

# 2022 College World Series

Friday, June 17, 2022

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

Oklahoma Sooners

Coach Skip Johnson

Jackson Nicklaus

Trevin Michael

Jake Bennett

Press Conference



pep in your step when you're going against those opponents knowing what the future of this program holds?

JACKSON NICKLAUS: Honestly, we talk about it all the time. The opponents are cool and all but we're just playing against the baseball. It's the same game, just against a different opponent. It's always fun to go out there and win and compete against the best people in the country. We're excited to do that.

**Q. Jackson, two things. First of all, just the grand slam there in the fourth inning. Would you mind taking us through at-bat and describing your emotions, what it felt like to hit a grand slam on this stage?**

JACKSON NICKLAUS: I didn't know that it was only the third one ever hit in this park in the College World Series. So that kind of heightened it a little bit, for sure. Going through the at-bat, though, they had that little pitching meeting. And I knew I wasn't going to be late to the fastball.

Struggled early against left-handed pitchers early in the season. I've been working hard on that, working on diagnosing pitches, separating balls and strikes. I saw the pitch out of the hand, a nice fastball and just tried to put a good swing on it.

**Q. Trevin, can you talk about coming in there in the seventh and obviously got a couple of runs off you? But just the pressure there to get the runs stopped, your mentality. And then how you felt the rest of your performance those last two innings went.**

TREVIN MICHAEL: I was just trying to pitch with a lead, really, the whole time. I wasn't really trying to go in there and strike everybody out or anything like that.

And it was really easy for me to settle in with a lead like that. And I was assuming we were going to go put up some more runs in the ninth. We did in the ninth. Got another one run back. That's what our offense does. It's relentless.

Oklahoma - 13, Texas A&M - 8

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with a statement from Coach Johnson.

SKIP JOHNSON: I thought we set the table really early, took the momentum in the game, early in the game. Settled Jake down a little bit early. Then having the long inning in the second inning was even tougher on him because you sit there, don't get to play catch in the dugout even though it's hot. Only get five warm-ups in between.

I thought the defense played really good. They were a tough lineup. Credit to them. They fouled a lot of pitches off and grinded bats on you. In the middle innings we kept it going. And then really helped us late to score run to take the momentum back on our side.

I think that's the biggest difference is we gather the momentum and kept the momentum and then gave it away and then got it back. And really proud of the kids -- or not kids, young men -- for battling and grinding out pitch to pitch.

**Q. Jake, as far as settling in after Jordan Thompson's three-run homer, seemed like were more comfortable. I think you sat down 11 of 13 there.**

JAKE BENNETT: With our offense coming out that hot early, it really does settle you down. And I just really tried to execute one pitch at a time.

**Q. Jackson, you guys went to Florida, took care of them. Took care of A&M today at the start of this thing. You maybe were around this place to call those opponents conference members at some point. Does it feel -- is there anything extra in your step, any extra**



So, you can go throw down the middle because it doesn't matter because we're going to score runs and they're going to make plays behind you.

**Q. I spoke with Kyler right after the game. He said it was important for him to be here to support you guys. Could you relay what his message was last night and him being here to support you guys today?**

TREVIN MICHAEL: Kyler told us this is every kid's dream. And don't play tight just because you're in it. I think we did a really good job of it. I don't know if it was his doing of us doing that, but it definitely didn't hurt, an athlete of that caliber talking to us, and for him understanding the moment.

The best part of that was you have John Spikerman, a true freshman, goes in there, his first at-bat of the game, gets bases-loaded walk. And Jackson Nicklaus, a true freshman, going out and did the same thing.

Those are two freshman that are on the biggest stage in the world for college baseball and they go in and have poised bats. I think Kyler Murray that's what he was getting at when he was talking to us, just things like that.

**Q. Jackson, you guys have been on the road a lot this postseason with the Big 12 Tournament and the Regional and Super Regional. I guess what goes into getting comfortable in the hotel room and stuff like that? What are some must-haves on the road when you're traveling? How do you manage to stay comfortable on the road?**

JACKSON NICKLAUS: We like to keep it loose and have fun on the road. We started off on the bus rides, when we were doing those early in the year, we'd keep it light on the bus, play games.

Traveling recently it's been a blessing to be able to travel the way we have with the planes and the first-class experience that OU is offering us. And the hotel, they feed us well. So we don't have to worry about food.

But we've been playing a lot of "MLB: The Show" during our down time, because we can't stay away from baseball. When the games are going on during the Regionals and Super Regionals, we're always locked in on baseball, never stop thinking about the game. And I feel it's helped us stay locked in.

