

# 2022 College World Series

Thursday, June 16, 2022

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

Oklahoma Sooners

Coach Skip Johnson

Tanner Tredaway

Peyton Graham

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Coach Skip Johnson and student-athletes Peyton Graham and Tanner Tredaway.

SKIP JOHNSON: Welcome, and it's a beautiful day that the Lord hath made and we shall rejoice in it. It's beautiful outside. Got to practice. Biggest thing, to see what the stadium looks like. Looks really good. It's a lot like the big league stadiums we got to play in before.

Looking for the opportunity to come to Omaha and do what we do and have fun doing it. Really proud of our kids. We're just a team full of Davids. So that's basically about all I've got to say.

**Q. Peyton and Tanner, you've been called a small-ball team by the media. You both have some pop. Do you guys embrace the small-ball moniker, or are you guys a little bit angry about that?**

PEYTON GRAHAM: I personally don't mind it. Just creating chaos, that's what we do. We've embraced it pretty well, and we're going to keep running with it.

TANNER TREDAWAY: I think it's just a part of our identity. It's part of who we are as a team. I think it's a key part of our success all year. If we weren't bought in, I don't know that we'd still be in the lineup.

**Q. Everybody, but everybody says we're taking it one game at a time, one pitch at a time, so on and so forth. Why do you think that has worked so well for you? What has it allowed you guys to embrace it and take it on? And are there examples of what you're talking about when you say one pitch at a time, one inning at a time?**

TANNER TREDAWAY: I think personally, and I think I can speak for the whole team, is it just really keeps us in the

moment. In big situations, when Peyton hits a grand slam, I think he really calms himself down and is just ready for that one moment.

I think it's really just trickled down the whole team, and it's just been really good for us. And we played in a lot of hostile environments, and this one's going to be the same. And I think that's why we've thrived in those situations.

PEYTON GRAHAM: Well said.

SKIP JOHNSON: One pitch at a time is really what the game's played like. You can only control your thoughts, your one thought on one pitch. You don't want to look in the future; you don't want to look in the past. It's easier said than done. We can sit up here talk about getting a team to play one pitch at a time, one inning at a time.

For example, Peyton's 1-2 at the Regional, we're down 3-1, and one pitch he squared up and hit it in the bullpen. It's really just about one pitch. This game's hard enough to play. It's an imperfect game.

And I was blessed to learn that, I think, going to the University of Texas from Navarro Junior College and really thought what I was doing. I really didn't know what I was doing as a baseball coach. And being around Coach Garrido and Coach Harmon in that and listening to what they talk about, one pitch at a time, I learned a lot how to teach guys in that environment. It's really just about one pitch. And control yourself.

It's 100 percent of what you've got to get to the next pitch. On the mound, if you're trying to get to the next pitch, all of a sudden you look up, you're at 100 pitches. That's really what it's about.

You're trying to teach baseball as much as you can as a head coach and that's really what a coach does, is he's trying to teach those guys how to play in the game that's really a tough game to play because these guys deal in failure a lot.

And you're trying to build confidence as you're doing it with one pitch because one pitch, it can help a guy's lifetime. It

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could hurt a guy's lifetime if they take it that way. So it's how you respond to the adversity that's thrown in front of you. And it's really just about one pitch.

**Q. As far as embracing the David role and embracing that underdog role, what does that mean throughout the dugout in the locker room? Is that something that you guys have talked about more and more as this has progressed for you guys?**

TANNER TREDAWAY: I think it just really keeps us all level headed and keeps us all the same. It makes us feel like not one person is contributing more than the other. I think that's good for a team morale and our success so far.

PEYTON GRAHAM: I think it helps us play with a chip on our shoulder, something to prove people wrong, that we came in here ranked eighth. First ones out, I think that just rallies the guys, gets them fired up a little bit.

**Q. Peyton, this experience, I know you've been here for less than 24 hours, but certainly you've been around. You've seen some stuff. What's it been like, how much are you cherishing this?**

PEYTON GRAHAM: It's awesome being where your feet are. It's amazing. Been here, I don't know, 10, 11 years ago watching the games. Now I'm here playing in it. It's pretty neat. Couldn't be more excited.

