

# 2022 College World Series

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Omaha, Nebraska, USA

**Texas Longhorns**

**Coach David Pierce**

**Silas Ardoin**

**Trey Faltine**

Press Conference



our Regional, but going on the road was also a piece in the Super was something that helped this team continue to grow and understand they can do anything they want if they just keep together and keep working. And they did. Backs to the wall all the way to the Super. Trey hits the big double in the second game of the seventh inning down by five.

A lot of teams check it in, start thinking we had a great year, start thinking about the draft, start thinking about other things, but this team never did that. This team just continued to play and created the breaks and created the things that got them to Omaha. So I'm very proud of them.

**Q. The past doesn't mean a lot at this point, but when you are wearing the uniform of a program that has been here 38 times, does the legacy and being part of that drive you guys at all? Is it something you ever think much about?**

TREY FALTINE: Yeah, I think it does. Obviously, you have past players and throughout the year they come and support us all year and have our backs. I think no one talks about it but it's bigger than our team. It's about our program and the history of the program. And I think that helps us as well, knowing the history of what we've done, what the university has done.

I think that helps us in those moments. What Coach Pierce said, we're down by five, it's not just us fighting; it's the program we're fighting for. And I think that's a big thing. I think that legacy and dynasty is much bigger than our team and will forever be much bigger than one singular team in a year. I think that's the best thing about our university is the tradition it has is, it's huge.

SILAS ARDOIN: Part of the reason we come to Texas is because of that history and legacy. The name on the front of the jersey means more to us than anything. And we want to make our alumni and our organization and our team proud. Each time we step on the field we know what we're representing.

And, so, anytime, like Trey said, anytime we're in a tough situation, we know we can fight out of it because teams

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by head coach David Pierce and student-athletes Silas Ardoin and Trey Faltine.

DAVID PIERCE: It's great to be back in Omaha for sure. It's been an interesting journey for this team starting as the No. 1 team in the country and then moving into winning 11 straight. And we have some veterans especially in our everyday lineup.

But I think a lot of our younger and new players just thought this is the way it is. And we went on the road in March, and I think we played 10 out of 11 on the road. And we took some hits. We lost one of our starting pitchers in Tanner Witt. We had to have guys step up.

And the distractions and handling the frustrations of moving from one to 10 to completely out of the polls, which the polls don't matter so much to me, but it becomes a measuring stick for so many people, media, fan base and all.

And a little devastating for our team, but the thing that was most impressive for our team is that they didn't get caught up in it. And neither did our coaches. And we never got frustrated to a point where players or coaches started pointing fingers or creating animosity between the two or each other. We just continued to play.

We just continued to think that we're going to get better every day. And we did. And we shored up some things in our rotation. We shored up some things in the bullpen. And the two constants for us throughout the year has been a tremendous defensive team and a very good offensive team that we want to make sure that has the ability to not just hit the long ball but have the ability to score in multiple ways. And have a mentality about our team that we're going to fight until the end.

And I think a great example of doing really well at home in



have done it before. And coming to Omaha 38 times, at this point it's expected, and we want to come out here and perform and do the best we can for our alumni.

**Q. You guys as a team leaned hard on the home run ball early in the season. Seems like the second half of the season you guys started hitting the ball in the gap. Do you think that helps you guys coming into this big ballpark not having to rely on the long ball?**

SILAS ARDOIN: Yeah, well, I guess the long ball, we never looked at it as part, a huge part of our game. It just kind of comes for us, because we built ourselves to hit long jobs to the middle of the field. Early in the season it just happened to go out for us, and it all worked out.

We know we have a good offense and we can really hit and produce runs in multiple ways, whether it's bunting people over or hitting singles, doubles, homers, it doesn't really matter. So coming over here, I think we're prepared.

TREY FALTINE: I'd say the same thing. Back in Austin, we have a pretty big ballpark ourselves, so trying to hit a home run doesn't always work out for us. I think there's a lot more times where we're trying to take our singles the other way or hitting doubles in the gap. I think it helps us being in an environment like this where it feels a little bigger and the ball might not travel as well.

**Q. Trey, when you boarded the bus you had shirts that said "keep going" on it. That kind of speaks to what Coach talked about how you all got here. Where did those come from, who put that together, and just kind of what does that mean to this team this year?**

TREY FALTINE: If we're being completely honest, we were in an inner-squad before the beginning of the year. And me and Ivan on defense, and we were just kind of messing around, we were just rapping songs in the middle of the inner squad. There's a song, it's called "Every Chance I Get." And it says "keep going" in it.

