

# 2022 College World Series

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Omaha, Nebraska, USA

**Notre Dame Fighting Irish**

**Coach Link Jarrett**

**Carter Putz**

**Ryan Cole**

Press Conference



They perform in the weight room, the classroom, on the field.

So I think that Super Regional was a culmination of what I've seen these guys do for the two full seasons I've coached here. And it's an older group. They've been through it. Starkville last year, we were a pitch or two away from talking to you about this last year. Didn't happen.

So I think going through the grind of this season, with all the accomplishments was really the reward of what they've been through for a while.

**Q. We talked about how you guys were feeling before we left for South Bend. Can you take us through the emotions as you stepped out onto the field and saw the stadium for the first time yesterday?**

RYAN COLE: To begin, truly it's a dream come true, watching this event on TV as a little kid and growing up, dreaming that one day you'll be here.

I think it was pretty cool to come and see the field right when we got here, take it all in, so we can kind of prepare mentally and be ready to practice today and play tomorrow, kind of put that all aside and just focus on the job that needs to be done.

CARTER PUTZ: Completely agree. I think when you kind of walk down that tunnel and step onto the field for the first time, you're kind of speechless, just because this is every college baseball player's dream.

But like Ryan said, once we were able to kind of walk around, get our bearings and experience that, I think it allowed us to come out today and really focus on what we were trying to do and get ready for tomorrow.

**Q. Ryan, before the Super Regional you had a pretty confident statement. You end up backing it up. I'm curious, did you think anything of that when you said it? And you win two out of three games, obviously it came through. Where does that confidence come from? How do you guys get that swagger, that edge you play with?**

THE MODERATOR: These guys have been exceptional. This is our 13th trip this season. The pathway here was obviously difficult. Had a great run through the league. We're just a hair shy of winning our division. I guess even the overall ACC title probably came down to the last weekend.

The ACC Tournament is a unique event, the way that's structured. I think it's very enjoyable for everybody. You know when you're playing. You know who you're playing. You know the time of the games. I think it's good for the fans.

Obviously a different feel in that event. And to go to Statesboro, you had Georgia Southern, Texas Tech, Greensboro -- Greensboro played seven games in their conference tournament, and had to really work hard to win that championship and earn their way in. Obviously they had a phenomenal run. And us. I would venture to say that was as competitive as any Regional I've seen.

You had three clear top 25-type teams. Georgia Southern's fans were very into it. The atmosphere was great. Texas Tech is a championship-level team. To perform the way we did in that Regional was impressive. Our guys functioned on all phases of the game.

Then you look at where that puts you -- arguably one of the best teams in the history of college baseball at Tennessee. They're dynamic. They play with a lot of confidence. Their fans are engaged. I think the fans feeding off the way that team plays and the talent of that team, that team fuels the fans, and the fans fuel them right back.

So it was a very enjoyable, intense environment that, quite frankly, we had prepared for from the time I've been coaching at Notre Dame. And these guys accept those type of challenges. They absorb a lot long the way. They work hard academically. They work hard with the travel.



RYAN COLE: Well, to begin with, I think the comment might have been blown out of proportion a little bit. But it all stems from just the confidence in every single person on our team from one to 40.

We've been through so many experiences that everyone has confidence in the person next to us and our coaching staff. And everyone goes out there and just plays with energy, passion for the person next to you, knowing that the next guy is going to back you up.

And in that situation, obviously we're going in to play the best team in the country that everyone said. And we just knew that if anyone could beat them, like we could, because we're experienced, have been through it, played in a hostile environment last year. And really the comment just meant that I had confidence in my team going into that and they shouldn't take us lightly.

**Q. Is it safe to say, after your Super Regional win against Tennessee, that you're coming into this College World Series with kind of a chip on your shoulder and just playing with nothing left to lose?**

CARTER PUTZ: Yeah, I definitely think we played this whole year with kind of a chip on our shoulder. That's kind of the mentality that our team likes to play with.

