great job. Running and catching the ball.

Q. Talked about how many times you've been in these championship games, do you change any routine in terms of what you do and getting ready?

COACH BOB STOOPS: No, not really. Our routine has been for the most part pretty successful. And so, no, our routine is pretty much the same as it usually is. It is the same.

Q. Coach, we just heard Gary Pinkel talking about possibly bringing home their first Big 12 Championship over there. Obviously it means a lot to them. What does it mean to your team you have been here so often?

COACH BOB STOOPS: It's still -- I keep saying each year is its own entity, its own kind of body of work. And these guys that we have here on this team won't be together again after this season. So this is -- they take a lot of pride in this one year and winning this game on its own merit, as I've talked about: Hey, this is special. Let's capitalize on it and make the most of it and make sure we're at our best.

So that's what you try to do and there is a lot of pride in that. And I understand Gary's point. But I'll say this after four of them, each one is it's still awfully special. We're excited for it.

Q. I asked Coach Pinkel this, Ohio guys are in some pretty huge games. He said there aren't a lot of people in Ohio rooting for him --

COACH BOB STOOPS: It isn't going to make a difference either way who they're rooting for. I know how Gary is and I am, we're not concerned about everybody else outside of our ourselves and guys and our team and our program.

We're fortunate to be in good situations. Gary has done a great job. I've said that in the last week in my conference I think Missouri and their administration, just like I said about Coach Mangino at KU withstood their course and developed their programs and look at what's happening now and the way they're playing. And it just sometimes takes a bit of time that they stay the course. And Gary's done a great job. So it's exciting to be in this position. And we just happen to be from Ohio.

I even had a coaching stint for nine months at Kent, his alma mater.

Q. Bob, along those same lines: What do you make of the North Division right now and kind of what's happened and finally shuffled a little bit?

COACH BOB STOOPS: Again, I think there's just -- there's times that teams have their times where they're really strong and stay strong and other teams may not be as strong as they have been. I mean, that was the case in the South for a while. I know there was a period of time when Oklahoma wasn't up here all -- we weren't

being talked about a lot, weren't winning many championships. There's probably a 10-, 15-year period of time where we weren't considered for much.

Now things have changed a little bit. So I think there's just -- there are periods of time where some programs may be down. Other programs are flourishing. And trying to stay there. So it's just -- there's always going to be, I believe, always quality teams throughout the league.

And I guess that's the best way to say it. I've said this a lot. I think each conference you got those teams at the top that will play with anybody. You've got those teams in the middle that will beat anybody if they're not ready, and you've got some teams that are struggling. And I think ours is always that way.

I think around the country I think every conference is that way and sometimes different teams come up that maybe traditionally you haven't been used to seeing that are really -- that are playing well and are kind of hitting their stride and are representing another school and playing in a great way.

Q. Want to ask you about your ability -- DeMarco Murray is not going to be in this game, but he only had five yards the first time. You feel like Allen Patrick and Chris Brown will have success running the ball against Missouri?

COACH BOB STOOPS: Well, we sure hope they will, of course, and that's our plan. You always want to. But those guys, quality players, quality backs, and we've got a lot of confidence in them. So, sure, we hope and hope to be able to establish the run and execute it well and have the balance that we like to have.

Q. If Bo Pelini becomes the head coach what kind of head coach would he be?

COACH BOB STOOPS: I don't know if I should answer because he's not one yet and he's got a big game tomorrow. Again, he'll be a great coach. We loved what he did in our program. He's a positive guy and he's got strong background. So he'll be an excellent coach, and I'm sure there will be a point where that will happen for him.

Q. What do you like to say to the Hispanic community for this game?

COACH BOB STOOPS: Well, hopefully

they'll be cheering hard for Jacob Gutierrez, one of our players, proud to be down here in his hometown and just appreciate any following and hopefully the ones here at the game are rooting for the Sooners. Hopefully we've got a few extra fans there.

PETER IRWIN: Coach, best of luck tomorrow night. Thank you.

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