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An Interview With:

## TEXAS A&M COACH MIKE SHERMAN

PETER IRWIN: Welcome to the Big 12 and, Coach, if you would introduce your players and make an opening statement or two.

COACH SHERMAN: Today we have Travis Schneider, offensive tackle for us. We have Devin Gregg, safety. And we have Jordan Pugh, cornerback. All fine players for us this upcoming season. Looking forward to working with them again after the spring and expect them to be leaders on our football team.

This is an opening statement. You all did a nice job organizing this thing. It's going pretty good. Of course, it's better here to be with the print people than it is with the electronic people. I won't buy you lunch, but anyways -- it's great being back at Texas A&M. I'm excited about it. Someone asked me, When did you make the decision? What was the deciding factor between college and the National Football League and what made you choose college?

It really wasn't so much college versus the National Football League; it was Texas A&M, a place I had a fair amount of familiarity with. I know the landscape well and I know what it's all about. It's as similar as I can get to a place like Green Bay, Wisconsin, where you come in to work every day, the expectations are very high, and the fans are very passionate.

It's like that up in Green Bay. It's like that in College Station, Texas, and the state of Texas all in the '80s. And that was the reason for going to Texas A&M. I feel strongly about the university and the leadership there and the potential that is within our grasp at some point.

And I look forward to achieving that potential, getting that potential to fruition. Anyway, questions?

PETER IRWIN: We'll have our first question.

**Q. I was curious if you talked to other guys who have come back to college with NFL head coaching experience, Pete Carroll, and Bill Callahan, for instance, and I'd like to know what appealed to you about Nolan Cromwell that you made him a part of your staff?**

COACH SHERMAN: I talked to Gene Stallings. And he's an A&M graduate and has taken his most recent job at Alabama to a national championship after having served as a head coach in the National Football League. Obviously Gene was coach and athletic director at College Station. I've talked to him. I haven't talked to Pete. And I have because Tim Cassidy worked with Coach Callahan. I have a fair amount of questions I've thrown to Tim that he has also thrown at Coach Callahan.

So I have had some connections. Not a lot of them. I think you have to do it the way you think is best. You evaluate the landscape and move forward from there. As far as Nolan Cromwell is concerned. Nolan and I worked in Green Bay when we were both assistants and I went to Seattle with him and Mike Holmgren. I was the coordinator. He was the receiver coach. So I've known him for quite some time.

Whenever I go to Combine, Nolan and I always sit down and talk football, and I've been impressed with him and the job he's done in the national football. I think this is a great opportunity for us but as well for him. He's excited about being a part of college football. He's been in the National Football League for 17 years and the opportunity to come to college and College Station, I think he had really blossomed. And we will blossom because of it.

**Q. Can you talk about how Jorvorskie Lane has bought into moving to fullback, and the second part, do you know what he's tipping the scales at this week?**

COACH SHERMAN: What time is it?

That plays part of it, too. I think it's difficult. When I came in, my press conference obviously I met with the team. Jorvorskie was in class during that time. But he came up to me shortly before my press conference, introduced himself, and at that time I told him, you're going to be a fullback. And there was no hemming or hawing about it. He didn't seem totally pleased with it but didn't balk at it necessarily.

And he presents a lot of qualities that you look for. I mean, in this offense you want your fullback to be able to catch the football. They have to be able to give us an advantage. We've never had a runner like Jorvorskie, and in the offense we've been in with a fullback that can run the ball like he can run the football.

He gives us a double threat as a runner and also as a receiver. Obviously his blocking, he's not had to do that very often. But because of his size he should be able to engulf people as well just mass on mass. And he's had some pretty devastating blocks in the springtime.

And I want him to have even more so as we continue on. The weight is an issue. It has been since we got there. He has lost some weight but still has a ways to go. And hopefully he'll be closer to that goal when we get to camp and then during camp that will have to be addressed continuously to get him down to the weight that I aspire him to get to that we agreed to, which would be in the 260s.

So we have a ways to go there. But I'm hopeful that we can get there.

**Q. Can you talk about your quarterback situation, what you've seen from Stephen on film, what you think of Jerrod and how this could evolve?**

COACH SHERMAN: I spend more time looking at our spring tapes and evaluating players and even game tapes. I've watched the game tapes. And I just want to see how our quarterbacks work in what we're asking them to do. So that's really been my evaluation.

I think we have a young quarterback that came in, Tommy Dorman came in in January. So he has also contributed to that group. But Ryan Tannehill obviously is a young player, red shirted, has a chance as well as the other two guys.

