

Baylor keeps winning postseason games

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WACO, Texas (AP) — Cory Jefferson figures not too many people really know just how good Baylor has been in postseason play.

Not even the senior forward had put into perspective what the Bears have done until asked this week about their 17-3 postseason record over the past six seasons, which now includes a third NCAA Sweet 16 appearance.

"I'd say it's a very low percentage, considering I didn't even know about the 17-3 until just now," Jefferson said. "It's not really something that I kept up with, but that sounds like a pretty good record to me."

That is an .850 postseason winning percentage, better than any other Division I team with multiple NCAA appearances in that six-season span. Before those three NCAA tournaments in five years, the Bears made it to an NIT championship game at Madison Square Garden in 2009 — then won that title last season.

"I think it says that we can compete at a high level, and against the best, and we're one of the best," said Scott Drew, Baylor's winningest coach with 204 wins in his 11 seasons.

Baylor (26-11), the No. 6 seed in the West Regional, plays No. 2 seed Wisconsin (28-7) on Thursday in Anaheim, Calif.

The Bears also made it to NCAA regional semifinal games in 2010 and 2012, winning both before losing in the regional final each time to the eventual national champ.

"This year, we had a lot of ups and downs, but we peaked at the right time, and we're still going," senior guard Brady Heslip said Tuesday. "Not a lot of people thought we were going to make the tournament, let alone the Sweet 16. The Sweet 16 wasn't our goal, so we're still playing for our goal."

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Kentucky is 17-4 (.847) in postseason games since 2009 with a national title two years ago. Baylor beat the Wildcats 67-62 in December at the Dallas Cowboys' massive NFL stadium, and the two could have a rematch there in the Final Four if both teams win two more games.

Stanford is 10-2 in postseason games since 2009, but its two wins to get to this season's Sweet 16 are the only ones in the NCAAs. The Cardinal were the 2012 NIT champions, and won another game in that event last year. There was also a CBI tourney appearance in that stretch.

The Bears have won 12 of 14 games since early February, when they were 2-8 in the Big 12. The latest was that surprisingly easy 85-55 victory over Creighton on Sunday night.

"It was obviously tough times, going through 2-8, but the great thing about our team is nobody lost hope," Jefferson said. "Everybody still believed that even while we were 2-8, that we could make it to the NCAA tournament."

Of the NCAA-high seven Big 12 teams that made it to the tourney, only Baylor and Iowa State are still playing. Baylor won three games in three days in Kansas City earlier this month before losing to the Cyclones in the conference tournament championship game.

Jefferson is the first Baylor player to get to three NCAA tourneys, though he played in just one game each in 2010 and 2012. He redshirted the season in between when the Bears didn't make postseason play.

After considering early entry into the NBA draft last year, Jefferson opted instead to return. He hoped for more a more significant part in the postseason.

"This was definitely one of the main reasons I wanted to come back, to be able to experience more of the NCAA tournament on a level like this," he said. "To just be out there and the entire atmosphere is something that every team works hard for throughout the whole season."