We care for one another, and we know that we have the confidence to go out and beat anybody. And so I think we're going to carry that over to this week. Take it all in. But we know we still have one job to do and that's to win the national championship.

RYAN COLE: Yes, I agree with everything he said. Obviously you can't get complacent in that. Every team here is very good and is here for a reason. Just need to continue to play the way we play and go out there and show what we're made of.

**Q. How do you balance the coming off of beating the No. 1 team in the country, like you said, and now there's seven other really good teams here and you have to focus on three of them first. How do you balance what you guys just did with, okay, now we've got another round of really good teams, and they saw what we just did and we have to take care of that?**

RYAN COLE: I think we have a certain level of confidence given the competition that we play on a weekly basis. I mean, every team in the ACC is a championship-level team and can beat you on any single day. So we've had to play with that focus every game this season.

And I think the biggest thing of it all is to forget what's happened in the past. It all comes down to one game, one pitch at a time and play it how we play.

CARTER PUTZ: Completely agree. I think obviously you enjoy that win. But to see everyone back in there, lifting and at practice, you can tell that everyone is focused on the next person we're playing or the next pitch.

And so I think just taking it one game at a time, taking it one day at a time really helps this team just stay focused, locked in on what we have to do.

**Q. You mentioned earlier that this is the dream of every college player. But when you come close, when a program gets close to it, and it's close enough almost to touch and then you just don't quite get there, does that put in a fire, a drive that even makes the dream more urgent? Is that something that's driven this team at all this year?**

RYAN COLE: I'd say, yeah. I guess looking at it when you're younger, it does kind of feel far away and feels like there's a long way to get there. With what we did last year, we felt we were right there, a few pitches away.

And since that loss, I mean, we've come back and worked every day with one goal in mind, and that's to get here and ultimately win the whole thing. I would say that feeling definitely had a part in this.

CARTER PUTZ: Yeah, I think when you have to go through that and watch Mississippi State dogpile and just to see them experience that, I think that is kind of something that sticks with you for a long time. And I think that stuck with a lot of us. I think it kind of pushed all of us.

We knew that we were a good enough team to make it to Omaha. I think you could tell it from that series. We knew that we just needed to get back to work, continue to trust in each other, trust in the coaches, and ultimately it would all work itself out, which it did this year.

**Q. Playing Texas that first game, another school obviously with a lot of great proud tradition. Just talk about playing the Longhorns right off the bat.**

RYAN COLE: Yeah, you know, hearing about it at first it's pretty cool. Growing up they were one of the teams that was here more consistently, I would say. And I think everyone knows that.

But at the end of the day, it doesn't really matter who we're playing. I don't think that affects the way we go about our business. So maybe a little bit of an effect at first, but gotta

try to put it in the back pocket and go out there and not worry about that but worry about our team.

CARTER PUTZ: Ultimately, like what Ryan said earlier, every team here is good enough to win a national championship, whether it's Texas or any of the other teams.

And so it's not necessarily worrying about the name on the jersey but just trying to go out there and play our game and play with each other and take it one step at a time.

**Q. Rich Wallace was the first guy off the bus yesterday. A bit of homecoming for him. Could you explain what he's done for your team this year, the value that he's brought?**

LINK JARRETT: Well, he's multi-dimensional. I think he's a lot like the guys that just spoke to you.

When you're recruiting at Notre Dame and you're asked to take the program and hire a staff, this is a national quest to find students that are capable of getting into Notre Dame.

And then you could layer in the baseball talent that's required to play at this level. That's a rare combination that we have to find. And it's not a state-by-state because we're a state school, we're a private school. This is a national hunt for players. Then you have to actually get them, because you know what, the other seven teams in this event are probably recruiting some of the same guys.

So that's where it started for Rich. And the recruiting is the lifeblood of what programs are about. You have to have talented athletes in the program if you think you're going to have a chance to win at this level.

From a coaching standpoint, he's great with the catchers -- phenomenal. He coaches third base, which has its ebbs and flows of how often you have to make tough decisions. He handles that. He's latched on to what my offensive philosophies are, my defensive philosophies.

