

2023 Men's College World Series

Sunday, June 18, 2023

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

TCU Horned Frogs

Coach Kirk Saarloos

Garrett Wright

Austin Davis

Postgame Press Conference



TCU - 4, Virginia - 3

COACH SAARLOOS: I think everybody was wondering what, after the punch to the gut on Friday, what this team -- how they were going to respond. And I didn't have any question about how they were going to respond. I could see it on the bus. I could see it on Saturday at our practice.

And it says a lot about who they are as kids and just being resilient. And played an awesome Virginia club with, obviously, have a ton of respect for Brian, Kevin and Drew, in terms of what they do with their program. There's no secret to why they're here every single year. They're talented and well-coached.

We just outlasted them. And a lot of that was because of the two guys up here. So just excited that we get to prolong our stay here and see if we can't make some more noise as the week goes on.

Q. Austin, I guess one of the things that makes Connelly good is that he's able to get outs without rising pitch counts. How did you guys make him grind through innings after inning today?

AUSTIN DAVIS: It was just the scouting report we went over with Coach Bruce before the beginning of the game. It was to ground out at-bats and wait til you get your pitch. And if you don't get your pitch just foul it off.

It was just about being mentally tough and staying in the box, and it was your box when you step into the box.

Q. Garrett, you seemed pretty animated after big plays and strikeouts today. Do you take pride in pitching in

the big moments of these types of games?

GARRETT WRIGHT: Yes, I do. I love the big moments. I've been there since freshman year and I thrive on those. I love the anticipation and the buildup in the stadium and with our teammates. So yes, love it.

Q. What specifically was working for you today?

GARRETT WRIGHT: Locating my slider. I trusted it every single time. And I could land it when I wanted to and I could bury it when I could.

Q. Garrett, first off, IHOP this morning?

GARRETT WRIGHT: Yes.

Q. You came in in the fifth inning, had 43 pitches. I think that's the second highest for the season. Not used to seeing you come in the fifth inning. What were your thoughts at that point coming in so early?

GARRETT WRIGHT: I just wanted the baseball. I just wanted to give our team the best chance to win. And so Loos thought it was the best idea to come in earlier and get it to Ben in the back end. That's what I did.

Q. Obviously there's a lot of pressure in elimination game. Austin, what was the relief when you saw the lead-off double from Nunez?

AUSTIN DAVIS: That's what he's been doing all year. That's what our team has been doing. Doesn't matter who is at the top of the lineup or where we're hitting at, what inning somebody is going to get on base and we're going to apply pressure from the top. As soon as we saw that, we knew it was go time.

Q. Austin, when you were caught stealing, seemed like you had a good jump. Could you talk me through what happened on that play during that play?

AUSTIN DAVIS: It was a little bit of miscommunication between me and the first base coach, but it's all good now. We're on top.



Q. Austin, with the approach to kind of fouling pitches off until you get one you can do something with, that just seems like that's a little bit old school. People would just kind of take a strike if it's not there and go to the next AB. Why do you think your team was so good about fouling off the ones that you couldn't do anything with and waiting for the ones you could?

AUSTIN DAVIS: Good thing you get three strikes in baseball. You just have to keep on going. Gotta work with the umpire's zone. You can't leave it up to him.

So you've got to keep fighting. That's what this sport is about. I mean, that's really any sport. You've got to keep fighting until you get yours, just like basketball. A shooter going to keep on shooting. So don't stop.

Q. Garrett, when you come on and they steal second base, second and third, what are you trying to do specifically to attack O'Ferrall and get out of that inning?

GARRETT WRIGHT: Throw strikes.

Q. Nothing more than that?

GARRETT WRIGHT: That's it.

Q. Austin, what's the mindset during the fourth at-bat? Also with Maxwell laying down that sacrifice bunt that was huge to get Silva into scoring position, what's the approach you have had all season just to unravel that moment to get the insurance run?

AUSTIN DAVIS: Pretty much when I get out of bed I gotta wear it on my hat or my helmet -- see ball, hit ball. If it's coming across the middle of the plate, do some damage. If you miss it just move on to the next one. And if I don't get the job done, then Eli behind me is going to get the job done.

Q. Curious your thoughts listening to Austin talk about I guess the way you can chain unselfish at-bats together and create a situation where that pitcher is having to grind just to get three outs and back to the bat?

COACH SAARLOOS: How about his silky smooth voice? Mr. Monotone. His personality is not like that.

But I think that's the great thing about the lineup. Like most good teams that have good offenses, it's going to come different in different parts of the order.

Oral Roberts, their nine-hole hitter hit the home run to put them ahead. Today Austin Davis is on base all four times, gets a big double.

It's just a matter of -- I thought Coach Bruce did a phenomenal job in terms of managing the game and moving things. Still too many base-running blunders. Just a little tentative in terms of on that side of things, which we haven't really been at all this year. So need to get that out of our blood and play like we normally play.

But I think in terms of Coach Bruce managing the game and seeing how the game was being played, I thought that was obviously big to get the guy in scoring position. And Austin came up and hit that double.