TANNER TREDAWAY: Yeah, this is a dream come true, for sure. I was just watching it on TV as a kid. I've never been here before. So this whole experience has been unbelievable. And I'm excited to play in front of 25,000 people. I think I'm looking more forward to that and that adrenaline rush and I'm just excited.

**Q. Could you guys speak to how your team speed has gotten you guys going and how it's even set you apart, especially in college baseball when so many teams are just mashing the ball?**

TANNER TREDAWAY: I think our aggression is the biggest key for our team. And I tell the younger guys, too, I said the best thing about the aggression that we have is that it really takes the fear out of the game.

Guys are too worried about stealing a base or putting a bunt down that it really takes away all the fear that you have in the game. And I think that's why -- when we play in these hostile environments, we've been able to take it one pitch at a time because we're so focused on accomplishing what we're trying to do.

And I think that's taken a lot of stress off not only us but the

younger guys as well.

PEYTON GRAHAM: I think it's a lot about what he said, and then also being smart on the base paths as well. Certain counts you run in, certain counts you don't run in. I think that just gives us a big advantage to steal that base.

**Q. Going off what you were talking about a minute ago, dream come true to be here and all that stuff, but how do you strike that balance, yes, making sure you soak it in, you appreciate that the fact that you're here, and also laser focused on the objective, which is obviously to get some wins here and try to win this whole thing?**

TANNER TREDAWAY: That's a pretty tough question. I don't know. We just try to stay in the moment. I think we enjoy this. We embrace this. This is once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I think we all understand that. But more than anything we're here to make a statement. We were here to make a statement in the Regional. We were here to make a statement in the Super. And now we're here in Omaha to make a statement.

I think everybody knows what our main goal is, but definitely enjoy and embrace all this.

PEYTON GRAHAM: Like he said, our main goal is to win it all. But I think everybody's taking it in. They're not taking any moment for granted. It's pretty awesome.

**Q. You've already touched on it a little bit but I know a couple years ago Coach mentioned he thought it was an Omaha-type team didn't get a chance to make that trip. Didn't play the season. Is there maybe some more cherishing this opportunity to know that you guys get a chance to do it now? Because it could have been a once-in-a-lifetime thing. Also, did you hear some of your teammates from that 2020 season who are saying go win it this time?**

PEYTON GRAHAM: That season just made everybody realize that you can't take any season, any game for granted. You never know when your last one may be. So we're blessed to be here. And all the guys from that team, they've sent us videos, texts all the time, go get 'em. So it's awesome.

**Q. Could you comment on your pitching and how it's elevated in the postseason, how those guys, whether it's one starting, closing, seems like everybody's had a big role in the way you guys have played in the postseason? And I presume that's the plan moving forward.**

TANNER TREDAWAY: Skip does a really good job with the pitchers, teaching the same stuff, really, taking it one pitch at a time.

But Skip says it too, but I believe in it, too, that our offense is really complemented for our pitching. I think when we're rolling offensively we really give them confidence.

Like Skip says, pitching with a lead is a lot better than pitching without one. They just gain confidence from that.

We've got a lot of level-headed guys, guys that don't get too low or too high. Not too high on emotion, which I think is good. I think that's good. Keeps you locked in and stay in the moment.

PEYTON GRAHAM: Our starting pitching has been nails pretty much all year. The pen, we've got guys in there that can get the job done. So we never really stand out in the field and worry, is this guy going to get him out or give up a run. We're pretty confident in those guys, especially Trevin Michael, he's been phenomenal this year.

**Q. Touched on it already, but you guys are coming in fourth in the country in stolen bases, and you have three guys on your team that have at least 20 stolen bases. How much more efficient is it strategy-wise that you have so many speedsters on your team that can contribute to a game in a big way on the base paths?**

SKIP JOHNSON: I think it puts pressure on the pitcher. If you can put pressure on the pitcher, it helps him elevate the ball at times, get behind in counts, get into advantage counts and stuff like that.

Coach Overcash and Coach Van Hook and myself sat down during COVID and we tried to figure out, we need to get more athletic and try to put some pressure on some defenses. And getting Reggie this year, one of the best base-running coaches around, really started the offense.

