

## Nate Hybl proves that he is the man for OU

NORMAN, Okla. (AP) — The Oklahoma Sooners have won 13 of the 14 games Nate Hybl has started at quarterback.

He hasn't thrown an interception this season, and his coaches have praised his poise and leadership.

Still, to many, Hybl is the guy who lost his job a year ago and is only starting to grow because of an injury to Jason White, who's ability to run and throw had coaches and fans excited about this season.

So be it, Hybl says. "I don't really sense it and I don't care, for sure," said Hybl, who will lead No. 2 Oklahoma against No. 3 Texas on Saturday. "I really don't care."

Offensive coordinator Chuck Long says Hybl never got a fair shake from Oklahoma fans last season, partly because he was hurt much of the time and because he followed Josh Heupel, who led Oklahoma to the 2000 national title.

"He's a lot more comfortable going into this Texas game than he was last year," Long said. "We're very proud so far. Every week, he's come in with a great work ethic attitude. It's just fun to watch what he's been doing."

The Texas game is where things began falling apart for Hybl last year. One week after surviving a pounding in a victory over Kansas State, he hurt his left shoulder and had to leave the game in the second quarter.

White took over, led the only touchdown drive of the game and Oklahoma beat Texas 14-3.

"I felt like I was, as a quarterback, starting to come into my own, then that happened," Hybl said.

The banged-up Hybl started the next game, against Kansas, but was ineffective. White threw four touchdown passes in relief and was named the starter. His ability to run is what set him apart from Hybl, and it added a dimension to the offense.

Two games later, against

Nebraska, White tore up his left knee and was lost for the season. The job became Hybl's again. After losing to Nebraska, the Sooners won three straight before getting upset by Oklahoma State in the regular-season finale.

Hybl threw three interceptions in that game and was roasted on radio talk shows. The rap was that he wasn't mobile enough and wasn't a difference maker at the position.

When this season began, White was named the starter. But early in the second game of the year, against Alabama, he blew out his other knee and Hybl stepped in.

So far this season, Hybl is 69-of-116 for 1,014 yards and six touchdowns, with no interceptions. Including last year's Cotton Bowl game against Arkansas, he has thrown 148 passes without being picked off.

"I'm a lot more calm under the gun," said Hybl, who also grew accustomed to pressure as an outstanding junior golfer. "It's just from playing in a lot of big games. You just have a different outlook on these games. You're able to handle all the hysteria surrounding it."

Long said Hybl's increased comfort and confidence are the result of added experience and knowing that this is his offense. He also is benefiting from a more solid pocket, coach Bob Stoops said. Often last year, Stoops said, Hybl was forced to throw to his first receiver because he wasn't getting enough time to find his other options.

"He's been exceptional," Stoops said. "Not only is he taking care of the football, he's making big plays. He made some big throws the other night against Missouri. He's throwing the ball downfield deep. He's very poised and confident."

Stoops said this game is one in which the quarterbacks will have to be able to make big plays. He likes Hybl's chances of coming through. "He's done it already," Stoops said. "He's been doing it for us all year. Hopefully he'll continue to do it."



HYBL

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## Guerrieri

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Guerrieri brings a lot more to the table than his coaching expertise. Off the field, Guerrieri's players are perfect.

"One hundred percent of the players that have come in and stuck with the program have graduated," Guerrieri said. "One hundred percent of those players have been able to go and do whatever they wanted to do in life, whether it was to go onto medical school, work for NASA, be an accountant, go into any other kind of professional life, or just become a coach."

"I get the most pride out of the program I run being a positive life influence on these girls."

Players flock to Guerrieri from not just Texas, but from all over the nation. Four players on the 2002 Aggie team come from outside of the state.

"I never felt anywhere like I do here," said sophomore Emma Smith, a native of Beaverton, Ore. "It's just a camaraderie that you don't find in many places."

Guerrieri has provided a family-like environment to every team under his tutelage, and professional careers are now not the only goal for some of his players with the development of the Women's United Soccer Association (WUSA).

"For me personally G. (Guerrieri) developed me as a player," said former player Nicky Thrasher who now plays professionally for the Atlanta Beat of WUSA. "I think (Guerrieri) is an incredible coach in the way he motivates the team to go out to practice and keeps them at a high level of intensity day in and day out. He keeps 25 girls happy, which is difficult."

In 2001, the Aggies made their first trip to the round of eight in the NCAA Championships, where they fell to the University of Portland, 4-1. Guerrieri and the Aggies now are setting their sights even higher to a final four berth, and the national championship.

"To get past the Sweet Sixteen and get into the Elite Eight that's great," Guerrieri said. "Now that has me thinking that we're on a progression towards a national championship, and that progression now is about learning from our past shortcomings and being able to overcome those through hard work."

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