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An interview with:

COACH SHAW

COACH SHAW: It's a difficult conference. It's an exciting conference with a bunch of different teams and have a bunch of different styles. It's an exciting year. I think it's going to be an insane year in our conference just with the amount of good football teams that we have and the exciting players that we have.

As far as our team's concerned, on the offensive side, having Kevin Hogan come back for a fifth-year I think was great. I think the way he ended the season last year he's playing as well as anybody in the country. Very excited about him coming back as a senior again as a captain. Really, I think we got a glimpse of how good he can become. I think he's still one of the more underrated quarterbacks in the nation. But you look at what he's done leading us to back-to-back conference championships, back-to-back bowls two or three years ago.

Having some ups and downs as a team as we had last year, now looking forward to what we have. I'm excited about him coming back. I think we have a phenomenal group of tight ends that I think everybody is going to get a chance to see. I'm excited about the running back position.

Chris McCaffrey showed me some phenomenal things a year ago. That is just the tip of the iceberg for him. But I also believe Remound Wright and Barry Sanders will have a big hand in what we do going forward. I think those guys are going to play very well for us. Really excited for us in the next step with the offensive line. The majority of our guys being fourth year seniors, and a lot of guys that have played some football for us. I think this is the first year in two years we've had competition.

So we're going to have competition for the right tackle position. We're going to have competition for the guys on the inside who really have a chance to put together a really good group

of mature young guys that learned a lot of lessons last year.

Defensively for us, actually, talk about the offensive line and being able to protect Kevin Hogan and having two senior receivers on the outside and Devon Cajuste and Michael Rector have both made a lot of plays. We didn't perform at a high level last year as we did two years ago, but Michael Rector averaged 30 yards a catch, and Devon averaged 20 yards a catch.

So we have two big players that we're excited about. Defensively we don't have a lot of returning players coming back. Losing a lot of guys to the draft and graduation. But the guys we have coming back are obviously exciting for us. You look at the guys we've recruited and the guys that have gotten just a little bit of playing time, we're excited to start up front. We have our first fifth-year transfer in Brennan Scarlett coming over from Cal who has played very well for them. He's been injured on and off throughout the years and he looks like he's going to be healthy enough to start camp in some way, shape or form. But healthy enough to play during the course of the year and to have that experience I think is phenomenal for us. Aziz Shittu coming back as a fourth year senior and highly recruited young man that has unbelievable talent that if he can stay healthy he'll be great for us. Two sophomores that one played last year and one red-shirted. Harrison Phillips played there for us. I think we've got a good group of guys, our line backing corp. Really excited about it.

I think Blake Martinez will be a household name by the end of the year. I think a lot of people know how good he can be. He's here today. But we have great book ends on the outside linebacker position, and we have a competition for one position inside. But as you can see, we've recruited a lot of linebackers, in particular, to vie for those spots.

Safety-wise, I think we've got two seniors back there in Dallas Lloyd and Kodi Whitfield that haven't played a lot but they're both seniors and had great springs. Really excited about their prospects. They're backed up by four guys that we've recruited and we're really excited about that we'll have a chance

to compete for playing time as well. Ronnie Harris is coming back. Earned his starting role late in the year last year and played extremely well. Excited about him coming back for his fifth-year, and we'll compete for the other corner position with a bunch of guys that we think are talented.

So we're a talented football team. We're lacking a little experience in some spots. But at the same time, it's the reason why you recruit and you recruit depth. So when spots open up, you have great guys vying for those positions. So that's where we are. As I mentioned, Blake Martinez is in the back of the room, and Kyle Murphy, our left tackle moving from right to left tackle, his natural position has a chance to be an outstanding football player. He's in the back as well.

Q. In your last few games you ran the ball 35 to 45 times. Was that a conscious effort to get back to basics, and if so, what prompted it?

COACH SHAW: So, those are always difficult questions for me because we had a lead in those games. Our biggest thing is we like to be balanced. We like to be balanced. But if we get a two-score lead or three-score lead like we did against UCLA like we did against Maryland in the bowl game, we're going to try to run the clock and run them out of the stadium. It's just our mentality. We're a physical team. That time also coinciding with us jelling as an offensive line and being a more efficient and explosive running game.

