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An interview with:

RYAN MALLETT

THE MODERATOR: We are ready to continue with Arkansas quarterback Ryan Mallett. If you could just give us some thoughts on the upcoming season and we'll take questions.

RYAN MALLETT: Thanks for having me. Hello, I'm Ryan Mallett. I just want to take this time and go ahead and give y'all my foot is doing fine. I'm right on schedule with my rehab. Be ready to go during camp.

I made the decision to come back to Arkansas. I felt like I owed it to the state. Playing one year and then leaving, I didn't find it ethically right. Especially growing up as a Hog fan, I would have been disappointed.

We got the greatest athletic director in the nation in Jeff Long. I think he's here somewhere. He's got this program going right. Obviously Coach Petrino does, too. We're excited about the year. We're embracing all the expectations. But what we got to do is go out and execute.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take questions.

Q. Can you talk about your rehab. I understand you've done more swimming than you care to ever do again.

RYAN MALLETT: Yeah, I feel like I'm going to try out for the Olympics in 2014. Is that when the next one is? I'm going to give it a shot (smiling).

I've been doing a lot of swimming to stay in condition. I haven't been able to run to this point, so I've been swimming a lot, doing a lot of weight room stuff with upper body, a lot of single-leg stuff. It's really helped me out.

I'll be ready to go in two weeks when we start.

Q. Ryan, have you taken out an insurance policy on yourself. If so, tell me about that process, the decision there. Did that make your decision to come back easier?

RYAN MALLETT: Yeah, I took out an insurance policy. It didn't have any effect with my decision really. Really the whole process was going to talk to compliance at the university and just filled out some paperwork and sent it to the NCAA, and really just went from there.

I really didn't have a lot to do with it except signing my name and filling out a bunch of forms.

Q. Talk about the expectations this season and how well do you think this offense can click? Do you think it's going to be just as good as last year's offense?

RYAN MALLETT: You know, obviously, especially in the state of Arkansas, the expectations are really high. We have even higher expectations of ourselves as a team.

As far as the offense, we lost some great players and we also got some players coming back and incoming freshmen that are going to help.

You look at the defense, they're going to be better. We got guys coming in on the defense that are going to help the defense be better. We're going to get better, especially during camp, is really when we're going to gel. I feel like this is the closest team I've ever played on, especially the three years I've been here. Really my whole life, this is the closest group of guys, especially as many of us as there are, that I've ever been a part of.

Q. Some people would consider you the best quarterback in the SEC for this upcoming season. What is your take on that assessment?

RYAN MALLETT: You know, obviously I don't think you can name a best quarterback in the SEC until the season's over. I had an okay year last year. The expectations of me are high.

Myself, they're even higher for myself. That's just how I was brought up, that's how I am. But I don't think that's a fair assumption. I think you have to wait till after the season for y'all to decide that.

Q. Obviously you're the unquestionable leader of this team, especially offensively. What sort of things are you trying to do in your absence to try to motivate other people to become leaders on your team, and how do you feel they're evolving in the process of their development as you try to take the next step as a team?

RYAN MALLET: The thing I try to do is when we have team runs, I try to be out there. I will be out there. Most of the time, I'm on the bike. We have four quarters, just like a game. We condition for four quarters. In between quarters, I try to go out there and motivate guys.

In my absence, I feel like we've had a lot of other leaders step up. We have DeMarcus Love on the offensive line, we've got Ramon Broadway, cornerback, Jerry Franklin, a linebacker. I feel like a lot more guys have stepped up since I haven't been able to be there all the time.

Q. The layoff that you had without being able to run, how do you think that's going to affect your sprinter speed and your escapability in the pocket?

RYAN MALLET: I don't know if I ever had sprinter speed (laughter).

My game is movement in the pocket. I'm obviously not a runner. My conditioning is fine. I've been in the pool an hour, hour and a half, four out of five days of the workweek. I feel like, you know, my conditioning is going to be fine. I guess learning how to run again, it's going to be new.

Q. When are they going to cut you loose? Can you start running now or where are you?

RYAN MALLET: Yeah, I mean, I'm right on schedule. I can jog a little bit. Obviously I'm doing my pool work still for conditioning. I'm not conditioning running yet. But the first day at camp, I'll be out there with cleats on, pads on.

Q. What happened when you and your dad realized you had such a strong arm and how old were you?

RYAN MALLET: I've always had a pretty strong arm since I was little. Some people call it

the Mallett arm, the family arm. On my dad's side, all the brothers, they could all throw the baseball really well. That's really where I got it from, is just playing with them ever since I was little, just maintaining and developing the muscles in my arm.

Q. Last year you had some really nice stats. When you sat down after the season was over and looked at film of your games with a critical eye, what did you see that you thought, That's good, but needs to be better?

RYAN MALLET: After watching the whole season, I was somewhat disappointed in my season. I missed a lot of easy throws that are really uncharacteristic. If I just take what I do in practice to the game, we might be a hundred percent every game. I missed some throws that were really easy. I missed a couple checks. I didn't miss too many checks, but I missed enough. It really didn't set well with me.

Q. Ryan, you talked about coming back to school for your junior season. Are you approaching this year almost as if you're a senior going into it feeling like this will be your last year at Arkansas?

RYAN MALLET: No, I'm not. I still have two years of eligibility left. I'm an Arkansas Razorback. All that stuff that comes after, if I have a chance to play in the NFL, when that time comes, we'll see. Right now I have two years left to play college football and I'm going to enjoy it.

Q. Your first two SEC games are Georgia and Alabama. Would you mind talking about how crucial that might be just as a tone setter?

RYAN MALLET: I mean, those are two great teams. But we have two games before those guys that we can't overlook. I mean, I played Appalachian State at Michigan. I was part of that team. We got beat in the first game of the season. I kind of learned my lesson from that as far as overlooking people. We have to set the tone in the first game and keep building, keep progressing, keep getting better every week.

Q. I'm sure you've been aware of some of the agent stuff in the news. Given your potential, that could become an issue with you. Does it make you more aware of being careful

who you talk to? What do you see as trouble spots?

RYAN MALLETT: Yeah, obviously as a college athlete, you got to be aware of who you're around at all times. As far as the agent thing, I'm not talking to any agents at the time. If they contact me, I tell them if I'm gonna go to the NFL, we'll talk about it after the season. That's how I'm doing it because I don't want to have to deal with any of the stuff that's going on.

It's unfortunate that the schools are having to deal with this and it's happening in such a great conference. I mean, it's obviously a problem.

Q. Do you think you miss easy passes because sometimes you get a bit too jacked up?

RYAN MALLETT: It comes down to technique, you know. Obviously I'm a fiery competitor and I get excited. But when I lose my technique is when I become less, you know, accurate.

Q. What kind of reports are you hearing from the guys throwing seven-on-seven on the new receivers you got coming in, impact players that are new?

RYAN MALLETT: I got firsthand information on them. I've been throwing it to them. We got four or five really good guys that are catching the ball. You know, they're play-makers and they're fast. They're track guys that play football, really, if you look at it.

They got great football instincts, great moves. They're going to develop their route running. They're not there as far as a Jarius Wright or Cobi Hamilton. They're new to it. But I think they're going to be a pretty good group, though.

THE MODERATOR: Ryan, thank you.

RYAN MALLETT: Thank y'all.

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