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An Interview With:

## NEBRASKA

CHARLIE FISS: We're ready to begin with the Nebraska Cornhuskers. We'll start off with Coach Bill Callahan and ask you your thoughts.

COACH BILL CALLAHAN: We're excited to be here, to be part of the media day. I hope you enjoyed our players, hope you get a chance to meet the three fellas with us. We brought down three seniors, wide receiver Terrence Nunn, who comes from the Houston area; J.B. Phillips, another Texas native from Colleyville, Texas; and the third player we brought down, Bo Ruud, who is a native of Lincoln, Nebraska.

I hope you get a chance to meet with these guys. Great group of kids all in their fourth and fifth years and they're really great kids. And I hope they have a great time today.

Just an opening remark about where our program is at. We're going into our fourth year. We're excited about our scheduling, it's probably the most challenging schedule we've had since I've been at Nebraska. It's one we all look forward to because there are great teams up and down the board. I start with that.

And secondly, our team as a whole, the nucleus does come back. We're excited about that aspect. And then, of course, what we've done this summer. I think that really points to us being a confident football team in our fourth year, as I've had the opportunity to watch our kids during the course of this summer prepare and get ready for this season.

With that, I'd be more than happy to answer any questions you might have.

**Q. Coach, is the plan still to name that QB starter a few weeks into August drills? And if so, what are you looking for in the meantime with those guys?**

COACH BILL CALLAHAN: We have a number of quarterbacks who are going to be

competing for the starting role, Sam Keller, Joe Ganz. Another third young man that we didn't have a chance to evaluate, or he didn't have the opportunity to play because of injury this spring, his name is Zac Lee, who is a junior college transfer out of San Francisco Community College. We're fortunate enough to recruit a young man out of Wylie, Texas, by the name of Patrick Witt, a fourth quarterback who came in early as a mid-year transfer from the high school ranks, no less, and did a tremendous job. As well as a fifth quarterback by the name of Beau Davis. We feel we're pretty well stocked at that position.

We have good experience. We've got guys that love to compete, love football, and then love being in the film rooms. It's going to be interesting to see how it all shakes out. But we will name that starter the week prior to the Nevada game.

**Q. I was wondering if you could just talk about Terrence Nunn and what he brings to your program, the fact that after this year he'll be a four-year starter, says a lot?**

COACH BILL CALLAHAN: Sure. Terrence is a guy -- interesting enough, when I went down to recruit him, it was probably as -- the first week or second week on the job, and we had flown down to Cypress Falls -- I believe that was the high school he was from. We had an opportunity to recruit Terrence, who at that point was committed to Wisconsin. And first off, Coach Gill, Turner Gill and myself went down. And he was initially going to be committed to Nebraska.

Then there was a coaching change. He decided to go to Wisconsin. So we went back down there. I told Turner, I said, Let's go down there and get this guy. There's no way we're going to let this guy go to Wisconsin where he can be in a pro passing system.

So we went down and visited. I remember Terrence asking me, Coach, am I going to play as a freshman? I said, There's no question you'll play as a freshman, because at that time we didn't have any wide receivers that really came from a passing

system, per se. So in all fairness, Terrence came in. He played as a freshman and it's a good thing and it's a bad thing right now.

It's a good thing because he did have the opportunity to get some experience while he was a young player. On the flip side of it, though, he now concludes his fourth year of eligibility, which, of course, selfishly speaking I would like to see him play five years.

But nonetheless he's a tremendous attitude player. He comes to work and comes to practice, works very diligently, very hard. He's very focused and great respect for the game. That's why I love this guy. He's just a fun competitor, a great example for our younger receiving core and he really spearheads that core of four senior receivers that we have in Nebraska. So I'm proud to have him here with us today.

**Q. Once again, back to the quarterback situation, you had Zac for more than a year, and I know your offense, with all there is to learn about, and he was saying how much better he was from the second year to the first and the experience and repetition and so forth. How big a tie-breaker with your quarterback decision is the experience factor, and how quickly is the learning curve taking place for some of the other guys?**

COACH BILL CALLAHAN: I think they're all learning. I think they've been in that classroom and they've been on the field. They've been in the laboratory so to speak for all the time they've been there, even with Sam. He was in every quarterback meeting a year ago. He had an opportunity to really learn the system, even though he did a lot of his time on the scout team. He did go to every quarterback meeting, watched every practice film. Took in every coaching point that was made.

