TEXAS FOOTBALL
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DT Poona Ford

Q. What does it mean to have won the starting position?
POONA FORD: It's really a blessing. It shows how much hard work can really pay off.

Q. Do you feel like the freshmen are ready?
POONA FORD: I mean, yeah. I think they're ready. They've been working hard all camp. Since they got here they've been putting in the work and they had the mindset they want to play early. They have the opportunity to, and we're going to need them. We're going to need them to step it up, play fundamental football, and follow the assignments.

Q. Charlie said he's been showing you guys pictures of Notre Dame's stadium. What do you know about the history and the mystique of Notre Dame? Does it seem like a special place to you when you think about what you're going into?
POONA FORD: I mean, yes. But we have a lot of history here, and a lot of winning football programs and whatnot. But I mean, that's all I really know about Notre Dame.

Q. Does it get you thinking about that whole situation?
POONA FORD: Yeah, I never would have really thought I would have ended up playing at Notre Dame.

Q. What has been the biggest difference for you as a player from the first year with Coach Strong to now this year?
POONA FORD: As a team, people are starting to buy in more. We're really coming together as a team, and we really trust each other. We treat each other like brothers. I think that's going to play a big part this year.

Q. What have you noticed about Desmond [Tank] Jackson coming back off injury?
POONA FORD: Tank, like Coach Strong says, he brings a lot of juice to the table. He sat out last year with an injury, but I think he's as hungry to get back and get on the field. He's going to make some plays for us that we're really going to need.

Q. When you look at this Notre Dame offense, how tough do they look on film? Are you going to have your hands full against them?
POONA FORD: We're likely to have our hands full against anybody. We prepared for this game, so I think if we do what we're supposed to do, we will be just fine.

DT Desmond Jackson

Q. What's it mean for you to be healthy, be back, and to go play against the Notre Dame Fighting Irish?
DESMOND JACKSON: First and foremost, I'm having as much fun as I possibly can because last year I got injured, and just coming back this year being around the guys again one more time, it's truly a blessing and an honor for me. As far as Notre Dame goes, I know that they're a really good team, a lot of tradition, just like Texas has tradition, and it's going to be two teams clashing, and we're going to be ready for them.

Q. Coach Strong talked about how this freshman class has confidence, cockiness. Have you had to tame them a little bit as a senior, and how good has it been for the program?
DESMOND JACKSON: I think they were the first class that came in, they remind me of me when I first came in. I wouldn't call it cocky. I would call it just they wanted to make their name known. They came in and acted just like us, making the jump. They're just a freshman class that has a lot of potential. They're pretty good.

Q. How much was that needed in the program?
DESMOND JACKSON: Like their swag? It was much needed. They came in, they came in just wanting to learn more about just everything. Some guys that came up to me and asked me a whole bunch of questions about the program, the school, how much work we have to put in, and I just told them like we've got to just stay humble and just put your head down and just keep working, and they've all been doing that so I've very proud of them.

Q. What was the hardest part about dealing with that injury and the road back to recovery to where you are now?
DESMOND JACKSON: Just not being able to be around my teammates. There were some times where just I couldn't even be able to walk -- I couldn't even walk for about two months. There were some times I wanted to give up because it was so much time, but they said God gives the hardest battles to the toughest

soldiers. I made it through it. My teammates held me down when I was gone. They helped me, healed me back up. The coaching staff believed in me, my family believed in me, and just being able to go out there and run in the summertime was just a great blessing for me, and just being able to put on the helmet again, I'm just so overwhelmed with joy just to be able to put the helmet back on.

Q. When were you given the full go that you were 100 percent to go full speed?
DESMOND JACKSON: Around May. Around May. And then I had to try to trim some weight off me. Sitting down for a while, it took me a little while to get back in shape. But I'm back in shape, I feel 100 percent, I'm ready to go.

Q. Do you feel the same as you felt at this point last year going into North Texas before the injury? Physically do you feel the same?
DESMOND JACKSON: I feel physically the same, mentally more stronger.

Q. Charlie has talked a lot about the interchangeable parts on the defensive line. What does that mean for you to have a deep rotation?
DESMOND JACKSON: You know, it means a lot. We've got guys that have a lot of experience, that didn't have a lot of experience last year but now they've got a couple games under their belt so now they know actually how to play, how to practice, how to prepare for a game and everything, so I'm excited about this year, about the D-line. I love my guys. They're all great young men, and we're all just ready to show what we have.