So those things kind of played into it. It wasn't things that we wanted mentally to do it. We got in a position where we got early leads and we got after both those teams pretty well on offense, very efficient offensively as well as very explosive offensively. And we ran the ball more in those second halves and not just to run the clock, but also to try to impose our will.

Q. What is it about the culture? It seems you guys kind of reload every year. What is it about the culture of the team and the players?

COACH SHAW: It's a mentality to make sure that we're recruiting depth. That we always have enough players because you never know when there is going to be an injury. I go all the way back to the 2006, the year before Coach Harbaugh came, that 1 and 11 football team. There were five or six NFL guys on that team, but the team wasn't very deep. In one injury, they were not able to replace anybody that got hurt. That was a lesson that we weren't a part of that,

and we said we have to continue to recruit. We can't recruit one good class and then take a break. We have to recruit class after class of good, solid football players so if somebody leaves early, like Andrus Peat and Alex Carter did or someone leaves to go play baseball, which has happened to us twice now in the last three years, we have to be ready. So we recruit depth. We recruited two great safeties that were freshmen last year, we recruited safeties this year that have a chance to potentially contribute. If not, they red-shirt but they're in the program. So we try to have depth at every position.

Q. You guys have dominated UCLA the last couple of years at least. What is involved in playing that team? Is it more mental than physical?

COACH SHAW: I think our games against UCLA have been tighter than most people remember. This past year, second half, yes, we opened it up. But the Pac-12 Championship game against them was a tight game. The game before the Pac-12 Championship game we extended the lead kind of late to give us a two-score lead. The year before that it was coming down to almost a red zone stand.

So those games have been tight. They're as talented a football team as you'll find in the nation, and we know that. We recognize that. It's our mentality that we have to play our best against those guys because they are so talented and well coached, and we've been able to do that the last few years.

Q. Will Devon Cajuste be fully healthy for camp?

COACH SHAW: It looks like it. Some point in camp he'll be healthy. I think early on we'll have to watch him a little bit. But he's made great strides in the last week and a half. I saw him the other day, he's walking with no limp. He felt great. He's going to start running straight ahead pretty soon, but he'll be ready to go.

Q. How much can you disclose about that situation? I heard he had surgery?

COACH SHAW: No, actually they didn't need the surgery. That was the rumor going around through social media, and that's what happens. What you read is not always what is true. There was a chance for surgery, and we talked about it, went and saw doctors, didn't need surgery. It's been healing great. He's been great with his rehab. He's a diligent young

man what it comes to the physical stuff. He knows how to push himself in the smart way. At some point in camp he'll be full go. But he's a little ahead of schedule which is great.

Q. Is that a high ankle?

COACH SHAW: It's hard to term it as that, similar to a high ankle. Generally probably the best way to say it is a high ankle.

Q. With so few people coming back as starters on your defense, what do you say to people who are skeptical of Stanford maintaining the high standards they've had on defense for so many years?

COACH SHAW: I say thank you. I say thank you. It's great. I like when people doubt us as opposed to getting pats on the back. I have no problem with that at all because I'm one of those guys that believes, yes, we should have to prove ourselves every year. Even if guys are coming back and we have everybody coming back, it doesn't mean anything. It's all about what you do here going out now. We've recruited extremely well. I love our line backing core, even though not everybody knows who they are. We've seen these guys. I think Peter Kalambayi is another name that's going to explode on the scene. Kevin Anderson played well last year, he'll play better this year. Blake Martinez is going to play as well as any linebacker in the country. I'm excited about his prospects on this level and the next. They're going to have a lot of names that people don't really know that are going to come in and play well for us.

Q. What can Christian McCaffrey give you as a full-time lead back?

COACH SHAW: Versatility. I think the biggest thing for him last year, which I took some flack for, understandably. But for him coming as a freshman, I believe this, and I've done it with so many guys over the years. When you have to play a guy who is a freshman, we spoon feed them. We give him only those things we know he can be successful at because we want him to start his career off on the right foot and not have any setbacks. We needed him to get stronger before we asked him to do much more than we asked him to do last year. He's bigger. He's stronger. He's more physical. Had an outstanding spring. He's a dependable pass protector now, which early on in his career, a lot of freshmen, it's hard to ask them to do that. We've got Blake Martinez blitzing through the A gaps that can stand up and pick those guys up. He can do that now.

