

2023 Men's College World Series

Tuesday, June 20, 2023

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

TCU Horned Frogs

Coach Kirk Saarloos

Kurtis Byrne

Cam Brown

Anthony Silva

Postgame Press Conference



hit against a team that was hitting almost .300 heading into today in CWS. What were you seeing that you were able to mow down that lineup like you were the first three innings of the game?

CAM BROWN: For me, like Coach said, living pitch for pitch. I think a lot of times I get myself in trouble. And just having the mindset living pitch for pitch. It's exactly in the moment.

Just worrying about executing pitch to pitch. I don't have to worry about who is hitting .300, .250, .450, whatever it may be, just executing pitch for pitch and trying to give my team the best chance to win is how I tried to go about it today.

Q. The fifth inning, obviously, seemed like you had an opportunity there and pounced on it, something this team does pretty well. And also, of course, the way you guys forced the action. If you could just kind of expand upon the way this team's style of play can impact the opponent and how you feel like that worked today?

KURTIS BYRNE: Definitely. I think the biggest thing, they were doing a really good job of making good pitches, kind of slowing us down a little bit, nibbling off the plate. They were doing a great job executing.

But I think the biggest thing for us, Coach talked about it, it's all about winning pitches especially down the stretch in that fifth inning on and really just not trying to do too much and kind of let our training and everything take over, and just not trying to just force the issue at that point in the game.

ANTHONY SILVA: Throughout this whole season, we've probably been in every situation possible so we knew how to handle all of that. We practice every situation possible. That's what we've been training all season long since the fall. And we just need to play our game, and that's exactly what we did.

Q. Anthony, what was the mindset going into that at-bat in the fifth inning and staying back on the baseball?

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COACH SAARLOOS: I thought Cam, out of the gate, gave us nine good outs and got out of a key situation there, I think in the second inning. And I thought he threw the ball well.

And really Luke and Hunter and Cohen after that. Offensively, they did some ready things against us. I thought we got a little bit out of like our norm a little bit I thought. I thought we were too reactionary to maybe things that weren't going our way or calls or things like that. I thought our body language was not up to normal standards.

And at this time of year, you want it so bad, I think a lot of times, when things don't go your way, I think it's overmagnified. So I just talked to our guys a little bit about, hey, let's get back into just living pitch for pitch.

I thought they just battled the whole day. It wasn't easy.

Oral Roberts, as we know, leads the country in run differential from the seventh inning on. So they're never out of a baseball game. And especially after Friday night being able to come back and secure the victory today was really awesome.

Hats off to that club. Winning 52 games is hard to do. And they had an amazing season. Just hats off to Ryan and his whole team. I thought they're a gritty bunch that played extremely hard.

Q. Cam, you went three innings and only gave up one



ANTHONY SILVA: I was just trying to get a good pitch to hit. And he did make a good pitch low and away. I stuck my bat out there and found some grass. That's all that happened.

Q. Kurtis, Friday you had one hit. Sunday no hits. How did it feel two at-bats, two big hits?

KURTIS BYRNE: First two games didn't go my way, I would say, especially yesterday. Just sticking with my routine and my process and not worrying too much about the outcome right now, I think that was the biggest thing today. Just about winning pitches and it worked out for me today.

Q. Is this kind of a measure of revenge given what happened in the last Oral Roberts game? Was that a motivator for the mentality at all, especially as the game got later on? Or was it just, like you said, Cam, just taking one game at a time and focusing on the present?

CAM BROWN: I don't think anything had to do with it. I mean, we're playing in Omaha and in an elimination game. I think that's the motivation we needed. We've been doing it all year with our backs against the wall. Coach Loos talked about that right after the game on Friday.

And I think for us, like, there's nothing that needs to be said between all of us. Through everything that we've been through this entire year, we've really grown and meshed as one unit.

Everything's been just super tough, super fun. Everybody loves each other, everybody fights, everybody's brothers. And so the motivation is just playing for each other and playing for the name on the front and just taking it one day at a time.

KURTIS BYRNE: I don't think you could say it any better than. I think Cam nailed it on the head.

CAM BROWN: I agree.

Q. Cam, after those first few pitches out of the zone start the game, took a moment off the mound to, I don't know, compose yourself in some manner. What did you do there? How did you settle back in? How did you get through that first inning and through that second?

CAM BROWN: You know, I think it's funny, I'll reference back when Coach Loos took a mound visit, not in that inning, but it's just he told me, we've been here before.

We've gotten out of this before and that's just kind of like something that I'm comfortable in.

When the pressure's on, like just keep fighting and going pitch for pitch. And when you're focusing on winning just one pitch at a time, it really doesn't seem like anything else is happening.

I think that was super important for me and my success for the rest of that inning, for the rest of my outing. If I would have let one bad at-bat ruin the rest of that first inning, maybe there's a hole that our offense has to dig, and I didn't want to be a part of that.

So just living pitch for pitch, trying my best to execute was all that I needed to do.

Q. When a team has had to fight for weeks with its back to the wall, how important and valuable is that now when you're going into the situation where you're fighting for survival?

COACH SAARLOOS: I think it's super important, I think, because I've said it before, we've been playing kind of this style or this type of game situation for six weeks. So, I mean, it's just what they've been doing.

And I don't think -- now there's a second deck on the stadium, there's 23,000 people, I don't think it's changed anything. It's the same thing it was when we really needed to win two out of three up at K-State and play good baseball down the stretch.