Q. You talked about there were times when you thought about wanting to give up. Do you have like a new appreciation for being able to play this game now?
DESMOND JACKSON: I've always had an appreciation to play football. I've always -- this is a game that I was able to give back to my city and my area that I grew up around. There's a lot of ways you can get out and do stuff with your life. I think it gave me an opportunity for life more than anything else because anything can be taken away from you at any time. Some things that you take for granted sometimes like being able to walk, being able just to do regular things like drive a car and try to talk to people. It was difficult. So now I've got a lot of appreciation for just everything.

Q. What makes Malik different, and how much of a freshman leader is he for this team?
DESMOND JACKSON: What do you mean by different?

Q. What makes him special as a linebacker?

DESMOND JACKSON: I mean, he's a guy that came in, like I said, like the other freshman class, they came in very, very humble, so guys that everybody had a lot of hype around, the five stars, this and that, and he just came in like I'm one of the guys. I don't care about that stuff, I just want to make sure we do what it takes to get back on the map. Since day one he's been real humble, been a guy you can talk to about anything, laugh with him, talk to him, talk about serious things, talk about classes, talk about what songs you like and all this type of stuff. He's a regular guy to me. He's a real good person.

Q. What about as a player? What have you seen that makes him --
DESMOND JACKSON: As a player? I mean, he tries to understand the game. He tries to be a student of the game. That's one thing I can say about him. He wants to learn as much as he possibly can.

C/OG Taylor Doyle

Q. Coach Strong told us that he thinks the players have bought into Tyrone Swoopes and believe in him. Why is that, and what has changed in him over the last year to make you guys truly, truly believe he can lead you guys?
TAYLOR DOYLE: We all have the utmost confidence in Swoopes, and I think that's because of his work ethic and determination. All off-season he's the first guy in the building, the last one to leave, and on top of leading by example in his work ethic, he's very vocal, and Coach Strong says, brings the juice every day. He makes sure that juice is there.

Q. If I would have told you back in July at media day that you'd have two freshmen starting with you on that offensive front, would you have believed me, and how pumped up are you for those guys to get a shot to play their first game ever in South Bend, Indiana?
TAYLOR DOYLE: I'm very excited for them to have that opportunity. Both those guys came into the program ready to work and have continued to prepare through the off-season and workouts and taking that over into preseason camp. I mean, just done tremendously well. They're guys who haven't complained one bit, they've put their head down and worked. I think it's a great opportunity for them.

Q. How big of an impact are they making? Are they surprising you at what they're doing on the field at such a young age, so new in college football?
TAYLOR DOYLE: Both the guys can play great football. This year we've been fortunate to have a little more depth on the offensive line, and that shows. We're

confident, and the individuals are improving every day as well as improving as a unit. So it's cool to see those guys grow into the game and really study the playbook and continue to improve every day.

Q. What's there to prove for that offensive line Saturday considering how you guys ended the season last year? It seems like you guys got a lot at stake, and to prove not only to yourself but the fans and the coaches that those last few games were a fluke and now this O-line and offense is back?
TAYLOR DOYLE: As an offensive line we're trying to establish an identity of tough, hard-nosed football, running the ball downhill, hard-working guys, and we're excited to have an opportunity to do that.

Q. How much is it asking of the freshmen to go to Notre Dame to start their first game as a player up there in a game like this?
TAYLOR DOYLE: I think I speak for everyone on the team when I say that we came to Texas to play in big games, and I think they're just as excited as anyone to have the opportunity to play the game on the big stage.

Q. Charlie Strong said as a defensive coach if he saw two true freshmen starting on the offensive line, he would blitz them every snap. How do you prepare those players for that, and what is the type of mentality that they have to have in order to stop that from happening?
TAYLOR DOYLE: We're just focused on executing our game plan, and in order to do that, we have to prepare, so we're focused on us and improving as a unit and as individuals and making sure we're ready to play once kickoff happens.