So he's a guy that can line up 7 yards behind the quarterback, and run the ball between the tackles and pound people, yes, he can do that. But he can do all the things you saw him do last year, run outside, run inside, be part of the gun run game. Return punts and kickoffs and catch the ball in the back field or catch the ball as a receiver. There is not a lot limiting what he can do.

So for us, that's where Remound Wright and Barry J Sanders are still going to have their role because we're going to use Christian all over the place. We don't want to kill the guy in the first three weeks of the season. So we have to make sure we play those other guys because Christian is going to return some punts and return kickoffs. There are going to be a variety of different things we use him for.

Q. What do you think the glut of experienced quarterbacks and proven quarterbacks in this league, what is that going to mean for the quality of play week-in and week-out, do you think?

COACH SHAW: I think the quality of play, I attribute is going to be really high, and I attribute that to the coaches that we have. We've got very unique coaches that have their style of offense and they're experts in their style of offense. So I think you're going to see a lot of the same things. I think there are going to be teams that don't have a quote-unquote returning starter that are going to play beyond expectations.

Once again, we all kind of know each other. I know who they recruited at UCLA. And I know they're going to be good. I know who they recruited at Arizona State, and I know how well he can play. We all know who is going to Oregon and seeing how dynamic of a football player he is. So there are a lot of guys that have moved on. But I think we have outstanding coaches with really good talent, and that talent will show itself.

Q. As deep as this league has gotten, does it still need to win a National Championship to maybe get the same benefit of the doubt that the SEC gets?

COACH SHAW: I don't think so. I don't think so. I think you error when you try to prove too much. I think the people that know and particularly the people that I've talked to, whether they're on the playoff committee, people at the NCAA, people in the media that actually watch all the games, we were voted as the most difficult conference nationally last year from top to bottom. I think the people that know and watch how we

play.

This year is going to be crazier than last year. This year in our conference it's going to be insane because everyone is so good and talented. You're going to lose a game to a really good football team. Somebody's going to say you shouldn't have lost to them. Three weeks later, that team's going to be to be in the top 15, top 10. That is the way this conference is going to be. I won't be shocked if this is the year we have a conference championship with a team in there that has two losses.

Q. Does that worry you in terms of the playoffs?

COACH SHAW: Not at all. Once again, talking to those committee members, they recognize how difficult this conference is. If you can come out of this conference as a conference champion, you're going to get into that four team playoff because of the road you have to travel. You look at the non-conference schedule on top of our nine games and look at the non-conference schedule for our conference. We're playing Notre Dame every year, Northwestern, Central Florida, Arizona State's playing Texas A&M, and UCLA's playing a tough out of conference schedule. We're playing the best of the best out there. If you can navigate your way to the top of this conference, you've traveled a road that is going to have a resume that the committee is going to look at and say they are deserving of this four-team playoff.

Q. Do you need to add size and strength (No microphone). Where's he at now and where do you want him?

COACH SHAW: He's over 200 pounds, very physical. Took it to heart what we needed him to do to be a complete back. Worked on his pass protection. I want to give Barry J Sanders the same credit. We needed Barry to get stronger and be more physical as a pass protector so that we can lead those guys in in those passing downs, so every time they come out, they're not going out for a pass or handing the ball. We can play action pass with those guys and have them straight drop back pass and pick up linebackers. That is a complete part of being a complete back at Stanford University. Both of those guys have made huge strides to where they are now capable of doing those things along with Remound Wright, so we have three complete backs in our back field.

Q. Can you elaborate on Aziz and Brennan, when they'll be ready to go?

COACH SHAW: Well, Aziz is completely healed from what kept I am how the of spring. She completely past that. He tweaked his hamstring. We'll prepare him in training camp. He's going to be fine for the start of the season. Brennan we're going to be careful with and cautious with with all the major surgeries he's had over the last few years. But he's a worker. He's blown away our trainers. He's blown away our strength staff about how hard he works and how specific he is with his rehab. He's been way ahead of schedule.

But we also know with his injury history, we're going to be very cautious with him throughout training camp. We probably have a modified double day schedule with him just to make sure. He probably won't want to do it. But that's why I get to be the head coach and he gets to be the player. We make those decisions for him. We need him to get through the season and be healthy and play as many games as possible.

