

College World Series: Baton Rouge Regional Sunday, June 4 2017

Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Matt Riser

Taylor Schwaner

Ryan Byers

Rice - 9, SE Louisiana - 5

Head Coach Matt Riser
Outfielder Ryan Byers
Infielder Taylor Schwaner

MATT RISER: Yeah, I'll start with the negative. It sucks. Just reality of it. The positive part of it, proud of these guys, man. Holy crap. Boy, did they fight, and they fight until the end. We knew going into this year -- we were really excited about this club, just knowing the leadership we had, knowing the seniors we had, their mentality, their makeup would be a real fun bunch to coach. But you always try to envision and how much fun it's going to be. And never lives up to reality, the reality of it. This was an extremely fun bunch to coach, and in all honesty I couldn't be more proud of the group we had.

Q. Ryan, big day at the plate for you. Talk about your day at the plate and also talk about your season.

RYAN BYERS: Today at the plate, I was just looking for good pitches that I could drive and just try to get on base, try to create something, and this season, you know, there's not really much to say. It was a fun one. I had a blast. All the guys, we battled. We went through ups and downs, but we never gave up. We always kept fighting. Even if we were down by a lot, didn't matter to us. We just kept playing and kept playing the way we know how to play.

Q. Taylor, a big weekend for you, big day again today, three hits, all extra-base hits with a two-run homer. Talk about your day at the plate and recap the year a little bit.

TAYLOR SCHWANER: Just trying to leave it all out there for my team. Obviously it wasn't enough, but it was a hell of a ride, and I wouldn't trade it for anything else. I wish we were still playing.

Q. Coach, what kind of grit did it show for Taylor to be out there, and could you tell when he was running the base path he wasn't 100 percent but he's still producing and making great plays at third base?

MATT RISER: Yeah, that was the identity of our club, man. You look the other night, Friday night, he goes down with the hamstring and then (Derrick) Mount gets hit in the wrist, and I'm trying to figure out if we can't keep going, who do we put there at third base or who do we put in the infield. We've got four infielders total, five infielders total for four spots. It makes it a little tough. But that's been this crew all year. The knickknacks and the hamstrings and the fingers and the bruises, they've gone through it all. They've refused to come out, and that was kind of the conversation we had Friday night, he looked at me, I said, "Hey, you good? Are you 100 percent?" He said, "No, Coach, but I promise you're going to have to fight me to get me out". I didn't want to get into a knock-down, drag-out fight there, so he stayed in there and obviously showed the grit, and that's just the makeup of this club, man. That's what makes it so fun. Regardless of the outcome of the game, they showed our true identity of who we are and what we are and a little redemption there, even though it didn't go the way we wanted it to.

Q. How difficult was it after such a late night last night, the quick turnaround, the format of this? Y'all all know what it is and I'm sure aren't going to make any excuses but just the

physical toll and mental toll it takes on your body?

RYAN BYERS: Yeah, you know, it takes a toll. Everybody came out today, and yeah, like we might have been a little sluggish or just going through BP, but you just have to fight through that. Just keep fighting. Doesn't matter, you're playing the game that you love, so you've got to leave it all out on the field.

TAYLOR SCHWANER: It's a grind. Postseason ball, you know, end of the season, gets hot. Just got to keep hydrating, and we did that. We were ready to go, and we just didn't get the outcome we wanted.

MATT RISER: Yeah, I think he hit the nail on the head. That's an excuse, and these guys haven't looked for it all along. They just haven't wanted an excuse. It's not the what if's, it's the what is, it's the hand they're dealt and they always deal with it, and that's just, again, the identity of this club. I don't think it played a factor in the day for us. I thought we did a good job coming out the right way. We had the one big inning we couldn't eliminate, and we talk about it, I think that's just baseball. Defensively you've got to be able to make the big inning, and it didn't happen for us today.

Q. Ryan and Taylor, this is the same scenario that y'all went home on last season with Rice here. Is it the same feeling as last year? Is this one worse? How does this kind of compare, the two seasons?

RYAN BYERS: Well, for me, I feel like it's worse just because it's my senior year. It's probably my last game I'll ever play. But I know it hurts for every guy that was on our team this year. It broke everybody down as soon as we ended the game. But it was a grind. We grinded through everything. We fought through everything no matter what. But we just came up a little bit short.

TAYLOR SCHWANER: Both sucked. Doesn't -- it's not good to end the season. I'm not going to compare last season to this season. Our season is over, and can't do nothing about it right now.

MATT RISER: Yeah, in all honesty, what we talked about, there's going to be one club happy at the end of the year, and that's the national champion. That's the true guy that will be celebrating at the end of the year. One day we'll get there. There's no doubt. It'll never be accused of lack of effort or work ethic, and I think that's the identity of our club.

Q. Matt, how would you characterize this team, a group of overachievers? Where are you as far as what this team represents?

MATT RISER: Yeah, I don't want to say a group of overachievers because then you're downplaying a little bit of their talent level, and I don't want to downplay that. They're talented kids and they're extremely good ballplayers. To sum them up, mentality-wise, I think you just -- it's just the makeup that we -- it's the identity of what I was as a player, and I think I couldn't be more proud of that part of it. I try to instill that in the guys, but it's up to them to make sure they take that identity. Guys like Taylor last year didn't have that identity, and we sat down and had a mature conversation. He takes that identity and becomes Player of the Year and then obviously had we made a run and won this thing, he would have had a chance to be the tournament MVP of the regional. For those guys to embrace that, again, just another moment where I couldn't be more proud of them.