Q. Those guys are playing that Notre Dame defense. What do you see in that defense and their front line? How good are they?
TAYLOR DOYLE: Yeah, Notre Dame has a great defensive front, a lot of depth, guys who can play, so we're excited about the opportunity to play a school with a lot of pride and tradition and history.

S Dylan Haines

Q. Dylan, is it safe to assume things look a little different for you going into this opener than last year, how you feel about your role and things overall?
DYLAN HAINES: Yeah, obviously going into last year just kind of being thrown in as a starter during fall camp, I would say -- I mean, I have the same mentality going into the game as far as how I'm going to compete and how I'm going to play. I would say the only difference is this year -- last year I was just concerned

with what my job was, what my assignment was, just trying to go out there and just trying to play, help the team. Now I'm just trying to take that next step in becoming a leader, not only helping myself but helping the guys around me because we've got a lot of young people going to line up out there in five days, so not only do I have to have myself ready, but I have to have Jason Hall ready, John Bonney ready, some of the young linebackers, Malik Jefferson, that are going to play. I have to have all of them ready.

Q. Are they ready, those young guys, a lot of them that will be playing?
DYLAN HAINES: You look at people were saying at the beginning of fall camp we lost all these guys to the NFL, we lost two linebackers, Quandre Diggs, Mykkele Thompson, and we were going to be a real young team. Honestly it kind of worried me a little bit, too, because last year I had those guys to rely on. I had those guys that are in the position I'm in now to just try and lead me, try and coach me and make sure I know what I'm doing. I was able to take that same mentality into camp and to help these young guys. Like I said, John Bonney, going to be the starter, hasn't played; Malik Jefferson, going to be the start, hasn't played. So I'm just trying to take all the knowledge that I had from last year and just give all that to them and they've done it and taken it with great stride, and I think both of those players that I've spoken a little bit about are ready, and everyone else that's going to play in five days here is going to be ready, as well.

Q. That said, isn't it a lot asking freshmen to come in and make a huge impact immediately?
DYLAN HAINES: I think the hardest thing about playing as a freshman is people are going to look at you're just out of high school, you're 18 years old, you're maybe not big, you're maybe not fast enough, but I think the biggest thing is just the mental side of the game. I think that's the area where players have the most trouble connecting from the high school level to the college level is there's so much more thinking that goes on in the game that people just really kind of don't understand about.

Like I said, some of the things I've done is I've sat down with all the young DBs and really stressed to them about getting in the playbook because that's the No. 1 key to getting on and off the field because if you don't know what you're doing, it doesn't matter how big you are, how fast you are, you don't have a place out there. That's been one of the things the coaches have stressed, too, to the players, and that was one of the things that I took last year and kind of used to my advantage was just I knew I wasn't going to be the biggest guy out there, I wasn't going to be the fastest, so what I did was I learned to think and learned to

anticipate and recognize everything that I could and just take that into my game with me, so that's what I'm trying to stress to these young guys, and I think they're doing a great job of that.

Q. What do you think it's going to be like going and playing in Notre Dame Stadium and on that campus and in that setting?
DYLAN HAINES: Well, you know, I honestly couldn't tell you because I haven't been in a historic stadium like that, but I grew up in Austin, I grew up watching the Texas Longhorns and I watched them. I never got to go to any of the historic games, but I never missed a home game. I watched them play USC in the Rose Bowl, and I watched them play Michigan, and I watched them play these teams. Just watching I was excited, so obviously words can't describe how I'm going to feel running out of that tunnel here in five days. But I just know it's going to be insane. I'm thrilled.

Q. With your story a lot of people could maybe think of "Rudy." How cool is it to be playing in that stadium with your story and that movie being what it is?
DYLAN HAINES: Kind of when I started playing last year, I compared a lot to Rudy. You know, I've seen the movie, and I like the story behind it. I'd like to think I've done a little bit more football-wise than Rudy accomplished. But just such a great story and a story that gives that school a lot of the tradition and the "Rudy" chants and all that and them just giving Rudy the same chance that I was given.

You know, it's just a great story, and I really can't wait to go and not just to play football but just to see the campus and I hear they have like a Rudy wall or -- I might not get to see it but they have something that is there for him. I'm thrilled to get to go to a place like that and get to play in a game.