Q. Aside from those guys, Davis and Cajuste, is anybody else not going to be ready for the start?

COACH SHAW: Noor Davis was injured training. It's a rarity for us, kind of a freak deal. It was a lower leg injury, a tendon injury. But he looks like he's earmarked somewhere around midseason to be back, and he's well on the way to doing that. Doesn't want to try to get a medical red-shirt and all that. If he can come back and play, he wants to come back and play so that is the one major one we have. Most likely he's going to miss some game.

But he's on the road to recovery right now. He's a little ahead of schedule. We'll see over the next month or so, if that's going to be a reality for him to come back maybe for the second half of the year.

Q. Anybody else aside from those four?

COACH SHAW: No major ones. The guys that missed spring. Most of those guys at some point will be back from training camp. Besides that we'll be pretty healthy.

Q. Will Jake Bailey be your kicker?

COACH SHAW: He's going to compete for it.

Q. What about the punting?

COACH SHAW: He's going to compete for that too. Because he's an incoming freshmen, he's got the ability to do all of it. We're going

concentrate on the punting. He'll battle for kickoffs, field goals, I think we have an in-house candidate and a freshman coming in also. We'll see how that competition goes. Jake can do that, but I don't want to stretch him too thin as a true freshmen. But if he can handle competing in all three, that's great. Otherwise we'll leave him at kickoff and punts.

Q. Can you compare Hogan's mastery of the offense, setting aside physical attributes to where Andrew was going into his final year? Is there any shot Kevin might get a game like Andrew did?

COACH SHAW: It's just, you know, we're talking about rarefied air. To the point with Andrew that it's an unfair comparison with Andrew, and anyone outside of John Elway or, you know, that is the rarefied air that Andrew was in to the point where we have -- Kevin is really, really close, I believe, to mastering our offense. I think his spring, I thought was phenomenal. We're so excited about it. We can give him two or three plays in the huddle, the audible package, and he's been great. Andrew got to the point where we could call three or four plays in the huddle, and he might choose a fifth play on his own.

Q. And it would be the right one?

COACH SHAW: Yes, it will be the right one. We'll say, hey, we didn't think of that. Nice job kid. But, yes, that's a whole different stratosphere that's just in the words of Urban Meyer, you only get one of those guys. It's unfair the rest of us don't get more than one.

Q. How committed are you guys to finding time for whoever wins the back-up quarterback role during games this year?

COACH SHAW: I would say beyond committed because it's going to happen. We need for it to happen. It's what we did with Kevin early on in his career. It's what we did with Tavita Pritchard early on in his career. We have a history of doing that. The biggest thing in doing that, that position is so vital I would never want to come into a year having a quarterback that's never played in the game. I don't ever want to have that again. It may get to the point where if we can't decide between the two, we'll play them both.

Maybe this week you're going to get four or five plays, and the next week we're going to get him four or five plays and we'll evaluate you guys that way. So they'll get a couple plays in the first and second quarter and very similar to what we did with Kevin. Get their feet wet in college football

and evaluate them that way. I'm not averse to doing that at all. I think it's vital to do that.

Q. Did Chryst or Burns have the edge coming out of spring?

COACH SHAW: That's hard to say. I think purposefully we didn't want to gauge the competition. We just wanted to have them continue through spring and pick up where we left off in training camps where we have certain factors that we're marking and evaluating that I think we're going to just kind of go in the flow and see what happens and see who executes the offense better. See who has the best understanding of what to do and how to do it, and goes out there and performs.

Q. Did Crower ever find a home?

COACH SHAW: I haven't talked to Evan in a while. He still had a couple possibilities as of a few weeks ago, and I don't know if he's made the decision. But hopefully he does, because I think the kid can play.

Q. What about offensive right tackle? How does that battle shape up? Is it Tucker and Austin or Davidson?

COACH SHAW: Nick getting hurt, I think hurt his chances a little bit, but hopefully he'll get back at some point in training camp to be pretty close to full go. But we're going to compete for that spot. As I've told my coaches, the best times we've had on the offensive line when guys earn spots. We can't hand them out. So all those guys will compete for that. There is going to be tough competition in couple different places in there, and we'll see how those competitions bear out.

Q. At that spot, is it Tucker and Austin or somebody else?

COACH SHAW: There are a few guys. David Bright has done some guard and tackle for us. We'll give him some reps out there at right tackle as well. So I think all those guys are going to rotate through there and we'll play the best guy.