Q. Brayden Taylor finally got the hit that has alluded him a little bit. How have his actions been in Omaha? Seems like he's been pressing.

COACH SAARLOOS: I think he's faced some really good left-handed pitchers for sure, which makes it difficult. There's no secret in terms of scouting reports and all those types of things and where to play defenses.

And I thought he's had some good at-bats and hasn't had anything to show for it. The same exact line drive that he hit that that he got his double on Oral Roberts caught it. Same exact play.

And then, he ended the game on Friday with I thought a really good at-bat. He's taking good at-bats. It's just a matter of -- I don't know if he's pressing or not. I think he's just trying to help the ballclub. And at this point he hasn't helped them the way -- he's made it look really easy the last six weeks in terms of how he's swinging the bat.

So I think it's just part of baseball. And the great thing about baseball is you have eight other guys around you to help pick you up. And I think that's the big thing.

You'll see the same exact Brayden Taylor that you've seen in his three years here be ready to go on Tuesday and probably have a really good game.

Q. Sam allowed two base hits to start the game, then retired 12 straight. In your perspective, what was working for him out there?

COACH SAARLOOS: I thought that was -- you can't teach experience. And I think that's exactly what you saw in the first inning. First guy got a base hit chopper over Brayden. Next guy, within the first two pitches, got a base hit to center.

First and third and then all of a sudden that inning can get away from you really fast. Facing Gelof and being able to get him to ground out and kind of stem the tide a little bit and be able to get out of that inning with a one.

And then he just kind of settled in. And any time there was a fastball in order to throw, he threw an off-speed pitch. And that's kind of Pitching 101 in terms of knowing who you are, not trying to do too much.

And I thought he did a great job with his changeup and his curveball and then being able to sneak the fastball by some guys when he needed to.

But ultimately came down to just his poise and presence that he's shown really the whole year, but especially down the back stretch this season.

Q. How did you feel like Ben bounced back today physically? Obviously results were positive but how did you see him physically after throwing as many pitches as he did a couple days ago?

COACH SAARLOOS: I think he threw 40 or 50 pitches or something like that on Friday, which Ben, knock on wood, is one of the most resilient arms in terms of bounce-back. He actually gets better the more he throws. I think it's probably because of his arm slot.

When you throw it from a really unorthodox arm slot -- I think he went with one time like eight or nine days in between appearances and his next appearance he wasn't very sharp.

Because it's different. And he's the guy that I think his mentality -- I knew he wanted the ball. And we got to the point in the lineup kind of before the game had started, in terms of the nine-hole hitter and then through the top of their order, I felt the left-handed option was really good against that kind of stretch of four or five guys.

And that's why he was in there. And did an awesome job in terms of finishing the game.

Q. Logan Maxwell had a double, went 1-for-2. What was the reason for pulling him out in the bottom of the sixth?

A. He has been dealing with hamstring issues. At that point we were winning. We wanted to get -- Luke probably covers a little bit more ground in the outfield than Logan does. His legs are more healthy than Logan's are.

And so really it was kind of, hey, let's go offense first and let's go defense late. And Luke did a really good job

coming in and getting the bunt down.

We've kind of done that a couple different times, and it's just trying not to stress out his hamstrings because he's got about a two-week shelf life with those hamstrings, if he plays too much.

Q. Are you going with a TBA guy for the next --

COACH SAARLOOS: Yeah, I love that guy.

Q. At this point, is there anyone who is not available besides Sam?

COACH SAARLOOS: Well, Garrett, when I took him out, he wasn't happy with me, but he said, after the game, "I'll be ready on Tuesday." So he'll be ready.

Q. And Cole?

COACH SAARLOOS: Cole said he was going to be ready today. I said, well, you're not allowed to be ready so put your shoes on. You know? So everybody's going to be ready, which is awesome.

That's what you need. You are going to need some guys to be able to come in throw some quality innings that haven't pitched in a little bit. Staying in the winners' bracket the last couple of weeks, the Braeden Sloans and Chase Hoovers and Hunter Hodges, some of those guys, Cohen Feser, some of those guys haven't had a ton of reps in games. But their number is going to be called. And that's the great thing about postseason baseball.

A lot of times somebody that maybe didn't have the biggest role throughout the season or maybe at the end of the season, you know, we're going to need to have a really good outing from. And every single year there's somebody that does that. So it's going to be fun to figure out who it is.

Q. You had Luke Savage warm up there in the ninth. How does that show the resiliency of him as a player after what he went through in the opening game?

COACH SAARLOOS: We had Henry, their second baseman, coming up after Stephan. And so he hits quite a bit better against lefties than he does righties. So probably going to go to Luke.

The best way to get that bad taste out of your mouth is running right back out there. And as a reliever, you have to have a short memory. And that's the type of confidence we have in Luke. Gotta put a good swing on it. He's on scholarship too. And I wanted him to be able to know that everybody has his back and I was probably going to bring

him in for the next guy, and just sometimes this game will test you. And the best way to do it -- I know what's inside of his chest. And I think getting him back up and bringing him into this game if we needed to, there's no doubt in my mind he was going to get the job done.

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