I kind of just jokingly said it. And little by little just kept saying it and eventually the whole team caught on and now we use that on our T-shirt.

Anytime we're down, someone's battling in an AB we just say "keep going" because obviously it's the rap song. But in other words for baseball we're fighting until the end, we're never going to stop until we know we're out, or last strike zone or last out. I think that resembles everything we've done this year, we just kept going and kept fighting until the end.

SILAS ARDOIN: Similar response. I can recall a time, we

were at Citadel and just took three straight losses to South Carolina, two to the College of Charleston. Those were tough for us, first time hitting adversity this year.

Had a come-to-Jesus meeting, whatever. We were at Citadel and you could really tell we were all pulling together at that time. And even after that we struggled a little bit but still during that time I remember I was on first base and I forget who was hitting after me, but they were just working at-bat. And it was the first time the whole dugout yelled keep going, keep going.

You could tell that the hitter wouldn't give in each and every pitch. It was really nice to see that. I think we built off of that since then and put it on our T-shirt. That's how we're going to go about this World Series. We're just going to keep going.

DAVID PIERCE: I appreciate you guys clarifying that for me as well.

**Q. I know a lot of people are buzzing the way the bracket's formed this year. Curious, I know your folks in the first game, but for the second game what that means, what the possible matchups could be either way for both y'all. And the feeling for your fan bases that might be coming up to see that game?**

SILAS ARDOIN: Like I said, like you said, we're focused on the first game and the first pitch. Our main focus is to take it one pitch at a time.

But if you want to look to the second game, it's going to be a lot of fun. That's why we come to the University of Texas is to play those storied and rival programs, like OU and A&M, whichever one it is. But it's going to be a lot of fun. We know it's going to be a great atmosphere. That's what we live for, a great atmosphere.

We've played in front of great crowds all season, tough ones and ones that are supporting us. And it's going to be a lot of fun. We have respect for both of those programs.

TREY FALTINE: I'll go with what Silas said, to play those teams, obviously we played them in the regular season, but to play them on the biggest stage is going to mean a lot. We'll have a lot of fans and a lot of hype around it, too.

But the first thing's first. Notre Dame, we're worried about that. That's our only focus right now. Once we get there, to that point, then we'll worry about that.

**Q. Talking about that first game for both players, Texas and Notre Dame, two great universities with great traditions. Just talk about playing the Fighting**

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## **Irish in that first game?**

SILAS ARDOIN: We're really excited to play the Fighting Irish. I can't recall that we've ever played them before. We knew we were lined up with them last year and they fell just short.

We know they're a great team, very experienced. But we have a lot of experience and a lot of Omaha experience. We're going to rely on that and we're going to play our game.

TREY FALTINE: They're obviously really good. They're here for a reason. They just came off a really good Super Regional. So they're a good ballclub and we respect them. We're excited for the matchup and for it to finally get here, play our first game. And getting ready.

## **Q. Obviously people see the numbers that Ivan put up this year, but what impressed you guys just in terms of his process this season, and from how much you know him kind of the things he did to be successful here?**

TREY FALTINE: Yeah, I'd say probably the craziest thing is that you see some people have a good week or two, but he's had a good, I don't know, five months.

That's the crazy part of the season, he's just continuously doing it. It's almost like you go to the ballpark he does something even crazier than he did the game before. That's obviously been the funnest part about it.

And off the field, that's how he carries himself. You would never think that he's the home run leader and he's batting whatever he's batting, .420. And to win the Golden Spikes as he should.

To see that and have him be on our team is special. And to see it every day and watch him working, all the things he's come through even since last year and to where he is now it's special to watch.

SILAS ARDOIN: Like Trey said, he comes to the field every day level headed. Never has his success on his mind. He only plays to win. That's the greatest thing about him, every time he shows up to the ballpark he wants to help the team win. If he goes 0-for-4 and we win the ball game he's just as happy if he went 4-for-4. That's the greatest thing about him.

We know what we're going to get each and every day out of him. He's the greatest player in the country for a reason. He'll do great in the College World Series.

He's the best player, but he works like he's not even close. That's the greatest thing about him, is each and every night, he comes in after practice and puts in the extra swings and puts in the work. And that's why he is where he is right now.

## **Q. How does playing in that Greenville Super Regional prepare you for Omaha better than playing at home like you guys did last year?**

TREY FALTINE: I'd say having our backs against the wall that first game, after losing that first game, I think it really helped us. It's the same format here as a Regional. So I feel like that really helped us.

