

2022 College World Series

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Omaha, Nebraska, USA

Texas A&M Aggies

Coach Jim Schlossnagle

Nathan Dettmer

Troy Claunch

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Jim Schlossnagle and student-athletes Troy Claunch and Nathan Dettmer.

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: Good to be back. It's been five years since I sat on this stage and got shutout by Alex Faedo. Glad he's not here. Always good to see Bill in his seersucker.

And we're fired up for the fighting Texas Aggies and the 12th man. And really excited for our players, for them to experience it once-in-a-lifetime, hopefully more than once-in-a-lifetime for one of us up here. But excited and looking forward to get the opportunity to play.

Q. Jim, as someone who has been here and familiar with this park, do you have any kind of feel on how your guys are suited for this park? And secondly, just as a veteran here, the message you give to your guys who haven't been here before?

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: I think the message, first and foremost, is I believe you have to have two personalities. Same way at home. They have to be a student when it's time to be a student and a player and an athlete when it's time to be a player. And when you come here, you want to balance -- I think if you try to have it all be baseball all the time and put a grip on them and put them behind bars in the hotel, that's not going to be a good experience.

So I think the challenge is to be a baseball player when it's time to do baseball, like we just finished with practice, and we'll have tomorrow or when you have an off day or a free couple of hours go enjoy everything that Omaha has to offer without tiring yourself out.

That's always been my message to the teams. Haven't won a national title yet. So I'm hoping that's still the right thing to say. But I do believe in that.

I think we would be -- I would be failing the players if we didn't encourage them to enjoy the things that are here without having it be a distraction.

In terms of the ballpark, this is obviously a lot bigger ballpark than most people play in, foul ground included. Speed in the outfield, being able to cover ground I think is important on this field. The grass is a lot slower, being in a northern climate.

But we play on different fields all the time. We played in Frisco early in the season, which is similar to this, in terms of the playing surface.

But I think at the end of the day it just comes down to playing good baseball. We've got to limit free bases, we have to catch the baseball and get some timely hits against some really good pitchers.

Q. Could you just talk about Coach Schlossnagle coming in and just the mentality that he brought and how he built the roster? I know he inherited most of the roster, but brought some other people in?

NATHAN DETTMER: Just since day one we've been talking about this, working for this. And now that we're here, all the work we've put in, this is standard. And I hope that we come back here next year and know we're going to do everything in our power. And we've talked about being delusional about winning and doing everything we can to be here. Ever since day one, and now we're here.

TROY CLAUNCH: I would agree. Just coming in, this was the message. This was the standard that was set. Coach does a great job of pushing you every single day, not only to be like who you are now but to be a better version of yourself tomorrow.

And he sees a better version in every single one of us, and he just pushes us to find that within ourselves. We know he has our back and he loves us no matter what. When you have someone behind you like that, when you have a leader that believes in you and pushes you to just be better every single day, again, it goes back to like he said being delusional about winning and being delusional about

getting better every single day. And I think that's what led us to be here.

Q. When you have a roster that has some holdovers but there's a lot of guys, veterans, coming in from a lot of different places, can you talk about what the meshing process was like and become comfortable with one another?

TROY CLAUNCH: It took learning each other both on and off the field. In the fall, we spent a lot of times together on the field, but we tried to spend a lot of hours off the field as well. So you can trust each other.

Early in the season, took us a little bit to get going, but I think that just came down to learning how to play with each other, learning again how to trust each other. Baseball can be an individual game sometimes, but it's very much a team game.

So, yeah, it's you and the pitcher, but I have to be able to trust the guy behind me to get the job done or I have to be able to trust the information from the guy in front of me.

So once we kind of learned to trust each other, once we learned how to play with each other, the connection was already there off the field, the relationships that we had, the friendships, the brotherhood, that was there. And once it clicked on the field, we just started rolling.

NATHAN DETTMER: I totally agree. And when we first got here in the fall, it really honestly felt like a summer team, just a bunch of guys with different backgrounds coming together to play ball. In the fall we had pool parties, getting together getting to know each other, having some fun. That's what it's all about, getting together and know you can trust them, like he said. We clicked, it worked and team morale is at an all-time high. Feels great.

Q. Troy, I know you have cliché is a lot of guys can reach out to guys who have been here before. Are you in a unique position that if anything goes sideways on the mound you can go out there, talk to these guys have a little bit of experience in this park and in this tournament?

TROY CLAUNCH: Yeah, I mean, well, my experience is limited to one inning. So I don't really have that much playing experience here. But yeah, I've seen what it looks like to win here, that's for sure.

I know what the standard looks like. But at the end of the day, like, it's still 60 feet, 6 inches away. The bases are still 90 feet away. Sure there will be more people in the

seats, maybe more people watching on TV. But it's the same. We have to continue to spread that message, continue to make sure these guys trust themselves, trust their process and continue to play the same game we have all year.