**Q. Jackson and Jake, obviously fast start, get that run in the first, then the big seven-run second. Like Skip said, seized the momentum early in the game. How big was it, Jackson, to get that quick run? And, Jake, for**

**you to have the lead before you take the mound?**

JACKSON NICKLAUS: In our advanced meeting we talked about being a team of Davids and attacking the giant. That's been our team motto lately. We just want to attack the game and play with no fear. We had a game plan. We wanted to execute early. We did. Jumped on them and it led to our victory.

JAKE BENNETT: Getting that early run, it allows you to settle down and make pitches and let your defense work behind you.

**Q. Trevin and Jackson, I was curious what quality you feel Skip Johnson brings to the club that maybe props you guys up and help lead to this season? You guys rooting for Texas to play them on Sunday?**

TREVIN MICHAEL: I'm not going to address anything about Texas. But I think -- (laughter) -- you can go watch the last out of the Big 12 Championship if you want to know how I feel about that.

But, Skip keeps it loose as you can tell it right now. That's nice. I've been in a program where the head coach was hard-nosed and iron fist. And I've been in a program where it was the complete opposite and it was just whatever the players wanted to do.

And here we get kind of a happy medium of that, and guys that have never been in another program probably don't understand that as much as I do. But I've been in three different collegiate programs, and I would say the coaching staff here definitely keeps it light and keeps everything poised. And it's never too never too high, never too low. We talk about riding the wave and that trickles down from the coaching staff.

JACKSON NICKLAUS: Me being a true freshman this is all new to me everything about this is a new experience. And Skip has really helped develop me as a player and a man early in the fall. He was hard when he needed to be hard on me. He was light when he needed to be light on me.

He helped me get acclimated to playing, gave me a shot where not a lot of other programs would. He likes to keep it fun and joke around and likes to give us a hard time at practice. On the road we keep it light. But it's also discipline. We're a disciplined team and he instills that in us.

At the end of the day, like I said, we're just going to go out there and play baseball. Doesn't matter who we play.



**Q. Jackson, as far as what you guys have been able to do as freshmen, have you had, like, during those down times been able to talk to Wallace or Spike or whoever about what you're accomplishing, and especially going into this stage and today?**

JACKSON NICKLAUS: I'm really close with John Spikerman. Probably my best friend on my team. We hang out a lot. We've been able to keep it -- we had to download about everything. We chat about what's going on, how we're feeling, how to stay loose, how to experiment, how to take everything head on and stay under control, because it's easy to get under control at this stage, being this young.

But, like we said earlier, ride the wave. We know we'll struggle and have highs and lows. Just trying to maintain a steady pace.

**Q. Question about Kyler. What was the genesis of him coming to you -- can I talk to the team, or how did that all shake out?**

SKIP JOHNSON: For me, probably it's a little different than them. I probably, when you have an ex-player like him come back, you know you've done something to carve your name on his heart, that he shows that he cares about us, because we cared about him. We showed him how much we cared about him. He's going to show how much he cares about us.

And that's really -- I get emotional about it because that's what it's really about. It's about relationships. Like those guys and all the other players that's played with me and all the other coaches I've coached with.

**Q. I know a lot was made earlier in the week just about being aggressive on the base paths and the speed you guys have. How satisfying was it to kind of win this one going the other way and using the power aspect of your offense?**

SKIP JOHNSON: I mean, it's just one of those deals where it happened. Our team identity is to be aggressive and to push the envelope a little bit. And I think we did that in some instances in the base running in the inning where we scored seven, taking that extra 90. That's who we are.

The power is good. We know Jimmy has some power and Jack Nicklaus has had a really good season for a freshman. It's really good to see that happen.

**Q. Could you tell us how important it was to start out so hot and getting the first win of the College World Series?**

SKIP JOHNSON: It's very important no doubt about it. Coach Garrido said, the world is a different world for winners and losers. We call it winning and learning.

So in that game itself, I think something happened where a base-running mistake happened. We talked to them. I talked to Sandlin. I talked to Jake about executing pitches, because they were really a tough lineup to navigate through because they're going to try to challenge you and foul pitches off and really have quality at-bats. That's what they're so really good at.

**Q. You mentioned their offensive approach a few times, but this is one of those four-hour grinds, it felt like. And you guys are producing those same kind of at-bats. How comfortable do you think your guys are in that kind of a game?**

SKIP JOHNSON: I think they're really comfortable. That's what they kind of do the same thing. We're the same team, really. You look at it. They might have a little more power. I don't even know. Haven't looked at the power numbers too much.

But we try to grind at-bats and separate from balls and strikes and put the ball in play. I thought really in the first inning or second inning, what kind of kept it going, where Spikerman's really dynamic. And he chops the ball to the first baseman. He's getting it down the line, probably ran a four-flat running down the line. That's who he is.

He did the same thing against Liberty in the first game of the Regional and kind of opened it up.