Q. What's at stake for this team and this program against Notre Dame?
DYLAN HAINES: It's obviously a big game. But regardless of who we're playing, though, it's going to be a big game. Every team right now is 0-0, so I think the whole mentality going into this game is just to go out and win, and that's really the only thing that we're concerned with right now. We're not really concerned with how big of a game it is to the media, how big -- how expensive all the tickets are, whatever. Whatever else is going on with the game, but I don't think really anything is at stake here. I think win or lose it's going to be a great game, it's going to be a hard-fought game. We're just trying to go out there and win. All the hard work we've put into this off-season and this fall camp, we're just going to look and have it pay out here in five days.

Q. Have you started watching game film and what do you think about their offense?
DYLAN HAINES: Yeah, we've been watching film now for a few weeks, so coming into game week now, diving down a little deeper into what they're doing on offense, and so I think some of the things we've been just stressing is one, just kind of trying and contain the quarterback with Malik Zaire, he can throw it and he can run it so that's one of the things they have going for them, kind of running that power option type stuff that they do. That's one thing. And then also containing Will Fuller. We watched 10 plus plays of him just running straight down the field, and whether he's covered or not, they're going to throw it. We're just going to try and prevent the deep ball, try and contain the quarterback, keep him in the pocket, have him make smart and accurate throws. That's as complicated as I like to get.

But yeah, so that's just some of the things, and then I can't really speak for offense, but I know we're going to go out there and try and move the ball with this new offense we've got, try and keep them on their feet, keep the tempo of the game up to the speed that we like to play it at.

Q. Does that excite you, being ready for the deep balls and you can make a big play?
DYLAN HAINES: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, that's just -- when you're back there playing, whether it's two high, one high, whatever, and that's your responsibility, that's just something that I'm always going to be aware of in the back of my mind is when I go back there is where is No. 7. On the off chance he takes off down the field, I'll hopefully be able to get a good jump on it and make a play.

QB Tyrone Swoopes

Q. What does this mean to be the starting quarterback for the Texas Longhorns on opening day in South Bend, Indiana? Can you put it into words?
TYRONE SWOOPES: It's obviously exciting. We're going to go up there and just play hard like we've been practicing hard and working out hard all summer and fall camp. It will be an exciting experience.

Q. The common word that's come out in terms of describing your fall camp has been how hard you have worked. Everybody has talked about how hard you have worked. Did you feel as though you had to put in a greater amount of effort and work hard and all that sort of thing? Have you felt like it's been a lot harder for you, a lot more hard work than what you've done in the past?

TYRONE SWOOPES: I definitely feel that way, just because last year wasn't the year anybody wanted, so this year we've just got to put in the work and do what you've got to do to get to the point that you want to be. I mean, I just did all I could on my own and with my teammates to kind of get us closer to where we want to be.

Q. Where did you feel you had to improve the most?
TYRONE SWOOPES: Just getting in the film room, kind of working on some small footwork things that have helped me improve accuracy and things like that. I mean, I just kind of, like I said, did that stuff on my own and got with some of the receivers and stuff in the summer and during this fall camp and tried to get those things fixed.

Q. What was the conversation like when Charlie told you that you were going to be getting the nod, getting the start in South Bend?
TYRONE SWOOPES: Well, he didn't even sit me down or anything like that. He already said that me and both Jerrod were going to play, so I was really not concerned with who's starting and who's not. I'm just going to go out there when I get my chance to play and do my part.

Q. Was there a formal announcement or anything or it just kind of came about that you were going to be starting?
TYRONE SWOOPES: It just kind of came about. There was no formal, like big presentation or anything like that.

Q. Charlie said all along that whoever was going to win this quarterback job would win the locker room. Did you feel like you had to do something to win the locker room or did you feel like your play could just kind of speak for itself?
TYRONE SWOOPES: I mean, I feel like mostly it's just my play. I'm just showing people that I've gotten a lot better since the last time we played, and didn't really feel like I had to do anything different outside of that, just kind of being myself around my teammates and coaches and everything. Other than just performing better, I didn't really feel like I had to do anything different.