Q. Troy, can you tell us about transferring in and being a leader right away. And secondary question, your postseason experience is not necessarily Omaha. Do you think that gives you an advantage when you come down here?

TROY CLAUNCH: The transferring process, it was a whirlwind experience, but once I got here, obviously started with my previous relationship with Coach Yeskie. And really trusted him. And then got to know Coach Schloss over the phone.

When I got on campus and met all the coaches, it was an instant click. And then meeting all my teammates. The leadership thing is pretty cool, especially when it's your first year. But at the end of the day I wasn't trying to be somebody I'm not. I wasn't going to try to come here and push myself on these guys. I just wanted to be who I am and trust that who I was as a teammate was going to be good enough.

It's pretty awesome these guys have all trusted me and I've been able to lead them this year.

As far as Omaha experience, postseason experience, yes, again, the lights get brighter. But we talk about it: Pressure is a privilege and we're privileged to be here and we just have to keep doing our thing.

Q. Troy, you have been here, we talked about. Do you notice any similarities between this team and the team you came here with before?

TROY CLAUNCH: Just that grit and resilience. In 2018, the message of our team was to finish. They got here in 2017 and felt like they came up short. So we had that grit to finish. Everything we broke on was the word "finish" and that was our goal.

And we just gritted our way through it the whole time. This team -- each team has a different story. We've had a different story, a different road of getting here. But I think our grit and our resilience is the same.

Q. And Nathan, if you'll kind of shed a little more light on the blister issue and how it interrupted you and where you are with the blister and where you are with your pitching?

NATHAN DETTMER: Four weeks ago now, I just got a little blister on the inside of my foot. When I tried to push off, it hurt. I'm not sure how it popped up. I think maybe the cleats had something to do with it.

I switched cleats. It's feeling good, totally 100 percent healed. Feeling good. No issue at all now.

Q. Can you speak to the challenge of Oklahoma, especially in this field of power-hitting teams -- they have more of a running game than a lot of the other teams here? What's the challenge in the opener?

TROY CLAUNCH: Any team you face here is going to be extremely good. We talked about it all the time. They're either really good, really hot or both. I would say Oklahoma is both right now.

So we'll dive into scouting-report stuff more tomorrow. Not super caught up in it right now. The coaches do a great job of taking -- there's so much information you can gather, and the coaches do a great job of gathering all that information and feeding us the information that we need rather than flooding our brains with stuff we don't really need.

So we'll come up with a good scouting report. We'll learn what we need to learn and then go out and play our game.

NATHAN DETTMER: We can get all the information in the world but at the end of the day we've got to perform, and it's all about us. And I know this might be one of the last times the 2022 Aggie baseball team puts on a uniform, so we'll give it all we have every game.

Q. What does it mean to you to get that ball and take those first warm-up pitchers and be a starter for one of the games?

NATHAN DETTMER: Means a lot to me. It's really surreal. We talked about it the other night. Last year I didn't think I would be here. It's a crazy, surreal experience. Knowing the coaches have the trust in me to be the number one guy, throw the first pitch in the whole thing, it's crazy. I know that trust. I feel it. I'll go give it my best.

Q. Wanted to see, obviously you guys going through this for the first time as a team, going through a lot of firsts in a while for this program. Just what's it been like to kind of do that collectively as a unit, but also the fan base kind of feeding off of that, following along first time in Omaha for five years or so, and just what's it kind of been like?

NATHAN DETTMER: It's been awesome. The support they've shown throughout the whole season following us and believing in us, even in our rocky parts, it's the 12th Man. I love them. It's the best school in the world. The fans are the best. That's why you play, for them and for each other.

TROY CLAUNCH: He said it great. But I wasn't here last year, obviously, to experience the down year. So I don't know what that feels like for them.

But I feel what it feels like for them this year, right? I've felt their passion coming into the year. I mean just meeting fans early in the season, before the season started, just how much they've expressed what this place means to them. And yeah, what it means to us.

They've supported us this entire way. There's nothing like the 12th Man. And we're excited to give them a team to root for here in Omaha.

Q. Could each of you speak to how difficult it is to compete in the SEC? And having four teams here, what that means for the conference? And just speak to that, please.

TROY CLAUNCH: I think playing an SEC schedule puts you in the best possible scenario to have success. When you're battle tested every single weekend, when there's not an easy at-bat, Friday through Sunday, whether it's the eighth inning of a blowout game or a tight game, there is no such thing as an easy at-bat or no such thing as an easy pitch.

When you can go through that week after week, you feel ready to take on anybody. I think there's no surprise that there's as many SEC teams as there are here. It's a great conference, but the teams that aren't in the SEC are also great teams here.

