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robert@robertleos.com

A Conversation with Adam Jones, Author of *Rose Bowl Dreams: A Memoir of Faith, Family, and Football*

Rose Bowl Dreams: A Memoir of Faith, Family, and Football, by Adam Jones, hit bookshelves throughout the country in summer 2008, just before the start of the football season—a season with great promise for the many Texas Longhorn fans who have been hoping for a repeat of their journey to the national championship title led by Vince Young in 2005-06. **Rose Bowl Dreams**, with game-day details of some of the most memorable, and some not-so-memorable games, captures the emotion surrounding the Texas Longhorns and their loyal fans. As the title implies, however, **Rose Bowl Dreams** is more than a journalistic recounting of the victories and defeats that the 'Horns have endured over the many years that Jones has followed them.

Rose Bowl Dreams describes an intergenerational phenomenon—how a common thread, in this case the love of football, unites a family from generation to generation, through thick and thin, through illness and good health. I laughed out loud when I read some of the author's descriptions of his reactions to the bad games, the almost-wons, and the great



Adam Jones

Photo by Chris Carson

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games played by the Longhorns. At the other end of the emotional continuum, his descriptions of difficult family issues such as dealing with the death of loved ones, were poignant and brilliantly written.

Adam Jones took time to discuss football and **Rose Bowl Dreams** with "The Report." **RHL.**

ROBERT LEOS: Adam, let's get to the really important stuff first: How about those Longhorns? Can they make it to the national championship game this season?

ADAM JONES: *It will be a long time before Texas fans get over this one. To beat the Oklahoma Sooners head-to-head and be denied a shot at the conference title doesn't sit well with anyone. The result is that we will sit at home and watch a Big 12 title game between two teams Texas defeated—both by double digits. A Missouri upset, of course, might well put Texas right into the national championship game, so hope springs eternal in college football! In any case, this has been a magical season for a Longhorn squad that most football people thought would lose three or four games when the year began.*

ROBERT LEOS: How would you compare Colt McCoy and Vince Young if you were forced to do so?

ADAM JONES: *I wrote in my column earlier this year that McCoy is the Texas fan ideal: almost a perfect amalgamation of Vince Young and Major Applewhite. He has the "coach's kid," field general, intangible qualities of Applewhite, but he's a far better athlete. For starters, he's*

about 6'3" and 210-215 pounds, very good speed, adequate arm strength; McCoy is a legit NFL prospect. He is not the physical genius of Young (no one is), but he has the same leadership qualities; McCoy, like VY, never seems to know when he is beaten.

ROBERT LEOS: I'm really interested in knowing about the process of writing *Rose Bowl Dreams*. Do you literally watch every game with a notepad and pen in hand? The book includes so much detail about so many games, Longhorns as well as others, that it would seem incredible to be able to recall such detail. Tell me about the research that went into the writing.

ADAM JONES: *You have to be vigilant about getting your facts straight. College football fans will remind you if it was 3rd and seven and you wrote that it was 2nd and nine—they are a tough lot. I have a remarkable memory for football games, but I back all of it up with research. The best original source documents are the drive charts that UT keeps for every football game. The internet also allows you to dial up almost any play you want, in recent history anyway. I watched and re-watched, at various speeds, the famous Vince Young 4th and 18 es-*

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cape at Kansas in 2004; it's still one of the most stunning displays of athleticism anyone has ever pulled off.

ROBERT LEOS: At what point did you begin to see how faith, family, and football were so intertwined in your life? And, when did you say to yourself, "Adam, I think there's a book here"?

ADAM JONES: *Football and family were intertwined immediately: as soon as I was old enough to go to games with my mom and dad and my grandparents to see the West Texas State (now A&M) Buffaloes play. The faith angle comes over time. People put their faith in all kinds of things and college football has an emotional hold that other sports don't have. I say in the book that if you lose a heartbreaker in college football, your heart really breaks. Probably in about 2003, after my mom died, I started to think about a fan's memoir, using college football as a frame to talk about other things: joy, loss, redemption and, as I grew older, being a dad.*

ROBERT LEOS: You created and maintain "Jones Top Ten. The Truth About College Football Since 1995." (Readers see www.jonestopten.com). Sounds like you're having fun with it but I note that you occasionally veer outside of the realm of college football. Did you create this site at the time Internet use exploded or has it been around since before then (I can't remember when the Texas

Education Agency allowed me to use the Internet)?

ADAM JONES: *It started in 1995 as an e-mail among five graduate school friends. We were from diverse areas of the country and had gone to school in different places. When we scattered after graduation, **Jones Top Ten** was my means to kick it around with friends about the college football season. Five friends became a dozen, a dozen became a hundred, then, as the internet took off, the weekly piece found its way to message boards and I bought my own domain name. It's always been free and it's always been fun. When it quits being fun, I'll stop!*

ROBERT LEOS: You obviously have some incredible time management skills: You've written *Rose Bowl Dreams*, you maintain the Internet site: www.jonestopten.com, you go to football games, have speaking and book signing engagements, you are raising a family, all while effectively serving as Deputy Commissioner for the Texas Education Agency, an incredibly important position. With the 2009 legislative session almost on us, I see you either curtailing some of the activities or living on a lot less sleep. Which will it be?

Oh, if you will continue all activities during the session, when will you be offering "Jones Time Management Seminars" so that I can participate?

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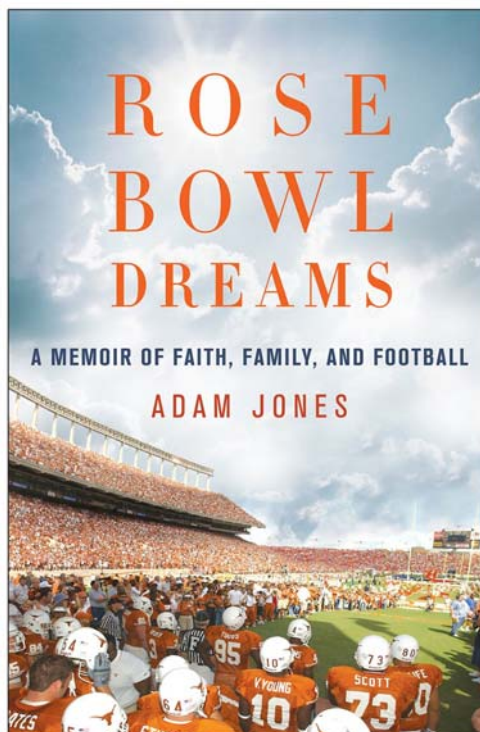
ADAM JONES: *The fall is always tougher than the spring. People ask why I don't write about college basketball and I always say "too many games." Once the college football season ends, the Legislature will have my full attention. I don't ever think of it as time management as much as I think of it as pursuing passions. I had to write *Rose Bowl Dreams*; it was part of who I am. That meant late nights and early mornings and two full weeks I took off from work to write—lots of missed family vacations. It also takes an incredibly supportive wife!*

ROBERT LEOS: **Are there other books in the works at this time that you would care to com-**

ment on?

ADAM JONES: *No. I think the next project will come to me. The writing is the easy part, actually getting the work to market is much more taxing, to me, anyway. It wouldn't surprise me if I mined some of the same literary territory about the intersection between sports and faith. I'd love to write about basketball, a sport I actually played, someday.*

ROBERT LEOS: **Thanks so much for agreeing to this Q and A. Best wishes for great success with the book and your many other activities.**



***Rose Bowl Dreams: A Memoir of Faith, Family, and Football** By Adam Jones was published in 2008 by St. Martin's Press. New York, New York.*

Contact your local or online bookseller.