

2023 Men's College World Series

Wednesday, June 21, 2023

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

TCU Horned Frogs

Coach Kirk Saarloos

Brayden Taylor

Kurtis Byrne

Postgame Press Conference



most tight-knit group I've ever been around. Very lucky. Very, very happy to be part of it.

COACH SAARLOOS: This is Coach Winkler's daughter, Kole. These are the types of kids I get to be around every single day. We just lost a ball game and Brayden Taylor has Coach Winkler's daughter, Kole, up here with him.

The stories are endless in terms of the kids we have in our program. And it just speaks for itself in terms of who we get to be around every day.

Florida - 3, TCU - 2

COACH SAARLOOS: I couldn't be more proud of our program and our players. Obviously ran up against a great Florida team and just came up one run short.

But like I told them, just the story and the journey that they took us on this year will never be forgotten. I think it completely changes our program in terms of what they did from the middle part of the season until now. It just stinks that it's over. But I've never been more proud of a group.

Q. Expounding on what Coach just said about this group, maybe the lasting impact this team will have on the program and the run you guys have been on, what has this meant to you guys?

KURTIS BYRNE: It's definitely meant a lot especially whenever, two months ago, when we got swept by West Virginia, we had a decision to make in the course of where this season was going to go.

I think as a unit we just came together and we played TCU brand of baseball. And there's nothing that can really compete with that. And just from that point on, it's just been awesome just watching this team develop and the friendships that we've all had. It's the tightest group that I've ever been a part of. And just been a phenomenal group.

BRAYDEN TAYLOR: Like he was saying, not everybody thought we were going to be at this point in the year where we're at. And I can't say enough about my teammates and staff and everyone who has supported us all.

I'm very lucky to be part of this team. As Kurtis said it's the

Q. Yesterday, by making it to today, TCU baseball becomes the sixth program in TCU this academic year to make it to the national semifinals. What's that say to you and to be part of that and what's that mean for TCU sports?

BRAYDEN TAYLOR: It's really cool to be part of such a great school. Us in the fall as a baseball team, we always would go to all the football games, watch what they did. They had a phenomenal run. We take what we learn from them. The same thing with basketball. It was just super cool that a little school in Fort Worth could do so much. I think that plays a lot into our game where people sometimes overlook us.

But, like I said, it's a very special time to be a Horned Frog.

KURTIS BYRNE: Brayden pretty much said it all. It's a special year for TCU athletics and hopefully it will get the ball rolling for next year as well.

Q. What has it meant to you to lead this group of freshmen and what do you expect from them as time moves on?

KURTIS BYRNE: Yeah, you know, just an amazing group of kids. Just the first day they walked in the door, wide-eyed, and just to see them now their development over a year. Karson Bowen, unbelievable, as we've seen all year. And he's done a spectacular job and just brings so much joy to me to watch his process and his development over the year. And he's like a brother to me. He is my brother.



It's just the way that the year's been done. He's been doing an unbelievable job. The pitching staff, they've been doing a great job all year. Kole Klecker, Ben Abeldt, Louie, they've been doing an awesome job. They're amazing hands going down the road. It's very exciting to see those guys and the development and the future they have. So very exciting.

BRAYDEN TAYLOR: This freshman class, honestly, taught us a lot. It was about us leading them in the fall, trying to get them accustomed to learning how TCU baseball runs. They hooked on immediately.

And throughout the season, they're the ones picking us up. So I'm very excited to see their future. These guys, no longer freshmen, but they were no longer freshmen in December.

Like Kurtis said, I'm excited to see these guys and their journeys forward. They're going to have great careers.

Q. Brayden, have to ask you about the final out because you obviously hit that ball really, really well. What did you think? What were the range of emotions off the bat and going forward?

BRAYDEN TAYLOR: I mean, I went up there taking my same approach I always do. Even though the moment may have seemed a little bit bigger, but I was just going up there, trying to get a good pitch to hit, put a good swing on it. I put a good swing on it. I thought it may have a chance. But I think big credit to Florida, though. Florida is going to be the team to win this thing. I feel they were a really good ballclub and the emotions that ran through my head after that was, I'm just going to -- it's going to be tough. Not very many words. It's hard to put into words right now.

Q. I imagine like this is one of the things a coach can't really control when you're sitting 23 and 20, wondering how a group of guys is going to respond to that and which direction they're going to go in, and 21-4 with four one-run run losses the rest of the way, what kind of characteristics did it take to pull that off, do you think?

COACH SAARLOOS: Resilient, hardworking, determined young men that decided that they weren't going to lose anymore. And it's pretty special when you get a group of guys -- the story is -- every season has a story, but this one is pretty special in terms of where they were, where they finished and they finished top four in the country. They were 23 and 20. Left for dead. And they just kept showing up, kept working.

If they don't hold onto that for the rest of their lives and think about what's possible when you just work hard and believe, I don't know what else you could point to. Because that was pretty special just to see them continue to grow.

Q. As somebody who has played in this College World Series, how do you put into words just the job that Cole and Ben did as freshmen, and they're not freshmen maturity-level wise, but freshmen on this stage, pretty incredible?

COACH SAARLOOS: You hit the nail on the head in terms of Cole and Ben. I remember my freshman year. I wasn't like that in terms of the roles that they had. And, I mean, they'll take a step back and look at it. And season's on the line and all those different things throughout the end of the year and it didn't affect them one time.

And Cole asked for the ball last night. I didn't know who we were going to start. But Cole shot me a text, and that kind of made my decision. He's answered the bell every single time.

The first guy I wanted to come in after that was Ben because he's done the same. And obviously finishing with Garrett, he's done the same. So pretty special kids in terms of their competitiveness and their ability to just simplify the game.

That's the sign of geniuses. What they say is you can make the complex seem simple. I think that's what Cole and Ben, really, all our guys have done. Just super proud of the way they handled themselves on and off the field.

Q. What are you most excited about for the future of TCU baseball coming back? And then you mentioned earlier about the people behind the scenes. Could you kind of, if you could, tell a story that may have, like, made your year that we may not know about that the people have impacted you behind the scenes?

COACH SAARLOOS: I mean, there's so many stories. One that pops in my head right now is our managers. You know, they donate their time to TCU baseball. They're there longer than we are, whether it be shagging fly balls or helping hit fungos or doing the laundry.

Those are the people that make a program special is when you have people that don't ever get any credit, they're kind of behind the scenes, they don't get the credit, but they make our program go.

To our bullpen catchers. It's all those things. You don't

really realize until you don't have those people that want to donate their time. And we have a huge manager pool of kids who just love TCU baseball and love to serve. And those guys are pretty special in our program and they're treated just like our players are.

And TCU baseball, we haven't been here in six years. And the guys were tired of looking at the 2010, 2014, '15, '16 and '17 signs in left field and the old pictures that are in our classroom to all those different things. And we'll have some updating to do because this group did some special things that are going to be, they'll be able to come back and show their kids and do all those things because they definitely, I think, was one of the best stories of the year in terms of who they are and what they did.

And, so, super proud of the fact that they won't feel it right now. But when they come up for air and understand and realize how difficult it is to get here and the way they played, there's some long-lasting memories that won't go away.

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