Obviously not being at home and having the comfort of your own fans and own bed, all that kind of stuff, it will help us coming into the College World Series. Obviously playing some tough teams, and they're experienced as well, so it's going to be fun to watch and fun to play with.

SILAS ARDOIN: Playing in front of that crowd, they had a great atmosphere. They were very loud, very active. And they were on us the entire series whether they were winning or losing.

And I think playing in front of that crowd prepared us to come to Omaha because we know that coming in we're not liked by a lot of teams and fan bases. We know we're going to hear it. And I think playing in Greenville was the best situation for us to be prepared for Omaha.

## **Q. Silas, Lucas was a guy who started the year out of the rotation, has moved into the No 2 role. What have you seen from him just off the field and how he's prepared in order to be successful in that role?**

SILAS ARDOIN: Lucas has just matured so much. Each and every day he's growing and getting better. And coming in you would never think he would be in this situation because we had Tanner. But losing Tanner, he really stepped up.

And he asked questions of all the starters. At that time Tristan was a starter, and he's a fifth or sixth year, one of those two. He has a lot of experience. He has Pete and Tanner, the things they do to prepare to start. And he put in the work and I'm proud of him for that.

He's really put the team on his back, because whenever we needed him the most, he was there. And he's going to continue to do well and excited to see what he'll do in the World Series for us.

## **Q. David, you guys got 128 home runs. I know you**



**mentioned you guys think you can score in a lot of different ways. I guess, that obliterated your program record for season home runs. So I guess how do you account for that? Something like 40 more than you guys ever hit.**

DAVID PIERCE: We broke the record without Ivan. It's been really impressive. The record was 81. And just kind of came in bunches, too.

I really think -- there's a couple of things that contribute. One, they answered the question, we're not really trying to hit home runs. And our ultimate goal is to hit line drives in the middle of the field. They talk about them every day they're diamond cutters. They're trying to hit diamond cutters every day.

I think when they learn how to use the opposite field gap and backspin that, then they're creating their swing path. And that swing path is the reason. And then you contribute to timing, rhythm, strength, all those things play a part.

We've also played in some conditions that were either very neutral or we've had a little bit more wind this year that was favorable. So I don't want to go there because I definitely don't want to discard what they've done, but we've had some other factors that have helped that.

And I truly believe that they don't work every day to go pull side home runs. You just become a better hitter doing that. Our goal is to become good hitters and then the home run comes with it, if you're on time and you have some power.

**Q. You mentioned earlier how you lost Tanner Witt for the season. How was this team able to come together and overcome that?**

DAVID PIERCE: Initially it was tough because he's not only a weekend starter for us, but one of our better leaders. Has a baseball IQ. He's around helping new kids even though he's a sophomore.

But it allowed opportunity for guys like Lucas Gordon, for maybe two or three guys in the bullpen to step up. And it really has helped Lucas become what he's become. I really think that Lucas could be our MVP for our pitching staff because without him we're not here.

But it's been tough. I got a picture from him the other day in his pin striped uniform with his glove, and -- in his pitching stance in his living room. And he just sent that to me, like, Coach, I'm with you guys. He's a heart and soul type guy.

And they just had to overcome it. They had to move on.

And unfortunate, but they did a good job of just moving on.

**Q. When you think back to signing Ivan out of Odessa, do you remember what you expected of him when he came into the program and sort of how to, reality versus expectations, how do you look back on that?**

DAVID PIERCE: I can just look back and see him hanging out in our dugout, a little insecure and just hoping that he fits into the program and that he can be a contributor. Like we've said before, just very humbled.

And then thinking that he's just an okay player. I never saw this coming. Then you started seeing signs of it once we got into the spring. And his power is different. You have guys that have 5:00 o'clock power and the game starts at 6:30. He's not a 5:00 o'clock guy. He's a gamer. And there's guys that have that power that doesn't equate in the game.

And he has game power. He has the knack of staying through the baseball as well as anybody have had.

**Q. As far as the scouting report Notre Dame has the best ERA of all the teams. How does that affect your scouting report and how you'll approach it at the plate?**

DAVID PIERCE: We don't scout. We just roll out. (Laughter). I'm kidding.

They're good. They're veterans. They know how to pitch. I think that's the thing -- there's a lot of big arms right now. A lot of guys throwing 95, but they haven't executed pitching.

And I think Coach Link and his staff have done a great job of just executing pitching. I think for us it's just to be ourselves, stay in the middle of the field in our mind and be in a good spot.