NATHAN DETTMER: And having that confidence in knowing that we've had success going through the SEC. And so knowing that if we just play our game and just be us, we're going to have success again. And just keep being us and rise up to the challenge but listen to our training.

Q. How would you describe the grind of an SEC Tournament or an SEC season to someone who has never gone through it?

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: You know, when you're not in the league, two things happen. Like, you watch from afar and you see the atmosphere. And you see the level of competition. But you're also, like, the whole just "it means

more" phrase. That's a little bit elitist.

And it's not that it means more -- no disrespect to the SEC or Commissioner Sankey. It doesn't mean more. It means more to more people. There's more people. The schools are bigger. College baseball means a lot to the people of Fort Worth, Texas and TCU. There's more people -- 70,000 students. 510,000 former students. So it just means more to more people in my opinion.

But the league itself, it literally is, it's such a gauntlet because of the level of play. Every single team -- Alabama and Kentucky didn't make the NCAA Tournament. If you would have told me two weeks ago Alabama and Kentucky would be at Omaha, it wouldn't shock me in the least, not for one second.

What Troy said, every single pitch has so much writing on it, just to win a game, much less a series. And then you throw in the atmospheres that are involved at just about every ballpark, it is, on a Monday, the day after you play a three-game series, at least -- I'm in decent shape -- but I'm literally mentally just so exhausted from the grind of the decisions that happen on every single pitch and the way it can turn, because the players are so good and the coaches are so good.

There's hall of fame coaches all across that league. And so you know you're not facing somebody that isn't prepared. Every single one of them is prepared at the highest level. And every single school is committed at the highest level. There's no step back.

Q. I assume Nathan's your guy for tomorrow?

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: Yes.

Q. What went into that decision, and how important is it to get past that five-inning mark that seems to be eluding you all?

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: I think if we were to try something different, I thought about doing something different maybe, using a bullpen arm to start a game. But I think sometimes that can send the wrong message to your team.

And Nathan, when he's -- I think he's won SEC Pitcher of the Week twice during that stretch, against Alabama, Georgia and Vanderbilt. He's certainly capable of pitching well here. He's ready. He's rested. And so hopefully he can go out there and give us some length.

Oklahoma is a real offense. Like, that's a real baseball team. There are some teams that you face that just, that's one thing about the SEC. There's not a comparable

offense in the SEC in my opinion.

The SEC has a lot more bangers, lot more homers. The parks are smaller. And Oklahoma is built to win this thing. I can tell you that, because the run game, the bunt game, that's a real offense. And obviously we're facing a great pitcher and a great pitching staff. So we have a lot of challenges ahead of us.

He'll have to keep the leadoff hitter off base and manage the run game. And we'll have to get outs when they bunt, because they do a lot of that.

Q. What made you select Troy for the 12th Man?

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: For No. 12? When I took the job, the 12th Man, obviously, if you know that story or you know what that is, it represents our fan base. And the No. 12 just means a lot at Texas A&M and to the former students and fans.

When you walk into Kyle Field, the football stadium, you see "Home of the 12th Man" across the facade of the upper bench. Eventually I would like to put it in our ballpark I don't think the No. 12 or 12th Man is recognized enough on the baseball side.

I felt it should be an honor to wear No. 12. We decided we're going to go through the fall and whoever we feel like best represents the core values of the university, we're going to award them No. 12.

It was a really hard decision, especially to give it to a new player. And I think you have to credit the returning players for how they handled it because it could have been real easy for somebody that's been at A&M and represented those values for two or three or four years to say, what the heck? Why are we giving it to this guy from Oregon State?

But Troy did such a great job of not having an ego, being humble, being conscientious, having quiet confidence to where he earned the respect of his teammates and the coaching staff. And frankly it was a really easy decision. And we may not do it every year. We'll see. But if we do it it will be someone that's really special that represents everything that the 12th Man is about.

Q. When you piece this many new pieces together and it works so well, and you end up here in a new uniform, how personally satisfying has this entire journey been for you?

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: Very. I don't think about it that much. I did think about it today because it was real tough to leave TCU. I love that school. My kids go to school



there. (Voice quivering). Sorry.

But I needed something myself personally different. And professionally I felt -- I believe there's a shelf life to everything.

I would have been more than happy and honored to be the coach at TCU the rest of my career, but I felt like -- I felt like it was a good time for TCU to have a new voice. And I felt for me professionally, you know, I really wanted the opportunity to compete in the SEC. I really wanted -- I'm not sure I want to coach into my 70s. I'd like to do this maybe 10 or 12 more years if they'll let me and we'll reevaluate it then.