Q. What is the biggest challenge of recruiting in the Pac-12?

COACH SHAW: It's hard to say what the biggest one is, because it's pretty brutal. I like to say that we don't recruit against any one place. We recruit against geography. So we recruit against LA, we're recruiting against the two LA schools as well as other places. A kid from Arizona, we're recruiting against both Arizona schools. In the midwest, you find yourself

recruiting against UCLA in different places. But Michigan, and Notre Dame, and Ohio State, et cetera. So recruit against the geography of wherever the kid is from. But you throw in our academic requirements and test scores and application process, it weeds it down even more so for us.

By the time we get to this point for the next recruiting class, our number of guys has completely dwindled. So we're looking at 35 guys, trying to get 20 out of those 35. So for us, it's a pretty narrow road to walk.

Q. How do you stand on the graduate transfer role at this point? You lost a couple of guys to it. But how do you stand on it? Should it be tweaked or what is this?

COACH SHAW: I'm in the minority here. I think the rule is great. I have absolutely no problem with it. Which is strange coming from a guy that's had guys leave. But the way I look at it common sense wise, if I'm one of those guys that I red-shirt my freshman year and I play three years and I've been there four years and I get my college degree and I look up and I'm a back-up and there is some place else I can go play, I want to play. I want to start. I've fulfilled my obligations with my letter of intent. I went there four years and got my degree and prepared myself academically. I've earned the right to seek another place to play a fifth-year. So when a Kelsey Young comes in and says I recognize you guys have great backs and I want to go some place where I have a chance to carry the ball 20 times a game. I say, great, who do you want me to call for you? So we've helped our guys find places to go because as far as I'm concerned they've fulfilled their obligation to Stanford University and gotten their degree. And I have a tough time telling a guy with a Stanford degree what to do.

Q. But (Indiscernible) would have been starters for you too, wouldn't they?

COACH SHAW: Possibly. I mean, Wayne lost his starting job to Harris later in the year. He would have to come and compete to get back now. Would he have the leg up? Possible with his experience. I love where some of our young guys are coming in. It would have still been a battle. Patrick Skov had the inside track to be a starter. I love where Daniel Marx is as well. So maybe they could be the front runners, possibly.

But it's part of my job to make sure we recruit with depth. We've got two fullbacks on our team right now. Both of them have a chance to be outstanding football players. So the thing came up

with Patrick. We talked about it. Talked about what he was looking for. I didn't try to stand in his way. I wanted to think about it, and make sure he knew what he was doing. Make sure it's the exact program he was looking for. With Patrick it was also a serious academic situation. He's got a chance to get a business degree, and that is the program he's in at Georgia Tech. So I said, if that's what you want, go get it.

Q. Is Trent Irwin likely the most of the true freshmen to play a lot?

COACH SHAW: That's fair to say. But I can't answer that until I see them on the field, particularly with the pads on and going through our ringers and going through some scrimmages before I can really see first and foremost who is physically, mentally, and emotionally ready to play, and who can go out there and execute. On top of that, we have a lot of guys that are coming back that I'm waiting to see that are veterans also. I have no problem playing freshmen in they're ready or red-shirting freshmen if they're not ready or somebody else in front of them is better.

Q. In a league with so many good teams, what do you see is the edge you guys have against everybody else?

COACH SHAW: To me, that's what makes this conference so exciting is I can't answer that question. I have absolutely no idea. I don't know if anybody has a true edge over anybody else. I think the biggest thing is anybody in our conference, if they play their best game, they can beat anybody else. The hard part of our conference is you can play -- everybody uses the Tiger Woods phrase that he started years ago -- you play your B game against anybody in our conference, there is a good chance you're going to lose and lose by 20 points. So the key in our conference is playing your best game every single week, which is hard, which is training because we're talking about it on the ride from Bristol last night.

In our conference with the 9 out of 12 conference games, you're playing conference games, you can play four conference opponents in a row, and now four of those guys might be ranked in the top 25, and that fourth game, you might be beat up and tired, and you're going to have to go play at Utah or at Corvallis or at Oregon or something. And those are tough, tough games to get your team up to play your A game again for the fourth week in a row against top competition. Those are tough games.