Q. Are you pretty vocal? Do you feel like when you're on the field, you're a pretty vocal guy?
TYRONE SWOOPES: I'd say I'm more vocal not in the sense of just like yelling and all that, but kind of when people do something wrong, just kind of walk up to them and just tell them how to do it right and how we expect it to be done, and when they do a good job on something, just kind of do the same thing, tell them

that they did good and keep on doing what they're doing. I'd say more in that sense I am.

Q. What's your mindset going into this year? I remember a couple months ago Coach Strong was saying that you kind of have that chip on your shoulder, that you want to show people that last year isn't you.
TYRONE SWOOPES: Yeah, I think that's how the whole program is going into it, just because it wasn't just me, it was everybody that didn't really have the year that they wanted to have. So I think everybody kind of has a chip on their shoulder and is just kind of ready to go out there and show people what we've got.

Q. You played in the Oklahoma game, you've been on the road to a bunch of games. Do you think it's going to be a special game plan in South Bend against Notre Dame in that setting, that atmosphere?
TYRONE SWOOPES: I think it'll be really special, just because, of course, of the tradition that both programs have, and I mean, I've been hearing about how it's going to be a lot of people and sold out and whatnot. I think it'll be really special.

Q. Did you ever watch the movie "Rudy" growing up? Were you ever a fan of that?
TYRONE SWOOPES: I've never watched that movie. I've never seen it.

Q. Are you scared to death of all the freshmen that are blocking for you on Saturday?
TYRONE SWOOPES: No. I've been with those guys since they got here in the summer. I've seen how they worked. I've seen how they perform in fall camp, so I'm excited to play with them.

Q. How much is it asking of a freshman to come in and play immediately and make an impact in a big game like that?
TYRONE SWOOPES: I feel like it's asking a lot, but I feel like they wouldn't have came if they didn't want to play. We're going to give them what they asked for, so I think it's good for them.

Q. How do you plan to handle adversity if you make a mistake? What is your attitude going to be like?
TYRONE SWOOPES: Just coming back, getting the coaching, seeing what I did wrong, and going back out there and not doing it again.

Q. What type of pressure do you feel knowing that there is another quarterback who's going to enter the game and possibly take your job if you struggle on the field?
TYRONE SWOOPES: None at all. I mean, just go out there and play my game. Can't really get outside of myself and do anything, try to do anything spectacular. Coaches always say that they want a manager, so I'll just go out there and do the best I can.

Q. It's probably pretty hard to not be looking over your shoulder knowing that Jerrod is waiting. How do you compartmentalize that?
TYRONE SWOOPES: Like I said before, when you kind of look over your shoulder looking at somebody else, that's when people pass you up. You can't really worry about anybody else. You've just got to kind of compete and get better, compete with yourself.

Q. It's been almost exactly a year since you were named starter last year. How have you changed in that year?
TYRONE SWOOPES: I think I have just gotten more mature, kind of know what's to come. I know what I've got to do in the week's preparation to kind of get ready for an opponent. I think that's probably the most I've changed.

Q. Has it ever happened over the past year that you were ready -- not that you were expecting because I know you weren't expecting some of the losses that you had, but were you ready for everything that you've gone through as the starting quarterback?
TYRONE SWOOPES: I don't think anybody is ready for anything that they -- they just kind of first get into it. I mean, I feel like I'm ready now, more ready than I was, of course, and I think it'll be a better experience than it was last year.

Q. How impressive has it been seeing all these freshmen, both offense and defense, come in and just make an immediate impact? Does that surprise you that these young guys have been able to do that?
TYRONE SWOOPES: Not really, just because seeing them work in the summer and then in the fall camp, just how eager they were to kind of contribute however they could, it didn't really surprise me to see how many of them were actually going to get to play come this season.

Q. Is Jerrod Heard ready?
TYRONE SWOOPES: Yeah, I'd say he's ready. I feel like they wouldn't put him out there if he wasn't, and so I feel like when he gets in, he'll do fine.

Q. What type of progress has he made that you've noticed compared to last year?
TYRONE SWOOPES: I feel like he's just similar to me; we've both had some footwork issues and things like that to get fixed. He's done that, and he's just been performing well in practice, and hopefully he'll do the same in games.

Q. Big picture, Tyrone, what's at stake for this team and this program when you consider how you finished last year?
TYRONE SWOOPES: Well, everybody's first game is huge, whether it's against somebody like Notre Dame or somebody not as good, so I feel like I'm not really worried about last year, just kind of starting anew and trying to get a roll on this year.

