

# College World Series

Monday, June 17, 2019

Omaha, Nebraska



## Dave Van Horn

## Casey Martin

## Heston Kjerstad

Arkansas Razorbacks

Texas Tech - 5, Arkansas - 4

DAVE VAN HORN: Well, obviously it was a tough loss. Pretty well-played game by both teams. For the most part, there really wasn't too many mistakes. Just kind of who got the big hit and who didn't. Give credit to Kilian. I thought he did a good job of battling and finding a way to get through some innings. Kept eating up innings. I think one time maybe Coach Tadlock might have been going out there to take him out, at least that's what it looked like and he promptly got another out, and got them through that inning and gave his bullpen a chance to rest a little bit more.

But just some big hits. Texas Tech took advantage of a couple of things, and tough loss, two tough losses here for us. Two one-run losses that really could have gone either way.

**Q. Casey, you had a couple of hits off Kilian but you also had a couple of strikeouts against that breaking ball. Thoughts about how he approached you and the lineup?**

CASEY MARTIN: I thought he did a good job. Like Coach said, he kept us off balance. He had really good stuff. He stayed strong throughout until they took him out. He threw me a lot of curve balls. I think maybe I was pressing a little bit too much, kind of in a gotta win situation, and that's on me being an older guy. I should know not to press, and I did.

So I had a couple of bad at-bats, a couple good hits. That's just baseball. But I thought he did an outstanding job. He's a good pitcher, and he took advantage of it.

**Q. This is for Casey: You obviously had a really good day with a double and a triple, but with the top of the order up, two guys on, no outs, were you pretty confident you guys would score there? How tough is it the way the ninth inning went down?**

CASEY MARTIN: Yeah, I had a lot of confidence top to bottom, doesn't matter who came up. I know our guys, they've battled all year and done an outstanding job

competing in the box. Just didn't fall our way, and like I said, that's baseball, and it's a tough situation, but sometimes it just comes down to that, and we just didn't get it done.

**Q. This is for both Heston and Casey: Heston, what was the pitch you hit on the home run?**

HESTON KJERSTAD: Fastball middle away.

**Q. After the way you guys got shut out, how good did that feel to break the ice?**

HESTON KJERSTAD: It's always good for someone to get the team rolling. We kind of feed off each other; once one guy starts hitting, other guys start to follow. So just to be able to get that rolling a little bit for us was good for us as a team.

**Q. For both you guys, you're going to come back and be the heart of the team next year. How good do you feel about the season you had getting here, because a lot of people didn't have you doing that before the season? And how good do you feel about the guys you've got coming back, even though you're losing a lot of good players, too?**

CASEY MARTIN: I thought we had an outstanding year, being counted out from the beginning. We bring in some new guys, Trevor Ezell did more than outstanding for us, and he's a competitor. Without bringing guys in like that, true leaders for this team, I guess you just could say such a young team we have, that it shows these younger guys what it takes to get here. So they've experienced it now, and they know what it takes. We needed that, and I think we'll be good if we can build off that.

HESTON KJERSTAD: We had a spectacular year getting back here for the second year in a row, but it shows a lot about the incoming guys that came in and replaced a lot of the starters and experience we had from last season, and it took everyone on our whole roster to get us here, and it was just great to be back, and we'll look back on the season and realize how good we were for the whole season, how good of an experience we had. But for now it's obviously a little bitter once the season is over.

**Q. Kind of building on that, the character and the fight of this team, you had the early lead, they came back, take the lead. Trading blows, how**

**much do you think that says about the heart that this team has played with all year long?**

HESTON KJERSTAD: We've been that way all year. There's been games to where we've been behind and our offense will keep striking back and our pitchers will keep us in the ballgame, and I don't think there's too many games this year that we didn't feel like we had a chance to come back and take the lead for our pitchers, and then our bullpen to come out there and shut them down again.

CASEY MARTIN: I mean, I think it just says a lot of what Coach here has done for this program. He goes out and gets competitors, the guys that want to compete, and that's awesome. That's big time for this program, and I think that's why we're pretty successful is because he surrounds this team with guys like Ezell and Zay (Campbell) and Scroggins, and man, it's been awesome, and I think it just says a lot about our program.

**Q. Dave alluded to it in his opening comments, but you come here and two one-run losses, could have gone either way. You guys could have been 2-0 with a couple of breaks instead of 0-2. How tough is that to contemplate?**

CASEY MARTIN: I mean, sometimes the ball bounces a little funny, and it didn't go our way, but that's just baseball for you. Just tells you it could go either way, and yeah, it's tough, but like I said, that's baseball.

HESTON KJERSTAD: Yeah, we just -- you know, one swing of the bat in either game for how close they were could have changed the outcome. You know, it didn't happen for us, but we'll get back after it.

**Q. I don't know if it's realistic for anybody to go to the World Series three years in a row, but do you guys feel good that you have a shot next year to be back here?**

CASEY MARTIN: I mean, honestly this program that we run at Fayetteville, I don't see why not. Coach has done an outstanding job recruiting. We have a lot of good young talent coming in. So you know, like I said, they know what it takes to get here, and I think this experience will be good for them, good for the older guys coming back, and I don't see why not. But I think our program is good enough for it.