The good thing about what I do is I just go to practice, go down to the tunnel and go straight to the bullpen because I have hard enough time teaching them how to throw strikes.

So I think it puts the fun in it. And our whole coaching staff feeds off each other of trying to teach kids how to play baseball, our type of baseball and our identity, being aggressive.

**Q. Could you comment on Jake's season as the starting pitcher and Trevin's season as the closer and how they changed roles couple times here and there? But especially on Cade and how he's elevated his**

**game down this stretch of the season to put you guys where you are?**

SKIP JOHNSON: To speak about Jake first, he's kind of like the poster child of what we try to do with the pitchers -- bring them in, put them in a plan of success as they develop in their career. It shows you what our strength and training staff is about and all the things that happened on our wagon wheel of culture.

You look at what he looked like in high school and how his body changed with the strength and development going from our trainer, teaching him a routine of getting better every day, and then us as coaches trying to teach him to repeat his delivery. And he kind of took his own accountability to get better.

And sometimes it works. Sometimes it doesn't work for young men. But to his credit, he took over and did those things. It's been great.

Trevin on the other hand was a transfer from Lamar. We knew what we were getting. He's kind of a hybrid. He can start a game. He can throw three innings. He can close a game. He can do things that -- what you need to do as a closer you've got to be able to field your position. You've got to be able to hold runners, throw two pitches for strikes and he's done those things.

Cade Horton on the other hand was a kid that came out of high school during COVID that was really highly touted as a two-way guy. Was a quarterback, too.

He unfortunately had surgery after throwing live BP. Hurts his arm on his fourth pitch he threw and had some adversity. I'll never forget it. We played Tulsa last year, played Oklahoma State and Tulsa. He went to the game, just got done having Tommy John. A month later and he was looking out the window. I knew what was inside the guy's chest but the way he was looking outside the window, he's a determined kid.

We got beat that night. He didn't like that too much. And that just fueled his fire to get better. Going back to Luke Spitz, our trainer, and Tim Overman, our strength coach, to get him back, he's going on 15 months.

We had Cade Cavalli -- he was a two-way guy as well. And we played him as a freshman, closed him, struggled a little bit. At the end of his sophomore year started starting. And going to his junior year was a starter. Ended up being a first-round draft pick. Kind of did the same thing. We'll have to take Cade off third and throw this guy in the Sunday row and kind of let him build up.

He's gotten better every outing. I think he'll continue to get better every outing. And that just shows you the work that he puts in. He's the guy that wants to stay late and keep working. He wants to come early and keep working.

He's a former quarterback of a good football team at Norman High School. And I think that really shows his leadership skills.

**Q. Having gone up against Jim Schlossnagle in the Big 12 for the past seasons, what do you make of what he's been able to his first year at Texas A&M and the rebuild? Are there any aspects, characteristics of some of the TCU teams you've been able to see with this A&M group he has?**

SKIP JOHNSON: Offensively they're really good. They're going to grind at-bats out. That's what his teams did at TCU. He's done a great job. The world we live in today, with the portal and all the stuff that goes on in college baseball, he's done a really great job of getting a bunch of guys together, get a great coaching staff.

The resources he's been provided has really helped him. Not that he wasn't a good coach before. It just shows you what he's about. And we're looking for the opportunity to go out and perform against him. It's going to be a fun day.

**Q. Your guys mentioned you called your offense "creating chaos." How do you feel like that works for y'all in this matchup against A&M where pitching staff has been up and down at times?**

SKIP JOHNSON: You never know in this environment. You think you really know what's going to happen in this environment. I've been here before. You don't really know. You just gotta go out and trust what they're going to do.

I think the difference in what we're going to do, we're going to be who we are. That's just what we do. If it works against A&M, it works. If it doesn't, it doesn't. We'll wake up tomorrow, God willing, and do what we do.

**Q. You're a team that doesn't rely on the long ball. How will that help you find success here in Omaha?**

SKIP JOHNSON: You look at this ballpark. It's built like Yellowstone. It's a big ballpark. I like big ballparks. At Navarro College, when I was at the junior college, it was a big ballpark.

It's about throwing strikes and playing defense and taking advantage of the other team's mistakes at times. That's really what baseball is about. Do you ever win at baseball?

