**Prompt 1:** **Data Set Description and Broad Question**

The data set contains basic demographic information about all NFL players, past and present, such as name, birth date, college, position, years played, etc. In addition to demographic information, there are additional tabs that track the relevant NFL season stats for each of these players for their position. Quarterbacks, for example, have data tracking their passing yards, touchdowns, interceptions, passer rating, etc., while defensive safeties have data tracking tackles, interceptions, and sacks. Together, this information easily would allow a data user to trend player performance throughout their NFL career. With this dataset in mind, across all positions, how extensive is the “Sophomore Slump” or lack thereof on NFL players following their rookie season?

**Prompt 2: Overarching Question.**

Does a “Sophomore Slump” exist and can its impact be felt more heavily in specific NFL positions?

**Prompt 3: Introduction.**

Hi, my name is Adam Bakopolus, and I’m here to understand what trends we might find about NFL players following their rookie seasons. This interview will take between 30 and 60 minutes, during which time we’ll go through several questions. Throughout, I’d like you to treat me as if you’re describing your thoughts on this matter to someone who isn’t that familiar with the NFL. I’m here to learn from you.

A couple of things before we start. I will take your comments to be confidential. I will never associate your name with any comments you might make, I will aggregate comments from several interviews I’m conducting so that your comments are not easily traced to you. Though I’m conducting this interview mostly for the benefit of my own data analysis, if I were to quote you in any report, I would only do so without identifying your name or specific role. If there’s anything you really don’t want on the record, even if it’s anonymized, please let me know that, too. Also, this interview is entirely voluntary on your part, so if at any time you’d like to stop, or you’d like me to remove information you’ve already provided, please let me know. Doing so will have no adverse impact on you.

Do you have any questions for me? All right, then, let’s proceed.

**Prompt 4: Questions**

**Background / warm-up questions**

* How long have you been following the NFL?
  + If not extensively, are there other sports that you actively follow or participate in?
* I have a data set I plan to analyze that is based on historical NFL data and player’s demographic information as well as season statistics across all positions. How familiar or comfortable would you be with this kind of dataset?
* Are you familiar with the term “Sophomore Slump”? If so, can you describe it?

**Main questions**

1. \*\*\* Since you played sports at a high-level in college, you have likely heard the term “Sophomore Slump” regarding athletic performance. Can you tell me how a slump may have manifested within your sport?

* Tell me more about example slumps you may have seen during your college career, for either yourself or others on your team.
* What do you believe contributed to these slumps?
* Were there internal or external factors at play?
* Did performance improve following this second year or did it begin a downward spiral from the rookie/freshman season?

2. Think back to the last time you interacted with the data I mentioned earlier – NFL player statistics. Can you tell me about any prior interactions with a comparable dataset?

* What specifically did you do with the data (Fantasy Football draft preparation, etc.)?
* What were you hoping to find or understand?
* What trends and/or information were you looking for when assessing a player?

3. \*\*\* Next, I’m going to ask you to speculate a bit about what might be in the data set. What kinds of trends do you expect might be in the data that we haven’t discussed yet?

* Where does that hunch come from? Why do you suspect that?
* Do you think there might be instances of Sophomore Slumps in the NFL data? If so, why?
* Is there any demographic information that could be useful in identifying players more susceptible to a slump (draft position, small or large university, etc.)?

4. Next, I’d now like to focus on Sophomore Slumps at the professional level. With the historical NFL dataset shaping this conversation, do you recall a high-performing rookie season followed by a disappointing sophomore campaign?

* Tell me more about the player and the slump they had.
* Why do you believe this slump happened?
* Was it likely driven by internal (preparation, attitude) or external factors (coaching decisions, greater focus on stopping the player)? What generally is the cause for slumps?

5. In your experience, are Sophomore Slumps typically overcome? And, if so, how?

* Does the player continue a downward trajectory or are future years more in line with the rookie performance?
* What factors were at play that led to a year over year improvement?
* Was the slump and/or subsequent improvement likely driven by internal (preparation, attitude) or external factors (coaching decisions, greater focus on stopping the player)?
* If a downward trajectory continues, why was there only one season (the rookie season) of strong performance before a sharp decline?

6. \*\*\* Now that we have a strong foundational base around Sophomore slumps, in general, I’d like to shift to a focus on slumps within NFL positions. Without the benefit of reviewing the datafile, what positions do you believe would be most prone to a slump?

* Where does that hunch come from? Why do you suspect that?
* Are there any positions that you believe should be slump-proof? If so, why?
* What factors do you believe contribute to some positions being more prone to slumps than others?

7. Is there any bias in media that may sway public perception around slumps?

* How does reporting differ for a quarterback compared to a running back or wide receiver?
* Is media bias towards “star” positions making it difficult to determine which positions truly are most susceptible?
* Does the media disproportionately report on slumps versus continued success, leading to a perception that slumps are far more prevalent than they truly are?

8. What are some key statistics you would focus on to assess whether performance may be tied to a slump?

* Are there any positions that can be viewed truly within a silo to assess performance?
* How would you adjust for factors beyond a player’s control (poor surrounding team, coaching, etc.)?

9. When evaluating a slump, is there anything beyond just statistics that you would look for?

* Is there a need to evaluate based on an “eye-test” as well as opposed to just statistics (if statistics are coming only during “garbage time” when the game is out of hand or already lost)?
* Should off the field issues or character concerns also be considered part of a slump?
* Should there be leeway for those with an “unexpectedly great” rookie season from a low draft position or small school?

10. One last question that I wanted to discuss is whether or not you would expect to see a trend with the number of slumps associated with a player from a particular college or on a particular professional team?

* What prevents a player from slumping?
* Do external factors such as coaching and the organization the player is associated with play a significant role in future performance?
* Are there any other trends you would be interested in looking for in the dataset?

**Prompt 5: Conclusion** Thank you. Those are all the questions I have for you. If anything else occurs to you after I leave, please don’t hesitate to let me know by email. I may be in touch with you again to ask a few follow-up questions. If I ever complete the actual data analysis, would you like me to send you a copy of the report? Do you have any questions? Thanks again!

**Prompt 6: Marked Questions** See questions above with 3 asterisks.