Q. You obviously know how well you can play and as fast as you started last night and even the high points today, do you feel like you left a little something out there to move something unproven from you guys?

MATT RISER: Yeah, I mean, we came into this thing with the attitude to win it. You know, again, the first two times coming through this, it felt like an achievement. Doesn't feel like a whole lot of achievement right now from a trophy or hardware standpoint. But from a heart standpoint, from a soul standpoint, there's a lot these guys have achieved, and again, just -- what they represent, the way they represent our University, when I hugged the seniors there at the end of the game and they break down in tears and then they tell me, "Coach, you made me a better man", I think

that's what gets me touched a little bit. And there's nothing I could be prouder or any greater achievement that they could have besides that, so I don't think they left anything out there on the field from a proving standpoint. I think they proved everything they had. Sometimes the outcome doesn't come your way, doesn't overwhelm the fact of what they really did achieve, which is becoming bigger and better men.

RYAN BYERS: Like Coach said, we left everything out on the field no matter what. Just got to look at yourself in the mirror at the end of the day and just have no regrets.

TAYLOR SCHWANER: Just that this team will be in the Regionals every year. We're contenders every year in the postseason. You know, we've still got to prove that, obviously, but I think that we've earned that right year in and year out, and next year we'll be back.

Q. Ryan, can you talk about how you and Matt came at the same time, talk about how far the program has come over the last four years and everything that you've accomplished and the state of the program now.

RYAN BYERS: You know, I feel like the state of the program now is we expect to be here. We don't -- if we get here, it's not just an accomplishment anymore. I feel like Coach has brought us to this level where we're expected to make a regional every year. We're expected to make a run for a national championship every year, and if we fall short of that, I guess it's just not enough for us. We just want more. We just want to keep going.

Q. Thoughts on Carlisle's (Koestler) performance today?

MATT RISER: Yeah, I thought he made some really good pitches in some good moments. Obviously left the one ball up there on (Rice's Dane) Myers and he hurt him. That's a good player. It's a heck of an at-bat. He fought off some really tough pitches, and we made one mistake, a three-run homer. Other than that, I thought he pitched extremely well. We need to get deeper in the ballgame. There's no doubt. And I think we didn't have conviction in his last pitch. I think that was the part we lost him a little bit there on that last pitch, so we went to the bullpen. But I thought he gave us a chance early. I was proud of what (Evan) Hileman did to come in. He had a mid-season injury there where he was out for almost an entire month, to come in in what, the fourth inning and basically finish the game for us, he went four and a third, let's see, 75 pitches, that's a pretty impressive feat. So Carlisle didn't give us the start exactly what we wanted, but Hileman definitely gave us the attitude to keep us in the ballgame.

Q. Could you speak a little bit on the leadership along with these two guys for the rest of the team?

MATT RISER: Yeah, I mean, you know, we talked about it there at the end, we broke -- I couldn't thank these guys enough because where they've raised the bar and the expectations not only of our program but of themselves, as well. If they continue to expect more out of themselves or continue to achieve more in their life outside of baseball, I think that's the thing that this leadership has done, it's paved the way for the guys behind them to make sure they come in and continue to raise expectations, don't be content with what's expected of you now, and then in a year or two from now when you finish up your senior year and you're sitting here in the same spot, hopefully it's dogpile for a national championship, but if it's not, they have raised those expectations for our program.

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Wayne Graham
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WAYNE GRAHAM: Well, obviously Kendal Jefferies gave us what we needed from the start, and Dane Myers did the rest of it. I thought we got good pitching against a very good hitting team, and I thought we hit the ball well, and that's the story of the game.

Q. Wayne, you said Kendal would start last night, then for the lineup earlier had Myers and then you went to Kendal right before the game. What was the thinking on the pitching, and how did you finally make that decision to go with Kendal?

WAYNE GRAHAM: We were thinking about the weather really, and the more we thought about it, Dane hadn't worked long all year. I thought Kendal had a little bit of chance to get five or even six, and Dane, you could see Dane was probably tiring a little bit in the last inning, and he's going to play first base the second game, so he'd better get a second win. But the pitchers did a good job. That team can hit.

Q. What's your pitching look like for the championship game tonight?

WAYNE GRAHAM: We'll start Addison Moss, and then we'll take volunteers. He's a rested guy and he has good stuff. He throws strikes, and he has a history of that. We'll do okay.

Q. Second year in a row you eliminated Southeastern from this exact tournament. Just talk a little bit about playing them and doing the same thing two years in a row.

WAYNE GRAHAM: Well, they still have a winning record against us this year. They beat us at home two out of three, and we were very fortunate to beat them again because they're tough. They run the bases extremely well, and they hit well. They're just a good ballclub. There's a reason they were rated I think in the top-30 RPI in the country.

Q. I wanted to ask about Myers. You said he was going to start but you had him at first base yesterday and today, he had that catch right there at your dugout where he fell over to catch that foul ball. Talk about his ability to play first pitch and then come in and pitch.

WAYNE GRAHAM: I told him to take a nap. That's all I ever needed. 15-minute nap, it'll bring him back. He's young. We'll see how he is. He's a tough kid.

Q. After the first couple of games, obviously this is going to be kind of a pick me up for your team, thinking that they can play some quality ball again I've got to imagine?

WAYNE GRAHAM: Yeah, well, we played quality ball in the conference tournament. We were up against teams -- the teams we beat in the conference tournament were all in the top 50 or 60 in the country, so that was kind of a confidence builder, and I think another one here. We can hit with people, and if we get to pitching, we can play with them.

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