Q. What has Charlie told you guys about the atmosphere that you're going to be walking into? He said he showed you pictures and tried to describe it. What's been his message to you about what that's going to be like?
TYRONE SWOOPES: He just always tells us, you can't let the stage get too big for you, that all those people will be there but they can't step foot on the field, it'll just be us and Notre Dame on the field, so we can't really let that consume us.

Q. You lost your two top receivers. Who do you see filling that void?
TYRONE SWOOPES: I've seen a lot of guys, like I said, eager to help where they could, and like two or three have stepped into those two places that left, so I'm excited to see what they can do.

Q. Do you feel like you should be the starter? Do you feel like you did enough? I know the coaches believe in you; do you?
TYRONE SWOOPES: Yeah, I believe in myself. But at the end of the day, it's not my decision, it's the coaches' decision, and regardless of what happens, whether we win or -- if we're winning, then I don't really care who's playing and who's not playing.

Q. How badly do you want to prove the doubters wrong? A lot of people towards the end of last season, there was a lot of questions about the offense and the quarterback position at Texas the last two games. How badly is this burning inside of you that you just want to prove to everybody that you can be the starting quarterback at Texas?
TYRONE SWOOPES: It's not just that. It's just proving to myself. I know I can do it, and just going out and doing it, that's the last thing I've got to do, and I feel like

I'll be able to do that.

RB Johnathan Gray

Q. How different is the feeling for you guys this year going into the opener than say it was this time a year ago?
JOHNATHAN GRAY: I think guys are more excited now to definitely know that we're getting ready to play a great team, Notre Dame, and I think the guys are excited to go in with some competition and get ready to just show what we've been working on for this year and show everybody that Texas is getting back on top.

Q. Talk about getting back on top, J-Gray, how far does this game go to prove you guys are back on top and the T is back in Texas and there's no more 6-7?
JOHNATHAN GRAY: There's no more 6-7. For this team I think we have a lot more riding on this. We try not to focus on the past and try and, like I said, put Texas back on top. Guys are more in tune with that this year than they were last year. We have more young guys. We'll just wait and see.

Q. Talking about those young guys, is it surprising how many freshmen, true freshmen and red-shirt freshmen are going to be having an immediate impact on this team?
JOHNATHAN GRAY: Oh, yeah, most definitely. Coming in as a freshman for me we definitely didn't have that many guys, and this year, seeing those guys ready to play, learning the playbook faster than we did is exciting for me being a senior. I know that those guys are willing and ready to put everything on the line for their teammates, and that's where we're at right now.

Q. That said, isn't it a lot to ask of 24 freshmen on the depth chart? Isn't that a lot to ask that many guys come in and make that big an impact that soon?
JOHNATHAN GRAY: It's not a lot to ask if you're ready for it, and I think those guys are ready for it. Coming in in the summer workouts, there were still some little freshman antics that they were doing, but for the most part those guys have matured faster than I've seen freshmen mature. Like I said, they know the playbook and those guys are just ready to go out and ball.

Q. What were they doing?
JOHNATHAN GRAY: You know, not waking up on time and just kind of lagging in the back. But they're up front right now.

Q. They're not playing Aledo High School on Saturday, those guys. What advice do you give them? How do you calm their nerves and ease them into that first game?
JOHNATHAN GRAY: Just tell them, hey, it's football. You're one of the outstanding athletes to come to the University of Texas, and it's football. Understand and don't make it harder than what it is. Just go out there and play the game that you love and do your best.

Q. Are you really returning kickoffs?
JOHNATHAN GRAY: I'm doing whatever my team needs me to do to win.

Q. I mean, do you worry at all about -- injuries have been a part of your career, but putting yourself in other situations where you can get hurt?
JOHNATHAN GRAY: No, personally not for me. I tore my Achilles and missed those four games, and that was the biggest injury that put me out. Other injuries haven't kept me from playing against other teams, so I'm just willing and ready to do whatever to help my team.

Q. Charlie said a week ago or so you didn't play in that scrimmage because of some minor injuries. How are you feeling heading into this and are you still feeling those --
JOHNATHAN GRAY: I'm good right now, healthy, ready to go out and play my senior year, and go out there and help my teammates.