Q. Looking at your team, what is the number one thing you guys have to do?

COACH SHAW: The biggest thing for me and our team right now is for us to play like we played at the end of the year last year, which was to play fast, to play with confidence, to play with energy, to execute and make plays. I know it sounds nebulous and nonspecific, but it was the biggest difference between us early in the year and late in the year. Early in the year we played tight. We didn't make as many plays. We didn't take advantage of opportunities. Later in the year, we played free, and loose, and relaxed and confident, and it was fun to watch.

Q. What specifically did (No microphone)?

COACH SHAW: I think it's pretty widely known now what he was going through personally in his life with a family illness that a lot of us didn't know how bad it was because he is such a stoic person, and he seems to be able to handle so much. I didn't know how much that was affecting him at the time. I think he was going through something that no one -- very few people can even understand as far as imagining being the guy that replaces Andrew Luck and takes the team to back-to-back Rose Bowls. That next year the amount of pressure that he put on himself I think was huge.

So he's carrying around these two big boulders. One on the personal side and one on the football side that I think I don't know that football was fun for a while for him. I think it was really, really hard. I think he took everything really hard and really seriously, and he wanted it so bad. The more he wanted it, the more he tries. I talked about this before and last week, the more he wanted to choke the football he was so tense. Later in the year he was smooth, confident and relaxed.

So I think the biggest thing for him was dealing with his family situation, getting back to the point of being what he was early in his career. When he first started he was a sophomore that went out there and just played ball. Getting back to that I think his use of the virtual reality later in the year helped also just to get more reps without being on the field mentally because that virtual reality, the biggest thing for quarterbacks is speeding up the decision making process. I think he was able to make quicker decisions because he recognizes things a little bit faster and he was able to play smooth. He said also as well that was one of the things that helped him kind of make that turn

later in the year. Late in the year, you look at UCLA, you look at the bowl game, he was playing as well as anybody in the country.

Q. You mentioned replacing Andrew Luck. Is it harder or is there something different about preparing the next quarterback when they're replacing a guy who is literally a legend? Like Oregon will be doing and Boise State will be doing and that type of thing?

COACH SHAW: There is no question. We can sit in a room, a coach and quarterback and talk about this is about you being yourself. But he's going to answer that question 20 times a day. He's going to go back home and get a call from a friend of his and say, how is it replacing a legend? So it's like you can't really escape it. But the thing with Kevin is Kevin did it, and did it at a high level. As a sophomore, he took us to the Rose Bowl, and came back and took us to another Rose Bowl. It was like, okay, while you did that, now what is next for you? Now what can you do? The stakes continue to get raised. Whereas really, hey, let's go back out there and play more football and see how good we can be as opposed to trying to live up to some nebulous thing that's out there in the ethos or in the cosmos. Hey, let's just go play football. I think if nothing else, and you watch us play even the games we won early in the year, it didn't look like our guys were having any fun. I couldn't put a finger on it. Later in the year we were having a blast. It wasn't just because we were winning. We were playing with that emotion, we were practicing with that emotion. The practices were great.

So as a coach what I had to do was say, hey, guys, this is us. This is our standard. It's not just winning football games, but it's what it takes to win football games and how we win, and how we play, and how we practice. Those things are indicative of us being successful. So that mood and that mode of practice, that mode of meeting and that mentality that we have as a football team is my responsibility. It's my job to help us stay in that fast, explosive, fun, enjoyable environment that helps us be successful.

Q. What have you seen out of the 2012 offensive line recruiting class over the years? How have they grown throughout the years? Now obviously you have a lot of them starting.

COACH SHAW: I think the big thing for that group right now is growth. Last year, and one of the things that I kick myself for, I probably put them up on a pedestal way too early. I was so

excited about this group and having the opportunity to play and play together. I didn't recognize, which I should, kick myself later, that you start four new starters on the offensive line and put the pressure on them to be great? That's not fair. That's just not fair. They had to learn a lot. They had to gel.

So you talk about individual learning, yes, I'm learning individual lessons. But now I've got to learn to speak this language with the bullets flying. You're looking at Josh Garnett, and Josh played great the year before. He played about ten plays a game. Now he goes from 10 to 65 or 70. Now I'm next to Andrus, which we're good buddies and we know each other, but now we're playing under fire for the first time, and you're playing against the number one picks at Washington. You're playing against great players at Notre Dame, and great players at UCLA, and stuff's happening fast. They had to learn some lessons.