The data and analytics that are available to us right now, every pitch that's thrown in this stadium probably provides a hundred data points just from one pitch. When that ball's hit, so you have the pitch and the result of the swing.

The defensive alignments, the scouting report information, the video presentations that we'll go through tomorrow with these guys on Hansen and the relievers that we'll see, that's what this has turned into. And he handles that beautifully.

And having worked at the event as a coach at Creighton,

he was involved in this. So I've leaned on him just to have the right template for what we are doing today. It's a complicated day. And he's got a feel for it. So the layers that he provides our program with in an expert manner have helped change what we're doing.

**Q. How hard is it for a northern team to get here?**

LINK JARRETT: Well, you have to have the ability to adapt to your situation at the specific northern school you're coaching at. I've had to change how I practice, when we practice, where, why, how long, how you do your preseason, the fall is probably the only thing that I could take my schematics for how I did it before and do it here.

But the preseason is totally different. So you better digest what facility capabilities you have, how to use it, how is the time best spent. We didn't step outside until Friday night at Stetson. So we went the whole preseason and we were never outside.

And I'll be honest with you, we might have played our best that weekend. It was phenomenal the way they played right out of the gate. Just telling you.

So being creative with what you're doing training-wise to prepare them, if you're not, you're not going to get out of the gates and be real good.

If you don't get out of the gates and get into the ACC, that we have to deal with, you're not going to have a good look at getting into a Regional if you don't take care of business on the front end and compete like crazy in the league. It's just not going to happen.

So when I got here, pivoting them into the mindset that when you get off the bus on February 15th and you play that Friday game, that game might be the difference in what happens on that selection Monday. And when I said it to the team, it was the first time I think they realized what I was trying to do with the program from day one.

How to handle the travel. We played five weeks on the road, sometimes six, out of the gate. Our first three ACC trips were at NC State, at Louisville and at Florida State. And that's what you're staring at right out of the gate.

Virginia Tech was coming to us. The weather allowed us to play Friday night. We probably shouldn't have. It was not playable. They had to leave Saturday morning. There was no thought of playing the other game. Those were our first 10 ACC games.

If you're not ready to go and the front-end games, haven't seasoned you enough get you ready, look at what you

could be staring at before you ever play a home game. So is it hard? Probably. Can it be done? Absolutely, you just have to be ready out of the gate and be really creative with the way you train them.

The season, with five ACC road series and five home, at some point the pendulum will swing back to give them a little rhythm of what it's like to play at home. This is trip 13. So they've been through it. And obviously we can do it.

I think Michigan proved that a few years ago. Maintaining it goes back to the previous question on can you recruit the right people, can you train the right way, and can you manage the game to put them in position through that long haul to be in the conversation to get to the Regional, you have to be in the position to get in. If you're not in that position all this is meaningless. You're not even in the discussion.

**Q. Obviously you were here last year watching your son. I'm just curious what it was like sitting there. Obviously you wanted him to win so badly but probably you're thinking, man, I want to be here myself really badly and you were really close last year. Now that you're here on the field on the other side of the net coaching up your guys, what's the last year been like? And what's it like to finally realize it and you're coaching in the College World Series?**

LINK JARRETT: I thought I was going to be coaching against him in this last year. Tough. Tough exit for them to sit there and watch that. Awful.

So what you thought was the most monumental moment as a player, for them, turned into the worst outcome you could ever envision happening as an athlete.

That was tough. So, I don't know that I'll be able to put perspective on how I feel right now -- like I know when we're out on the field I've got to prepare. There's things we're trying to get through today that will determine the outcome of the national championship.

So, but when he gets here tonight and we're going through the opening ceremony, does he want to walk on the field tonight with us? I don't know. Like those are things last year that happened to him and the team that that's tough.

So I just want him to be at peace with what happened, and he got them here. Now he's just got to enjoy kind of watching these guys. He knows these guys. He doesn't know them like he knows his team. But he knows them.