Q. Charlie said in his press conference today talking about putting more emphasis on the run game so it's not all on the quarterback. How do you prepare yourself for that this season and some of the younger guys, as well?
JOHNATHAN GRAY: For me it's just understanding what I have to get done. I know I have to keep the ball in my hands a little bit longer. That way Tyrone can think in the backfield. I know protection-wise we have to stand up as a team. As a running back you have to block linebackers and keep the pressure off the quarterback.

As long as we can get the running game going, I think Tyrone will have an easier game going in passing-wise. For us we just have to get the running game started.

Q. How did he (Swoopes) win the locker room?
JOHNATHAN GRAY: Just being Tyrone. Tyrone is a guy that you want to be around, and he's a leader on the team. He tells people how it is. Tyrone is a great guy that you want to be around constantly. He'll teach you what you need to

learn. He'll teach you the playbook, and you hang out with him. He's done a great job of being mature from last year. He understands what he needs to get done to help this team out, and so I think he's done a great job of handling everything.

Q. Is he as quiet around you guys as he is when he gets in front of the microphone?
JOHNATHAN GRAY: No, he talks a little bit more. I think he's more excited to talk to us than the media.

Q. What do you think it's going to be like going up and playing in that setting, that atmosphere, Notre Dame Stadium, all the history there?
JOHNATHAN GRAY: I think it's going to be great. Some of us, we haven't been there. Some guys visited. For me personally, I think the atmosphere, the tradition, all the history that went into it, it's going to be great to step foot over there and be able to play and be a part of that history. We're willing and ready to go.

Q. Who is "Chuck" Strong?
JOHNATHAN GRAY: Chuck Strong is Coach Strong's alter ego, and you don't want Chuck to come out because Chuck is not nice. Chuck will try to bury you into the ground, and like it says, Chuck Strong is very Chuck Strong.

Q. Have you met Chuck?
JOHNATHAN GRAY: "Chester". I've probably met Chester. That's a little bit borderline of Chuck and Charlie. But a little bit.

Q. What does it take to get Chuck Strong to come out?
JOHNATHAN GRAY: A couple mistakes. Not much. A couple mistakes. A couple being late to something, and Chuck will come out.

Q. Did you see a lot of Chuck Strong last season?
JOHNATHAN GRAY: Very much a lot of Chuck.

Q. So the less Chuck the better for you?
JOHNATHAN GRAY: The less Chuck the better. Chester is good. Chester is good.

Q. Was it good to have Chuck? Was that something maybe this program needed?
JOHNATHAN GRAY: Oh, yeah, definitely. From last year when Coach Strong came in, they came in guns a blazing. This is what it's going to be….abide by the rules,

and if you don't do that, then you're going to be dismissed. So guys started to wake up and be like, okay, this guy is for real. Coming in this year, everybody knows he's for real. You don't want to mess up because you know he'll get onto you, and guys are more focused because of that, so I think it helped out.

Q. Do you get a sense from Tyrone that he wants to prove that last year wasn't him?
JOHNATHAN GRAY: Oh, yeah. That's what we talk about in the locker room. Tyrone is like, 'I can't wait to step on the field and prove that we're back, prove that I can lead the team and I can be a leader for the team,' and we're all rallying around him. That guy has done a complete 180, and for the better. We love him for it, and I'm ready to see what he can do this year.

Q. What kind of tempo and high octane are we going to see from this offense Saturday?
JOHNATHAN GRAY: It's going to be fast. It's going to be fast, furious, and guys are going to be even more one-on-one battles skill guys wise, and everybody is going to be excited. You're going to see a more excited offense and more productive offense. Guys are going to know more about what they're supposed to do, their responsibility, and getting the job done.

Q. How about Jerrod, where is he, and obviously he's going to play, but how do you feel --
JOHNATHAN GRAY: We feel comfortable with Jerrod, too. Jerrod is more a rah-rah guy. He's, like I said, understanding the playbook better, and he's shown us what he can do this spring. We rally around that, and if Tyrone goes down, knock on wood, we know that Jerrod Heard can get the job done, as well. Like I said, we rally around them.