You don't. It's really making -- the other team making mistakes. That's how you end up winning. Sometimes it really reveals your character. That's what's awesome about baseball.

**Q. Along the same lines what I asked Peyton and Tanner about soaking this in but staying focused. You know as well as anybody how hard it is to get here but to play in this event, what's your message to the guys in this area, make sure you appreciate this but keep focused on what the goal is?**

SKIP JOHNSON: The biggest thing is when you're getting ready for a baseball game you're on a mission. All the other things can be a distraction. And I was blessed to learn that from one of the best baseball coaches, if not the best college baseball coach in the country.

So what you've got to do is ground yourself, and really what Tanner talked about being in the moment. Understand, like, hey, we're fixing to practice. Let's get together and understand what we gotta practice for our 50 minutes, which is really unusual to have to wear turfs on a baseball field when you're usually practicing in spikes. So that was really unusual. I wonder if they wear sandals when they go to the Final Four to do their shootaround.

But I think that you've got to be focused on what you've got to get focused on in that moment on that one pitch. And all the other distraction, whatever the game happens, if it's happiness or sadness, whatever happens, you've got to flush it and get to the next pitch. We talk about that. We've got to live that. As coaches we've got to talk to them about it as much as we can.

**Q. I don't think you guys have run as much maybe in the postseason. But from a pitching aspect, is that something that has to be in the back of their minds as far as what you guys have done with your running this year?**

SKIP JOHNSON: I think the difference, if you go back and look at it, when you get in this type of environment and you get further down, teams are more equipped to stop you. And you've got to figure out a way how to score that run. And so with, being Florida or Liberty or whoever we've played, Virginia Tech, they're more equipped to stop some of the things that we did.

It wasn't necessarily us just -- we don't just go to first base and all of a sudden just go to second base. I mean, there's ways that we have got to look at it. And so I think that's more of the opportunity.

We're going to be aggressive. That's who we are. And if





we make the out, it's going to happen. But we're going to be aggressive.

**Q. Have you made a decision on starting pitcher? And what goes into making a decision on a first-game pitcher in the College World Series?**

SKIP JOHNSON: When my dad passed away in 2011, he had a cowboy hat, that's how he paid his bills. They were in a cowboy hat. He just pulled it out. That's what I'll be doing. I'll put all the names in a cowboy hat and pull it out and find out who is going to pitch tomorrow.

**Q. Is it a big hat or small hat?**

SKIP JOHNSON: It's a cowboy hat. (Laughter.)

**Q. In your experiences in this tournament, is there any advantage or disadvantage, or nothing at all, to playing in the first game of the tournament like you guys will be on Friday?**

SKIP JOHNSON: Not that I know of. It's not like you have magic dust you can throw on top of it and all of a sudden there's something else. I'm glad that we're kicking it off. It's good. They can go out and play their game and do what they do and see what happens.

**Q. What kind of advice do you think Augie would tell you going into this? I know you guys went to an Italian place last night that he liked to go to. But just as far as are there any memories you think about him coming back up here to Omaha?**

SKIP JOHNSON: 2009, I'll never forget it. The bus was like a courtroom, or whatever you say, it was like really quiet. All of a sudden he let the radio play. "This is Where I Came From," a song from Kenny Chesney came on.

I'll never forget it. And we get ready for the first game. He didn't talk about winning or losing the game. He talked about executing. He talked about getting bunts down, first pitch strikes. And talked about playing good catch. And we win on a walk-off walk. How does that happen?

I thought to myself, this is pretty cool. They never talked about winning or losing because what happens in this game, when you talk about winning or losing, kids start fearing that instead of just playing the game. Like I said earlier, do you ever really win at baseball? You don't. You just gotta keep playing the game. And it's an incredible venue, and I think that's what coach embraced.

When you got down to the College World Series, it was totally different for him. And being around him for the 10

years I was blessed to be around him and Coach Harmon, it was just like that, it was about executing your game plan.

And I've heard Venables talk about that. I've heard Lincoln Riley talk about that, and Barry Switzer talk about that. All the good coaches. Gene Stephenson's here. I've heard those guys talk about all those things.

You learn from all those guys. That's what you do as a head coach. And I'm really blessed to be under those guys and learn from them.

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