**Q. With all the changes that have happened with your pitching staff, from when Tanner went down, how important has Silas been all year just to be that consistent guy, both in the clubhouse and behind the plate?**

DAVID PIERCE: I'm really glad you brought that up, because it should not be overlooked. We've played 67 games. He started 66 of them and played in the 67th.

He's just been rock solid. He's durable. But he comes from a catching family. Dad caught in the Big Leagues. He came out of the womb basically being set up, programmed, however you want to say it, to be that guy.



And his body is very conducive to being a catcher. He's much more flexible than maybe he looks and very durable.

But I think the biggest thing that I could go to with our staff and Silas' trust, they just really trust that, one, he knows how to work with each guy and get the max from them. One guy you have to joke with him on the mound and the other guy you have to kick him in the tail.

Just understanding the staff and knowing how to get the max out of them, Silas does an excellent job with that. But he's a rock. He's the foundation of that entire group.

**Q. You had that string of games where you guys were struggling there in early April, going on those road games. Do you think that triumphing through a little bit of adversity helped you get to this tournament?**

DAVID PIERCE: 100 percent. I don't think you win championships without adversity. Every team. In '03, I was with Rice, we were the No. 1 team in the country. We went through a spell where David Aardsma couldn't get anybody out as our closer. We had the big three.

You can go all the way back to then to right now of just fighting through different things, because it's either going to make you better or it's going to break you.

And if it makes you better, and you're talented, then I think you can get back on track. And they just handled it -- I think the thing that was most impressive was there was no finger pointing, whether they didn't like how they were being handled from a coach or they're not playing enough or whatever the case was.

They just continued to try to get better. And it sounds so basic, but our goal is to just get a little better every day. If you can get there, be in that present, you've got a shot. And they're a mature team that was willing to go through the distractions and not listen and just keep trying to get better. They did an awesome job of it.

We wouldn't be here without their makeup, mentality. Not just Silas and Trey, but numerous guys on this team that have such a high character and a great foundation.

**Q. Can you tell us who your starter is going to be tomorrow night?**

DAVID PIERCE: Pete Hansen.

**Q. What went into that logic of starting him?**

DAVID PIERCE: He started every Friday night for us this year.

**Q. Sounds like good logic.**

DAVID PIERCE: I had to think that one out. (Laughter).

**Q. When you talk about that adversity, what did your team kind of show you this past weekend in Greenville with the rally in Game 2, and when you're at the third game with all the delays and crazy fan base and all that stuff?**

DAVID PIERCE: I think many people throughout the country watching our game probably thought Texas had a nice year. Had some adversity, had a few injuries, couldn't overcome it. Move on to the draft, move on to summer ball.

I think fan bases naturally still probably thought similar. But our team -- I never sensed one thing of panic.

And it's just a tribute to our mental game. It's a tribute to our players, their perseverance, their grit. But truly has helped us along the way to become not only baseball players, but better young men and understanding that in the society that we live in, where it's quick gratification, it's not the reality. And our kids have just worked and they've trusted each other.

So we wouldn't be here if it wasn't a unit like that. If it was a couple of guys, then we probably wouldn't have overcome it. But I think we have a team that's full of winners and guys that just believe in each other and they like playing and they like playing together.

I never sensed any kind of panic or even frustration down by five in the seventh of Game 2. We got a big hit from Trey. That's what we needed. We got a big home run from Douglas, that's what we needed. Turned into a three-run game. I don't think ECU gave in.

I don't think they, per se, melted or did anything wrong. We just went out and won the game. And that's kind of how it went.

**Q. One of your players mentioned how, as one of the heavyweight programs, other fan bases might not like Texas for whatever reason.**

DAVID PIERCE: For whatever reason. (Laughter).

**Q. To be in that situation, does that put a unity or a toughness, does it become a weapon or something positive that your guys turn into?**

DAVID PIERCE: Yeah, I think so. I think, just when you



come to Texas, I mean I took the job at the University of Texas from Tulane, Sam Houston State, spent nine years at Rice, two years at the University of Houston and coached high school 11 years.

I grew up in the state of Texas and I looked at the University of Texas as the pinnacle of college baseball. Those guys must be really something special. Those guys must get everything. They receive whatever they need. They have all the resources.

And it's really not the case. We're another really good team, but I think from the outside looking in, you look at our situation, and I think it's built from the history of this program, the success of this program, the 38 times in Omaha, people just get tired of Texas, to be honest with you. So we feed off of that.

When we went to ECU, it wasn't about ECU. It wasn't about their fans. It's just about us. So we're just going to be us. We're not prima donnas. We're not overly gifted. We're just a hard-nosed bunch of guys that like baseball. And it happens to be at the University of Texas.

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