HESTON KJERSTAD: We have good coaching and great players that come in every year, our program is never out of the running. You've just got to keep playing and we'll get back after it in the fall and improve and be back in the spring.

**Q. Dave, you got the first two guys on in the ninth, you have the top of the order. It was looking pretty**

**good there. What were you thinking, and I guess, the job their guy did of getting you guys out?**

DAVE VAN HORN: Well, Floyd came in and did a great job. He had an opportunity to let that thing slip away, and he didn't. I think they thought we were bunting with Franklin; we weren't. And I just wanted to see if we could draw them in a little bit and maybe he could slap the ball by him, and it worked.

Then Ezell obviously coming up, one of our best hitters, switch-hitters, he had an option to bunt for a hit if they stayed back. If they were up I wanted him to swing. Looking back at it, I wish he would have hit the first pitch. It was maybe a ball low but it was probably the only fastball he got, and the third baseman is way up, Warren is way up, and they started backing up a little bit.

But I just didn't feel good about bunting one of my best hitters with first base open, then they'd have an option to either walk Casey, set up a double play, or the other thing is there's a lot of swing-and-miss there in the 2 hole, and I just felt like that the key at-bat was going to be Trevor. Trevor needed to hopefully advance and maybe drive them in, and he made some really good pitches to Trevor. You know, but it was looking good, but you've got to get them over and in, and we didn't.

**Q. Dave, Kopps has only given up two home runs all season and then he gave up two today. What did you see from him?**

DAVE VAN HORN: He made a couple of mistakes, got behind in the count. The first couple of hitters, three hitters he sees, he's 2-0 before he knew what hit him. I think he went 3-0, came back, ended up getting the first hitter, and just kind of set a pattern that way a little bit. And then he goes out and gives up another home run in the second inning and then he's like lights out. You know, a little confusing there for us what to do. I only have so many guys really available and we've still got a lot of innings to get.

You know, you have a couple really good hitters and make a mistake. A couple of really good hitters and make a mistake, and you've got to give their hitters credit, when we made a mistake they hit it, and that was the difference in the game. Warren got a hanging breaking ball off Noland and it left the yard first pitch, and all of a sudden they're down 3-2 and we were cruising a little bit and that spun the game, and the triple that gave them the lead was a 3-1 pitch. Cody got behind. Pitch really wasn't a bad pitch, it was a fastball away, went out and got it and hammered it. But the problem was we were behind in the count. The run that ended up scoring to give them the lead was a walk. The run that scored the other night, a guy got hit in the back, got hit by a pitch. Then they got some big hits after it or a sac fly or whatever. That ended up

being the difference.

But we left too many runners on base here. We had eight runners today. Eight runners the other day we didn't drive in, and that ended up being the bottom line. We just didn't score enough runs.

**Q. Dave, Caleb Kilian didn't allow you guys to get in a groove offensively, nine strikeouts. What did you see from him, especially with that breaking ball?**

DAVE VAN HORN: I felt like he did a really good job with his fastball, not leaving it in the middle of the plate when he threw it, and then he pitched off of it with a lot of breaking balls. The fastball was getting up there 92, 93 miles an hour, maybe a little bit more every now and then, with some run, and they had to respect that fastball, and then he kept them off that breaking ball, which was really good. Just a good mix and really not leaving too much out there for us to hit.

**Q. I know it's a tough way for it to end, but kind of putting the season in perspective, considering all you lost, how do you feel about the season overall and the future because you've got some of your best players coming back. I know you lose one of the good ones, too.**

DAVE VAN HORN: No, I mean, you look back at fall ball and you start from there and you kind of try to figure out how you're going to piece it together and how are we going to be good enough to compete in the western division of the SEC. We knew if some guys had a good year that we'd be okay. I don't know that we knew we were going to get here but once the season started going, we started gelling a little bit, guys started getting better, and pitching started working a little bit. Guys then got over some soreness and some little injuries, because we had some of that in late March where we had guys missing weekends, especially relievers but we kept finding ways to win games. We felt like if we got to the best-two-out-of-three, weekend-type, super-regional series that we'd have a chance to get back here.

You know, just really proud of the team. Told them that after the game. Told them to walk out of there with their head high. We were real close to winning two games. We ended up losing two one-run games; kind of hard to swallow. But overall it was a really good year, getting a part of the Western Division championship with a really good Mississippi State team, but throughout the year we swept Mississippi State at our place. And getting back here, just proud of them and appreciated the effort they gave us all year. Those guys showed up every day and worked hard, smiled a lot, and it made it fun to work with them. I just appreciate the effort.

I'm going to miss Fletcher, that smiling, goofy center fielder. That guy can play with anybody. You know, you think about Trevor Ezell coming in and just really, really solidified our lineup. I'm going to miss that guy, his leadership, and it wasn't all verbal, it was just by work ethic and toughness. Kenley had an incredible year and he kind of came out of nowhere and we had to have that.

I could probably go on and on. A lot of the pitchers, as well. Campbell, you only get one or two of those guys every now and then. I've had one the last two years. We're going to have to find somebody or somebody has got to try to become that guy if we're going to have an opportunity to make it this far next year.

It was a good year. I know there's a lot of people back home disappointed, but probably like me, if they just take a step back and take a breath and kind of realize what we replaced and how we did after we replaced all those players, it was a pretty good year.