So it was pretty easy, seamless, in the sense when we hit spring football this year, that those guys could play at a very high and competitive level.

I'll give you an example. We did not have to scale back the offense and start all over again. We didn't have to take the play book and say, Okay, guys, we're going to start here at square one. We actually took off from where we ended up at in the Cotton Bowl against Auburn with that type of installation.

And they really grasped it. They really did an excellent job, really absorbing everything we wanted them to do. So I was pleased with that and

pleased with the success that all of them had this spring.

**Q. Kind of continuing that thought, talk about how significant this decision the quarterback is in terms of you've been there now to kind of implement your system and kind of get, so to speak, your guy in there. So how -- with that in the continued development of your offense, how significant is this decision who you pick a week before the season?**

COACH BILL CALLAHAN: Well, there's so many things that can happen during the course of time and the opener is such a long ways off. We've always managed our quarterbacks, I think, extremely well.

That's because we communicate with them on a constant and consistent basis. So that's never been a problem. Never been a perceived problem.

Our players know where they stand day in day out. They know how they've done from a production standpoint. They're graded. They're evaluated. They know where they're at. So there's no inconsistencies from that aspect.

So, yeah, I don't know if I'm answering your question, but I think overall I think that the guys when they go out on the practice field they know what's expected of them. They know how they're going to be graded, evaluated, and they know the line of communication is wide open. And they know where they have to get to. They know the expectation level of where they gotta get to. I think that's what makes for great competition at that spot, for any spot for that matter.

**Q. Coach, I know coaches don't pay a lot of attention to preseason polls, but were you surprised at all to see Missouri picked by the Big 12 media in the north, and is that something that you would use as motivation for your players?**

COACH BILL CALLAHAN: Well, my understanding is that the Big 12 writers essentially pick the team to win the division predicated on a number of factors.

And the first factor is the quarterback. And since they have a starting quarterback that's established in their program that's been productive, I can see where that's going.

Personally, no, I don't agree with it. But I love our football team and I think they're capable of

doing some great things. And I understand how it all works and why people make the decisions and do the things that they do. And motivation -- we've got plenty of motivation with Nevada, you know, in the opening game.

There's a lot of different variables this season that are different on our schedule. First off being the fact that we play SC and Missouri, both teams, they have two-week byes before we play them. I think that's a little bit unusual. We never encounter that early in the season.

And, of course, we go out and play the ACC champion in Wake Forest. So there's a lot of different dynamics that are happening in the non-conference schedule. One that we look to as a great challenge.

So I don't want to take anything away from Missouri, and I certainly wouldn't want to take anything away from any of the competitors in the Big 12 North, as I was telling the writers out there earlier, hope springs eternal for everybody at this time of year. And it's going to be competitive. It's going to be exciting. It's going to be fun and it's going to be interesting to see how it all shakes out.

**Q. Coach, in the four games, if you dissect the four losses last year, was there a common denominator that you saw, particularly offensively and any shortcomings?**

COACH BILL CALLAHAN: There would be, and we start with this premise and we end with this premise. Winning the turnover battle. I truly believe this. As you look at the Texas game, we turned it late in the game. And if you looked at the Oklahoma game, very first play of the game they made a fine play on the ball and we turned it over. And I felt very strongly in post season games that we played against Oklahoma and the game we played against Auburn, we played championship defense. If you go back and look at the statistics and look at our defense and how they performed in those two games at that time of the year, I think we did remarkably well.

But we did turn the ball over. And I might take that responsibility. But that is the vital factor in winning the championship and not turning the ball over.

And of course we did so I think five times against Oklahoma to their credit and against Auburn twice to their credit. So I don't take anything away from those defenses. They did a fine job.

But that's something we're going back to work on this fall, try to do a better job. We did

during the regular season. During the 9-3 season we did do a good job like I said with the one faltering -- we faltered against Texas late in the game.

Aside from that, that is an area that's always discussed. It's always emphasized and not only in the classroom but on the field as well.

CHARLIE FISS: We'll stop right there.

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