And so it was just a personal -- personally it was a great time. And professionally it was the perfect time for me to do it. And then to have all the coaching staff and all the guys, like guys like Troy Claunch -- Troy Claunch could have been a plug-and-play player for a thousand teams in a way better position with a roster than Texas A&M, but he chose Texas A&M.

When a Palisch or a Claunch or Kaler, these transfers, or Nathan Dettmer could have transferred. So when those guys decided to stay, the way I handle things is I feel a personal obligation to make sure that they have a great experience.

And it's very satisfying, not for me personally, but to be able to look over here and see Troy. We didn't let him down. And so we'll see what happens while we're here. Ultimately we want to win a national title.

But you have the 12th Man. You have an administration that's committed at the highest level. And my biggest fear in life is to let somebody down. And so we have these fans here. They're going to get to experience the College World Series and hopefully we can stay here for a while.

Q. What allowed you to come in here and have this level of success in your first year?

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: I think just what we talked about. Number one, the players. They're good players. They might be orphans, might be everybody from somewhere else, kind of. But they're good players. Troy Claunch is a good player. He would be in professional baseball if it was more than a 20-round draft. And you see that a lot -- we're in the golden age of college baseball.

It will last a while, but with the 20-round draft, more scholarships coming we hope. This is the golden age of baseball.

And then our coaching staff. You have guys like Nate Yeskie and Michael Earley, Nolan Cain, Chuck Box, all the guys who came in and just really bought in a culture. We tried as best we could, I think the guys from College Station will tell you, we tried to dive into what Texas A&M was all about, whether it's yell practice football games, bonfire, the war hymn.

If you're not part of it, you don't understand. But once you're in it, you're, like, this is really cool, man, to be part of something that's so much bigger than yourself. I think that being an Aggie is what's really bonded us.

Q. Jack Moss said the other day that -- he kind of talked about how he came down for his first trip and he said he went around the stadium with you. I wondered your recollections of that were? And he said that made a huge impact on his decision to come there.

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: Jack, he was one of those first guys we had on the visit. One of those first guys we wanted out of the gate. Him and Dylan Rock were the first names we were talking to. But the thing with Jack is there were a lot of great programs that wanted him.

I said to him on the field the other day, thank goodness we're here because I didn't want to let you down. But ironically Ole Miss and Arkansas are here. Those were the other two schools he was looking at visiting.

I wanted to sell him on the vision. And with a transfer, it's different than selling to a high school player because you're selling something that's in the distance. With a transfer they may only have a year or two to experience it.

So a lot of those guys, they're a little hesitant to be part of a roster that just finished not making the SEC Tournament.

But I think he bought into our staff. He bought into what Texas A&M is all about, and I think he had enough confidence in himself to know he could make a big impact.

Q. That was the first time he'd seen the stadium as well?

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: First time I'd seen the stadium? No, I've seen the stadium plenty in the other dugout.

Q. First time you visited --

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: Might have been our first official visit. He may have been the guy, the first official visit. So that was neat.

Q. Coach, could you just tell me if you noticed any

kind of difference with this Texas A&M team to some of the previous teams that you brought to Omaha at TCU years before?

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: Biggest difference is the starting pitching. We don't have the depth of starting pitching that most of those teams have.

In college baseball, this year, you don't really see it as much. Some of these teams have that, which is why they're here. So that would be the number one difference.

This is a really offensive club that we have. We had a couple of offensive teams like that at TCU, but the ballpark at TCU plays significantly different.

The wind blows in most days. It's a pitching and defensive-built stadium; whereas, A&M's park, once the weather changes, the wind blows out a lot. So the home run and extra base hit play a big role in that.

The biggest difference would be the starting pitching. But because our starting pitching hasn't been elite, our bullpen is really good, because we use it a lot. Especially those three lefties, Palisch, Menefee, Will Johnston, Brad Rudis and Cortez will play a big role in this tournament. Those guys are seasoned because they pitched a lot.

Q. I know it's been a long season, but arriving here, does it feel like a fresh, exciting start for the guys and for you?

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: Yeah. For me, this is the pearly gates of college baseball. This is what you dream about. This is why you do all the other stuff. Nobody gets into coaching, I hope not, to recruit. You don't get into coaching to raise money or go do all the other things. You get into coaching to work with kids and have them see success on the field and end up in the College World Series.

I forgot your question, but the excitement of being here. You want to balance the excitement of being here with winning.

When you land and you instantly come to the ballpark, and, for me, I've been here enough to know how awesome it is, and what the fans are going to be like, and just how people are treated.

Omaha, it's everything you think about. Every time you lift a weight or make a recruiting phone call, this is what you're thinking about.

So to have that hard work resolve itself in being here is just

-- it's very gratifying. I sure would like to win the last game, though, and that's something that ultimately we want to be able to do.

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