But he'll enjoy it. But there's only one guy that will truly be able to feel this and put this behind him and that's J.T.

**Q. You've talked about this being your team's 13th trip. I think you've got 23 wins already this season away from home. You almost feel like you guys have as much or more routine away from home than you do at home?**

LINK JARRETT: We better. You try to create what it's like to do it the right way on the road. Then you try to create the right way to do it at home. So, again, you have to be really good in both instances to have a chance to be in the discussion for any sort of postseason stuff.

So we have to be really comfortable. And the thing about it is early, when it's all road, road, road, road, it allows you to come up with a rhythm and things you want to do on the road.

Once you get through the travel and get to the hotel and start the process of preparing for the games, we do have a way that we like to do it.

We also have a way we like to do it at home. So you have to really be good at figuring it out on the road. Then we had some series in a row at home late, not a ton, but you do. It just eases the burden of them, sitting in O'Hare or sitting in Midway, and sitting in Charlotte waiting for a flight.

And then Sunday packing up the hotel and scrambling, and playing the game and jumping and bussing somewhere, and flying and getting to O'Hare at 11:00 o'clock, and bussing two and a half hours back to the field and you roll into the locker room at 1:00 or 2:00 in the morning. Sometimes it's four, five weeks in a row. Got to be good at both.

**Q. Piggybacking on that question, what makes a good road team or a team that's good away from home? And how much of your road routine is applicable here this week?**

LINK JARRETT: All of it, really. The timing of what you do before the game and where you go -- and the BP is not going to be consistent across the board. It's just not. Some days you'll have to hit in the cages, like in this event. And that happened in the Regionals.

You just try to, once you count down, probably like football, their itinerary probably has a list of this is what's happening three hours before the game, two hours before the game, one hour before the game. You roll through it. So there's some commonality in what it feels like. Your first part of that was what?

**Q. What makes a good road team?**

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

LINK JARRETT: They have to focus on like the details of the game, because all of the things going on around you and how the place plays and the people and the noise, you have to essentially whittle that down to the details of the competition.

And that's really what matters the most. So the sooner they can get to that point in the first game on Friday, like they did in Knoxville -- and it doesn't matter, records, crowd, noise, can't hear, can't think -- what matters is what's going on the field.

I think that's what it is. And being able to handle some adversity. You're going to handle some things on the road. It's not your home field. So can you play through some of the things that inevitably happened in any of the games? But it seems like it probably happens a little bit more on the road -- just the familiarity of the dimensions, how the surface plays. But you've got to play through it and you can't let it snowball on you.

I think that's why we got out of there in Knoxville is because we took some blows. They delivered -- but it wasn't knockout-type blows; it was little punches along the way. And on the road, if you have been through that and can handle it, you have a chance to escape and get out of there.

**Q. What memories do you cherish most of your own playing experience here? And as part of the trip last year or this year, do you hop up to Rosenblatt, the place there that they still have, the little diamond and remember back at all? What do those memories mean to you at this point as a player?**

LINK JARRETT: Well, two of my teammates flew from, one from Key West and one from Tampa to be at this. They're in my hotel.

And you remember the guys on the team. These guys that were here, they'll remember each other as much as anything that they'll do within the game, I think.

I remember how badly at shortstop when you're trying to close out these games you just would hope that there was a ground ball hit somewhere where you could field it and get an out. And you knew you were one out closer to winning a College World Series. I remember that feeling.

And we talked about it in practice a lot. Like that taste of collecting the last six, nine, three outs of these games, it's real. And that intensity to figure out a way to run down a fly ball or pick up the bunt at a critical time and get an out, the magnitude of trying to finish off a breaking ball, like feeling

how important each one of those pitches are, that's what I'll remember the most.

I can't remember -- I mean some of the hits and some of the plays, I remember sporadically, but it's more the feeling of the guys on the team and then how badly you just wanted to do something to finish those games off.