And they both are competing with each other. Jerrod and Stephen are competing on a daily basis. It's very healthy. But it's very competitive. And I've been asked this many times about quarterback controversy. And I've said it

many times. I don't think you have a controversy when you feel like you have good talent at that position.

And if we didn't have talent at that position, yeah, there would be a controversy. And if you don't have a quarterback in this offense, well, you're going to struggle. I have confidence that we're going to have a very good quarterback when we start the season. I think he'll play at a higher level because of the competition. I think it would be unfair to me to just walk in and hand Stephen the job.

And I've told him that. He's going to have to earn it. And I think in fairness to him he has to work. In fairness to Jerrod, they both have to work to compete against one another and earn the job.

**Q. I guess to follow up on that, your offense is very different from what Franchione was running, and predicated on getting that option running game going. Do you feel like the players that you have can be flexible enough with their skill level, with techniques that you're teaching to be able to adapt to your offense, not just at quarterback, but with the offensive line and everybody else that has to pull for you?**

COACH SHERMAN: That's a great observation. Doesn't make one better than the other. It's just different. Whether you're running an option style offense or pro style offense, you still have to be good in the offensive line. We lost some good players off of last year's squad. We're going to be very inexperienced and young on that stage. We only had eight scholarship linemen in camp this past spring. Fortunately we signed some guys, and whether we can matriculate fast enough to be able to be inserted the lineup remains to be seen.

But I think everything starts with them. Can they learn the techniques and the schemes that I want them to learn? Most definitely. And I feel like at the receiver position as well, although we don't have it -- I may have written it all down when you asked me for starters, but we're still looking for starters at that position. We have to have guys who will catch the ball more consistently. Moving Jamie McCoy to tight end from receiver has helped us with the loss of Martellus Bennett. McCoy is a good route runner. Gained another 10 or 15 pounds in the process to put himself in the position to be a good tight end

but in this offense a tight end is very critical. So that position is the position of concern for me at this present time.

But collectively do they fit? I'm not one that's going to make players fit a scheme. I think the scheme has to fit the players. So we will do less of this and more of this maybe because of what we have or don't have and work from there. But I think we'll be a very functioning offense. But I think everything has to go through the quarterback.

The tail back is very skilled, the tail back position is a very competitive and skilled position. So I feel good at two premiere positions, quarterback and the tail back, that we will be able to move the football.

**Q. Wonder if you can talk about trying to implement your plans of the power running game behind such a young offensive line with that much experience?**

COACH SHERMAN: It's like I said. Regardless of what you do, an inexperienced line, whether you're an option team or a spread offense or West Coast offense or a power offense, it's a challenge. No matter what your scheme is you need a decent offensive line. It's a challenge regardless. But I do feel like what we're asking them to do and the repetition that we have within our offense, particularly in our running game, will afford those linemen an opportunity to get good at the skill level that we need them to get good at.

They're a tough group of guys. And I often feel like an offensive line, even though there's no name -- Travis may be the biggest name in the group, but there's no named guy necessarily that's an all-American, all-conference guy.

I think offensive line is measured collectively. How do they work well collectively. I've been on offensive lines or I've coached offensive lines you have the star player but collectively as a group they didn't mesh very well. So our goal is to get this unit to play very well collectively and to be able to play some of these younger guys that will also have recruited. I almost said drafted. Have recruited to play for us.

So we have to accelerate their learning curve as soon as we can when we get our hands on them in a couple of weeks.

**Q. Can you talk a little bit about what Joe Kines has brought to your defense and when that job opened up again and you were looking for somebody real quick, what about**

**him was it that appealed to you and despite his age?**

COACH SHERMAN: Well, we don't hold age against people. And the older I get, the less I do that.

So I think his age is a tremendous plus for him. Because he's seen everything. I think in college football so much different than the National Football League, your defensive coordinator has to be a sharp guy that has seen everything.

Defensive coordinator, on offense you may be a bear team, a wishbone team, spread team, you need to know one offense. As a defensive coordinator you need to know all those offenses. So you have to be able to stop them. So you have to have a guy who has been in the mix with this. And he has been in a number of places and has had success and has seen it all.

This is a guy that thinks about football when he goes to bed and thinks about it when he wakes up. When you combine that with the passion he brings to the table, it's just a great mix for us and he fits in very well.

Early on in the process, I mean, he was a guy who was going to stay retired. And then we were able to work it another way when he decided this is what he wanted to do. I'm excited. I'm very pleased that he's our assistant head coach as well as our defensive coordinator.

PETER IRWIN: Thank you, Coach.

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