Q. Charlie Strong said that as a defensive coach if he saw two true freshmen offensive linemen he would be blitzing every single play. Is that kind of what the offensive coaches have been preparing this offense for with how good Notre Dame's defense is?
JOHNATHAN GRAY: I think in the beginning, yes, with Patrick Vahe and Connor, for them guys to be young, they had to learn the game, but now those guys are matured, they're nasty, they're mean. So I wouldn't be blitzing too much. They'll pick it up. As a senior running back, seeing that, you're like, okay, let's go, I want to run behind them. So what they've done since they've got here has opened my eyes, and I'm ready to roll behind them.

DE Shiro Davis

Q. Shiro, what's this defense going to prove on Saturday at Notre Dame?
SHIRO DAVIS: I know from the past year, a lot of people consider us being soft. We've got to definitely improve on that end, be able stop the run, and just finish a game for four quarters.

Q. How much does that burn you when over the last year people thought you guys were soft?
SHIRO DAVIS: I hated it with a passion. That's something that comes from my neighborhood, nobody ever really took it lightly, and definitely as a football team you sure don't want to be called soft.

Q. Talk about these freshmen. A lot of them are starting. Are they in for a rude awakening or do you feel confident these guys can get it done and bring it Saturday?
SHIRO DAVIS: The freshmen that came in this year? I mean, all of them worked just as hard as anybody else. I mean, I feel like they definitely have a good understanding of what to expect, and the older guys will definitely grab them and just let them know what needs to be done.

Q. Do you think they really know, though? Think back to your freshman year; did you know?
SHIRO DAVIS: No, they really won't know until the actual game day, especially OU week. It's just one of the things you really can't put into words.

Q. What will you say to them or what have you said to them to try to get them anywhere near knowing?
SHIRO DAVIS: Whatever you do, just don't freeze up. Just go back to the basics.

Q. With a quarterback like Zaire, how do you guys approach containing him?
SHIRO DAVIS: Just really work on our rush lanes and make sure he doesn't have a gap to run out the pocket, and just really, like I said, stick to the basics. Don't try to do too much but make sure you do your job.

Q. Talking about those freshmen, is it impressive to see how many of them are having such an immediate impact on this team?
SHIRO DAVIS: Yeah, definitely. For a bunch of young guys to step up and help out as much as they can, it's a good thing, especially when they're pushing us upperclassmen, so we've got to step our game up as well. They're definitely a

way for everybody to get better.

Q. A lot of people say that the linebacker position is the quarterback of the defense, and you all will be starting a true freshman and a redshirt freshman at linebacker. How much concern is there with that?
SHIRO DAVIS: I mean, a lot of people do say that, but everybody with this defense, everybody knows what to do. I mean, everybody knows the calls. I guess in the off-season everybody talked, never be at a position besides your own. In a situation like this, he doesn't get the call; he doesn't know. We just help each other out. So really can't say for our defense that the linebacker is the quarterback of the defense.

Q. What do you think it's going to be like going up to South Bend and playing in that setting, Notre Dame Stadium, all the history and tradition that that place has?
SHIRO DAVIS: It's going to be amazing, man. I'm so excited for it. I feel like it'll be like playing here, honestly, especially with the tradition we have here at Texas.

Q. What has Coach Strong tried to -- what's the message he's tried to give you guys in terms of what you're going to be walking into with that setting?
SHIRO DAVIS: I mean, it's just -- when I think about it, it's just like playing here at University of Texas. There's so much tradition here, I think they have one more game than us. I think it's like 892 and we have 891 or something like that, and he just preached it would be something special to go get it tied up.

Q. Coach said 6-7 is not the standard. After the bowl game he said the program had no passion and pride. Is the passion and pride back in this program and will this game go a long way to either show or not show that the T is back in Texas?
SHIRO DAVIS: Oh, definitely. It's a big game, especially for the first game of the season, and no, 6-7 is never a standard here at Texas. It's something we definitely want to go out and prove ourselves that we are back and we're ready to play.

Q. How different are things than they were a year ago?
SHIRO DAVIS: It's a lot more brotherhood here. Everybody loves each other more. Everybody seems to get along with each other, just like last night, like 25 of us went to go get some wings. No special occasion, just because we wanted to hang out with each other more. I feel like that's something we definitely needed last year.