**Q. Not that it may have had a lot to do today on the field, but Oklahoma's had a heck of a spring, between the women's softball and you guys. Is there a dynamic going on that you feel right now, Kyler was here, Porter Moser is here. Your have the women winning the championship and you guys are doing well.**

SKIP JOHNSON: I'll take the center fielder. If we could bring their center fielder to play for us and the girl that hits all the home runs. Goodness, it's fun.

Patty does a great job. She's a first-class coach. And going over there and watching them play in the Regional was really amazing. They had a really good team.

That's what the University of Oklahoma is about. It's a family environment. You talk to everybody around it, the coaches talk to each other. I sit in the Regional championship game with Porter Moser and watched the game. It's what it's about.



We get texts all the time. Coach Venables calls, we win the Big Ten Championship. That's what we do.

**Q. Your team's a little bit different than everybody else. Everybody has grad transfers, I think. Notre Dame they're all 25 and have graduated, stuff like that. But you have three freshmen in the lineup, a bunch of sophomores. So how is it that they've kind of matured and come through to be where they are right now?**

SKIP JOHNSON: It just shows you the sign of our development program and what we try to do to develop those guys as young men and baseball players. I think that's what's special about our program.

We built that club, up to the COVID year, we had a really good club that year. And I mean, it was like it broke our heart. And then all of a sudden last year happened. We're trying to build it back up.

And you know with Spikerman, we put him in the Stillwater series. We knew we needed him at the end of the year, and all of a sudden -- we always knew how dynamic he was. And Jackson and Wallace Clark has, I think Wallace Clark, at times has been one of our team MVPs. Grinded at-bats out, just trying to win pitches. It's been fun to watch.

**Q. You've talked about wanting to see your team react the right way to playing in some of these new environments. Obviously it's not as different as playing in Arlington, but how do you feel like the team reacted? Obviously the batters were seeing the ball pretty well early. How do you think they did in general?**

SKIP JOHNSON: I thought they reacted really well. It's a lot different than Globe Life, it seemed like it was about 20 degrees different, I'll tell you that right now. But the environment, the adrenaline of the environment, it will take a lot of toe out of you. You gotta really focus on pitch to pitch. That's what we talk about, winning pitches.

And the game's played one pitch at a time. I mean, I learned that from Coach Garrido and Coach Harmon at the University of Texas when I coached for them.

But, really, in this environment that's what it's about. It was really awesome to hear Jackson talk about, when somebody talked about you're ready to play the University of Texas, it's really about playing against the baseball. And that's what you try to teach them.

That's what we practice a lot. And for him to regurgitate

that, that's a great sign for our program and our culture.

**Q. Is there anything in particular you tell your batters to look for when there's a mid-at-bat coaching mound visit coming out of that, or is it case-by-case?**

SKIP JOHNSON: On the mound visit or the -- from their mound visit, are you talking about? No, not really. You're just trying to win pitches and just try to beat the infielders with two strikes. All you're trying to do is beat an infielder with a pitch, put the ball in play, try to create as much chaos and pressure as you can, grind the bats out. That's the biggest thing, what we try to do is try to grind the bats out, from one pitch, and try to win pitches. And one pitch is a lifetime. It might not seem like it, but it is.

**Q. I was hoping you could talk about the job Trevin did. Obviously limiting the damage in that seventh inning, but then also shutting it down from there, and what's it been like as a coach, the last month plus, he's been so good for you in the back end, what is it like knowing you have a guy you can turn to in the end to get those big outs?**

SKIP JOHNSON: I wanted to get David out there for an inning, just to get him out there. No better time to get him out there, he's probably going to start the third game, to get him comfortable. Whatever happened, it didn't matter.

But having Trevin as a safety net there, he's what we talk about. The guy can throw two pitches for strikes, even three at times. He can fill his position and he can hold runners. And he loves that moment. There's sometimes he wills that stuff on himself at times to be really competitive.

And he really -- when we talk about the intangibles, every coach in this World Series can go out and evaluate if a guy can throw hard, have a good breaking ball or whatever, but it's the differences, every coach is trying to find the guys with the intangibles, the guys that pitch with their head and their heart and their gut. That's really what it's about. Pitch with your head and your heart, at the end of the day.

**Q. I know the TV broadcast mentioned that Brett's hand was not too good. Curious your thoughts on Brett's hand. And also Kendall, how is he doing after taking that hit-by-pitch?**

SKIP JOHNSON: I didn't get to talk to Kendall. I talked to Brett and just told him I was sorry. He worked really hard. His at-bats got a whole lot better. And I'm proud of these kids. They're just a team full of Davids. That's all they are, guys who believe in each other. That's what I have to say, because that's what it's about, really.



For him, he started really turning the corner on having quality at-bats. And that was really, really big.

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