**Q. Can you tell us who your starter is going to be tomorrow night? And just talk about the challenge of playing Texas the first game.**

LINK JARRETT: Bertrand will pitch. To be honest with you, from what I've looked at, with Hansen, I think you're going to see similar good lefties. Good. I think there's a lot of similarities.

I haven't seen him firsthand, but we'll go with Bertrand. Good matchup. And it's interesting that both of the lineups are a little right-handed heavy. I don't know exactly what they're going to do, but with our switch hitters in there, there's a lot of righties, and they have a ton of righties, and they have some big -- Melendez, and some of those guys, it's a potent, physical, right-handed hitting group.

Bertrand's secondary pitches, they're clearly going to have to be better than they were in Knoxville. And that fastball command, the margin of error when you're facing guys that are this physical and talented, it's diminished, like you can't live in the middle of that plate.

So I think looking at it from big picture, you have some similarities in the team. I think both guys do a good job fielding their position, controlling the running game. So you don't get to this point in the season unless you have those type of guys to run out there in these championship events.

And I think you'll see some really, really well-played, well-pitched baseball. The ball wasn't carrying at all today. To think what it was doing in Knoxville and to take batting practice here. We didn't hit one ball out. No problem. But in Knoxville, don't know how many home runs we hit, but we were driving balls. So were they.

The dimensions and the way it plays -- the grass, it grabs the ball. So that plays into the pitcher's hand and you have two really good ones going at it.

**Q. We've talked about it, been here as a player. You've been here as a dad a year ago, now as a coach. Can you just put into words for fans out there what it means to be here, from whatever perspective because of what Omaha means to college baseball? How do you put into words whether you come here as a player, a dad, a coach, what it means to come to Omaha on a**

## week like this?

LINK JARRETT: When you say "Omaha," I think the country knows exactly what you're talking about. When you say "Augusta," I think, because it's in the same spot and the community embraces it and continues to embrace it harder than when I played here. This has turned into a spectacle that would be right up there with some of the other great events.

This weekend, as a parent last year, this weekend, from seeing it from the outside of the stadium coming in, you don't really see that when you're on the inside of the stadium. You jump on the bus, you get here early, you come on in and you get out, there's like a lot of people here.

When you're outside, as a parent, there's ten times the people running around. So the spectacle of it, it's awesome. And I enjoyed all three parts of it. Like playing -- the tunnel vision of how do we get this done as a player, I don't think I was as aware of what was going on around me.

I didn't really want to go get caught sitting somewhere for three hours trying to eat; I just wanted to do my thing and play and try to find a way to win.

As a parent, this is great. We can go sit and eat all you want. He's in the cage. They're at practice, they're doing weightlifting, we'll see J.T. later.

That was pretty fun. I was not happy at the time because I was a couple days removed from losing to come here.

So that was fun for a little while, and then last year turned to not fun in a hurry for my son and for NC State. For J.T., it was tough. It was awful to go through that. Awful.

This, the intensity of this as a coach, I told our team -- and I didn't want to make the moment too big, but I've never seen a moment too big for them -- I said this would be the most contested, exciting series that college baseball has ever seen, last weekend. I think it was.

You had that group that had put themselves and separated from everybody else and you had our group that I think people liked watching last year, and let's go see what this is. Maybe the two winningest teams in college baseball over the last few years.

So the intensity of that was as immense as anything you could deal with in coaching. The relaxation I felt when Brannigan fielded the ball, threw it to Miller, Miller threw it to Putz, I hadn't felt that as a parent or a player.

I was watching them jump over the railings. They were coming from every angle to get out of the dugout onto the field and dog pile. And I was the most relaxed I think I'd ever been to watch those guys go enjoy that.

So as a player, I was right in the dogpile. You felt differently as a player. As a parent, I was probably not the normal parent in this because of my job, but I tried to be.

And then the coaching part, just so calming and fulfilling to watch them move past what happened one year ago and see it in a place where I don't know how many people thought we were going to go in there and win.

So three totally different feelings. All pretty special.

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