I think they've finally realized -- I don't know if "realized" is the right word -- but I think they got consistent at being consistent. And I think that's the great thing is being able to see that from a ballclub that has had stretches where it wasn't very consistent.

So that's the neat thing about coaching 18- to 22-year-old kids is it's fun when they all grab hold of it together and don't want it to end. And I think that's what this group is doing. They're they've got their head down. They haven't taken a second to look up. And I think they're enjoying what they've been able to do.

Q. I wanted to ask about the second called out there at third base. What did the umpire tell you? I noticed online there was a previous play earlier this year where a similar thing had happened. What did the umpire tell you and what maybe needs to change about the rule interpretation?

COACH SAARLOOS: Well, the umpire told me that the call on the field was that obviously they got Elijah out and

then he called Austin safe. When they went back and reviewed the play, they saw that Austin was off the bag. And it didn't really matter that he was forced off the bag because the umpire on the field did not say there was obstruction.

So as soon as the call on the field -- he didn't say there was obstruction, then you can't actually go -- I can't go and review the fact that, hey, he was pushed off the bag. The only thing they can review is the fact that he was off the bag and he was tagged out. They can't review if he was pushed off or not because it wasn't ruled that way on the field.

Q. Would you like to see the NCAA revisit that?

COACH SAARLOOS: That's way above my pay grade. Obviously with the length of the review, I think there were a lot of questions maybe going back and forth in terms of -- because I hadn't seen that and I had never been a part of that. I think there was probably a lot of talk back and forth back in the replay studio figuring out what are the steps here, because I think they probably went through multiple steps. Elijah was tagged out, okay, yes. Then Austin Davis, he was on the bag, then he was off the bag. Okay, and then was he tagged? Okay, yes, he was.

Like I said, if the umpire's judgment -- you can't really review the judgment of an umpire because he didn't make the call that it was. And I don't blame him. He had a dive, a tag right into another tag and there was three bodies all right there.

And so for him to -- he got all the calls right -- he got the call right with Elijah. And I think at that point there's so many bodies, there really wasn't -- he didn't call obstruction and there wasn't anything that I think he could do.

But I thought for the most part, in terms of the ruling on that and the ruling on the balk and the overturn on that, I thought that was done well, extremely well. I thought they got the calls right.

And obviously that one didn't go our way. And it was mainly our fault for even putting ourselves in that position by our base runners.

Q. I'm sure you can understand that part of the beauty of baseball is there's quirks and maybe you see things you've never seen happen. What was the fifth inning like for you doing your interview with ESPN, then you have a call where you have to go talk to the umpires, back to the interview, losing a run off the board, then breaking the dam and opening the game up?

COACH SAARLOOS: I think part of those in-game interviews. I don't do a whole lot when our hitter are hitting. Coach Bruce and Coach DiLaura and Coach (indiscernible) and our offense is doing everything. I kind of just sit on the rail and cheer like the rest of our guys.

And so being down there and I've got a good buddy up in the booth, Chris Burke (phonetic). We had the interview. Then that happens, it's okay, let's go see what he has to say.

But I think the big thing was being able to overcome that and figuring out a way to score some more runs. And it obviously was big because you've got the bases loaded and a guy with a bunch of home runs standing in there in a 3-2 count, it's a little bit different if it's a 2-1 or 3-1 game.

Q. This team now has been here played three games and won a couple. First of all, does it feel like -- can you sense maybe an added comfort level that comes once you're out here a few days and you kind of get that extra maybe confidence boost from being used to the setting? And, secondly, the way you were able to string this game together on the mound today and what you've got now rested for tomorrow, do you feel it's setting up pretty for you well pitching-wise?

COACH SAARLOOS: The first part of the question, I think anytime you come here, your goal is to win the College World Series. And I've been, luckily enough, been here seven different times. And I don't think we've been able to win a game.

And I think sometimes when you get here, and you get caught up in everything, you forget about the baseball portion of it. And I think this group has done a really good job handling all the distractions and being able to play baseball.

But I think after losing the first game in the way that we did, I thought the way that they responded to it against Virginia and winning that game, I think, gave them a little bit of a comfort of being able to be here, get to play on Tuesday. And to get in the practice, to be able to be with one another.

I think people that we flew with, I think we almost were over our weight limit because everybody packed pretty heavily because we're planning on being here for a long time. So I didn't really want to be part of a deal where you pack for 10 days, two weeks, then next thing you know you're back home in three days.

But our guys, give them the credit, amazing in terms of -- I think they just like to play baseball, and when the game

comes calling, they're ready for it.

The second part of it, I think the big thing was Hunter Hodges, getting look back out there, but then Hunter Hodges coming back in -- I don't remember the last time Hunter threw in a game for us. It's been a bit. And he's been able to come into situations, like I told him, when bases loaded, first and second, I want that guy to be you.

And for him to come in, give us two and a third innings was huge for us. And Cohen having a really great eighth inning making things interesting in the ninth. I thought those two guys were huge in terms of us moving forward if we got the opportunity to play tomorrow to be able to get four and a third innings from two guys who haven't been used a whole lot in the last two weeks. That was pivotal. I don't know who we're going to throw tomorrow, but it's going to be someone that's pretty good and we'll string it together and we'll figure it out. I know somebody is going to ask me who the starter is, I'll just tell you I don't know.

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