

Southeastern Conference Football Media Days

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Oklahoma Sooners R Mason Thomas

Press Conference



Q. Who's some of your favorite edge rushers?

R MASON THOMAS: Edge rushers, Nick Bonitto is a big one. Micah Parsons, anybody who fits my stature, Nick Bonitto, I was talking about him in the other interview, he's the guy -- he'll be that role model who I look up to. He just went crazy this past season with the Broncos. He is set to make something good.

Q. You had kind of a breakout season last year. Since then, what have been the main things on and off the field that you've been working on?

R MASON THOMAS: My run game. Putting on a little extra weight. Moving well with the weight, too. And I think just overall I can work on everything, but the run game was probably a big one, just more production there -- not just because other people say it but I want it for myself too.

Those are two things -- adding weight and run game production.

Q. You guys had one of your biggest wins last year against Alabama. This year you're headed to Tuscaloosa to play the Crimson Tide. Interested what that win last year did for the morale of the team heading into this season. How excited are you to play at Bryant-Denny Stadium?

R MASON THOMAS: That was a big one. We really kept that momentum into this season. We know what we can do. It showed a little glimpse of what we can do.

So for their stadium, I hear it's loud. When they score, the lights flicker, or actually turns off, right? And it will be fun to play against them. They're a good football team.

Q. You had one of your biggest games this season last year against Auburn in Jordan-Hare Stadium. Your memories of playing in Auburn, and how did you do so well that day?

R MASON THOMAS: To be honest with you, I didn't play that good the first half. I just remember that stadium being loud.

It was a good football team because they were ahead of us most of the game. It was exciting to celebrate with our team, for it to be our first SEC win, it being on the road, it was exciting. It was just a lot of energy. And I like how we played as a team that day against a really good Auburn team.

Q. Who designed your shoes? And what would you like to see from the defense last year that you didn't -- some of the good things you did last year on defense collectively?

R MASON THOMAS: I feel bad, I forgot his name. I need to get in contact with him. It was here in Atlanta. He designed -- the Air Force 1s are iconics. I went with that. It's all white so you can spray paint it and do whatever you want to it. I told him, could I get the OU with the 32? And then I threw the "Grease" on it. I like that movie right there.

I know Coach V talked about the third down last year. We can be better -- that would be a down where we could be better at. We can be better in all downs but the third down was a big thing.

I like what we did last year was the communication. We had a lot of communication. Especially from the leaders, Billy, Danny and Ethan.

On the defensive side, we communicated a lot. For us to be that good on defense, we know we can communicate more, which gives us that exciting feeling for this year coming up that we can be even better.

Q. You spent a little bit of time with John Mateer. What have you seen out of him from a personal perspective and as a teammate? And as far as what do you feel you bring as a prospect going into this season where you may be trying to get better?

R MASON THOMAS: John is funny. The quarterbacks



are like -- I see why everybody likes him. He always knows what to say at the right time. And it's funny, he's quirky, he's swaggy, he's all that. I like him. I'm glad he was able to join our program.

For me, as an outside linebacker, I bring setting the edge being that forefront, it's big in the trenches in the SEC. For us, like, Dam Williams, (indiscernible), P.J., for us to be that unit, we want to be, we all, including me, bring that violence that violence, that leadership from a big-guy standpoint, leading by example, because when you talk, it's all talk until you go do it. So leading by example is a big thing for me.

Q. A lot has been made about Coach Venables taking over as defensive play caller this year.

R MASON THOMAS: Yeah.

Q. How much have you all kind of looked or seen some of what his defense looked like at Clemson? And what's different with him in charge now compared to maybe prior?

R MASON THOMAS: It's the same thing. Since 2022, my first year, when he first got here, it's the same thing. You would think it would be some kind of drop-off, but he's a defensive mind. He's always on the on defensive side of the ball, so it's the same.

It's no drop-off. We don't have to change language or anything like that. It's the same playbook. With him it's always been like that. We weren't nervous. We weren't frustrated. We weren't rattled. It was the same.

Q. (Question off microphone)?

R MASON THOMAS: When I was getting recruited at OU, it was a lot of Clemson film. I think now we ran a lot of plays like he did in Clemson. It was like we're looking at what we do now, more of -- I know my first year we were looking at Clemson a lot because we didn't have any film of us doing it. Yeah, we have so much film of us doing it now so we're watching ourselves.

Q. With the storied program that is Oklahoma and the success that it's had, how much pressure do you guys have to get back to that, get back to a double-digit-win season after last year?

R MASON THOMAS: I don't think we in a sense have pressure. We know what the standard is, what the people in the team in the past have set. So I know if we can put our head down, we can work, focus on the journey and not the destination, we'll be right where we want to be.

Q. LSU's never been to Oklahoma before. It's way down the line I guess, Thanksgiving or so. But what can fans expect about going to see a football game up there?

R MASON THOMAS: It's going to be a loud environment. They have never been to Oklahoma? Really? Have we been to LSU before? First time.

So like how their environment was loud, really good LSU team, they're coming to another really good LSU team coming to our stadium. It's going to be loud. It's going to be a lot of that older music, that Iron Man, AC/DC. You're going to hear a lot of that. That's what you're going to expect.

Q. You laughed a little bit when we brought up John Mateer. What thought prompted that, the smile? And what have been some of the interactions? How has he ingratiated himself to the team since he got there?

R MASON THOMAS: He's integrated himself into the team, like, smoothly. If he says he's anxious or he was a little nervous, he didn't look like he was to me. But it felt like he's been here for four years already.

So our interactions are funny. He likes to goof around all the time. Especially on the plane ride here, we were just laughing on the plane. Our interactions are funny. So that's anytime somebody brings it up, I'm always going --

Q. (Question off microphone)?

R MASON THOMAS: He'll say, like, random things at random times, but he knows what to say. I don't know I can't even remember a certain joke or a certain comment, but I just knew I was, like, laughing.

Q. Another school coming to Oklahoma for the first time in program history this year is going to be Auburn, the rematch with Auburn. Auburn's never made the trip. Jackson Arnold, transferring in, he's going to be leading Auburn as the quarterback this year. What kind of player is Auburn getting in Jackson Arnold, and what's it going to be like facing a team quarterbacked by a former teammate?

R MASON THOMAS: It's going to be exciting. Hats off to Auburn. For them to come into our stadium, it's going to be exciting. The AC/DC, they're going to hear a lot of that. I know Jackson already knows -- he's been in our stadium before. He's going to know it already, the environment, he's played a lot of games there. We're just excited to play them.