Later in the year I think we learned a lot of lessons and got more comfortable. I think we as coaches knew what they did well and what they didn't do well, so we could utilize that knowledge to help them be successful better. We ran the ball better, protected the ball better. Everything was better at the end of the year. Part of that was four new guys gelling as a unit.

Q. You took responsibility for when it wasn't so fantastic, the execution in the red zone. Then it was exceptional down the stretch. Is it still going to be you calling the plays in the red zone?

COACH SHAW: Coach Bloomgren and I, we work together on the play calling and kind of running pass to a certain degree. Although I make run suggestions and he makes pass suggestions. Coach Tavita Pritchard is intimately involved in the passing game with me as well. But the red zone for us came down to execution. I'm a firm believer in this. The red zone for me comes down it three different things: Number one, running the football. You've got to be able to run the ball efficiently in the red zone, no matter what style of offense you use. Number two, having an athletic quarterback, whether you can use him in the running game or scramble for first downs and scramble for touchdowns. Number three, is finding match-ups.

Later in the year I thought we did a better job of finding our match-ups, making the throws, making the catches, having the coaches put guys in position. I think Devon Cajuste and our tight ends down in the red zone, those guys are tough one-on-one match-ups. When we find a good match-up, we have to exploit it. Now with people

trying to protect over it, that's when we can run the ball and do different things. So I think later in the year we did all three of those things. Kevin did a great job scrambling. Didn't force the ball, scrambled. Got positive yards. We did a great job running the football, more physical up front. I think we ran through some trash, and broke some tackles. At the same time, you saw Cajuste make plays, you saw Austin make plays and our guys make plays in the red zone that helped us get to that ridiculously high touchdown percentage which is years ago was kind of our standard.

For about three or four years straight with and without Andrew we were one of the best in the nation in red zone offense. We became unbelievably inefficient this past year to the point of, and I'm exhausting the subject, and this is vital so I don't mind talking about it, we missed a ton of field goals inside the 35-yard line. We turned the ball over five or six times, I believe, inside the 25-year-old, which never happened to us before. We had more negative plays in the red zone this past year than we've ever had in my eight years there as a head coach or an assistant.

So all of these things that killed your red zone percentage, we were doing all of it. At the end of the year, we weren't doing any of it. Efficient running the ball. Athletic quarterback that made the throws. Outstanding, big, physical guys to go up and make plays. So it was a huge lesson for us to how vital doing things right in the red zone was.

Q. You talked about the fun aspect of the game. Can you talk about how cathartic John Flacco's speech was? A number of players have pointed to that as the moment where a lot of things got said that needed to be said.

COACH SHAW: Absolutely. Absolutely. It was at a low point to where, gosh, we just couldn't get the ship turned right. I tried to say all the right things and that didn't work. Other guys tried to say the right things and tried to do the right things and forever reason at the end of that, John Flacco put it all into perspective. I'm sure there are some guys in the room that are in the interview room with me that we heard the yelling and screaming coming through the room. For a split second I thought, oh, my God, we're fracturing. There are guys out there screaming. I heard. I was trying to talk and listen at the same time, and I heard what he was saying, everything he was talking about was about brotherhood. It was about being together and being there for each other in

tough times. It was about doing your job and counting on the guy next to you saying all the right things.

But saying it with such passion, energy and focus, and you look at who is saying it. Here's a guy who was a walk on. Here's a guy who earned his right to get on the field. Earned his right on defense, and earned his right to get on special teams. He's basically saying it's not about what you get but what you give. What are you doing for your brother or to have somebody else's back? What are you saying to tell a guy that you were there for him? All those things. I think it flipped the mentality on our football team.

Q. Your first recruiting class is really unique in that you dipped into Arizona really hard. You've got a guy playing pro baseball and a guy playing pro football, and you brought them with you in Blake Martinez, and to be able to have that (No microphone). But you have about a third of the true seniors in the entire conference playing. You have over ten from the class of 2012 who are true seniors. What about the class made it so that so many of them were game ready from the git-go?

COACH SHAW: It was a very talented group. It's a group that we are leaning on maturity-wise for us. They're an older group. And they've won a lot of football games. The biggest thing I pressed upon those guys is identifying the leadership that was there before you and being that example for the guys behind you. As I said, it's a talented group and group that really has the ceiling is the limit.

But at the same time, it's a group that we lean on for leadership as well as execution for our game plans. It's a group that has a chance to be a phenomenal group that we'll remember for a long time.

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