

# 2015 Men's College World Series

Saturday, June 13  
Virginia 5 - Arkansas 3



## Virginia

An Interview With:  
COACH BRIAN O'CONNOR  
CONNOR JONES  
DANIEL PINERO  
KENNY TOWNS

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Virginia head coach Brian O'Connor, Connor Jones, Daniel Pinero and Kenny Towns.

COACH O'CONNOR: In the first World Series game of this year that was certainly an excellent ballgame, hard fought on both sides. Just really proud of our team for, again, continuing to find a way to win a ballgame. It's kind of -- that ballgame is kind of how we've played for the last couple of weeks. I thought Connor Jones certainly didn't have his best stuff, but he grinded and gave us six innings. I thought he did a tremendous job and certainly we were very, very aggressive, our plan coming into this World Series was to be very aggressive and take the fight to the other teams and certainly we did that from an offensive standpoint. Both of these guys up here had some big hits for us. Danny certainly having the three stolen bases was big for us. And just proud of our guys that they continued to grind it out and find a way.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

**Q. Kenny and Daniel, if you can just talk about the two-out approach today. Seemed like whenever you got two outs and runners in scoring position you were able to bring them in. And Connor whenever Arkansas had runners in scoring position you were able to make a pitch play to get out of it. If you could address that?**

CONNOR JONES: Going back to earlier this year, I found myself in quite a few situations with runners in place and runners in scoring position. It's not the first time I've been in that position this year. It felt like almost every inning I threw with runners in scoring position. So I got pretty used to kind of pulling it together and having to make a big pitch there. And I thought Ernie made a great play on the double and Danny in the middle. Fortunate enough to make plays.

KENNY TOWNS: One thing we like to focus on with runners in scoring position, especially with runners on

second base, with two outs, you don't want to do too much, you just want to go out there and try and hit the ball on the barrel and hit a line drive or a ground ball somewhere. We were able to make some good swings in the situation. Danny had a really good swing on a pitch high and in and was able to get it over the third baseman's head to get that first run across. We had a lot of guys have good at-bats with a runner in scoring position and put a lot of pressure on those teams.

DANIEL PINERO: We were just trying to put the ball in play, any way any how, and it worked out for us. And we shortened up our swings a little bit with two outs, make the defense work a little bit. And we came through and did a good job with that.

**Q. Danny and Kenny, Killian and Jackson are two guys you saw last year. How much did that familiarity help you in your at-bats today?**

DANIEL PINERO: We came out wanted to be aggressive, two good pitchers, great pitchers. And Killian came out, and he shoved -- and we did a good job putting the ball in play and just staying back and trying to work it to the other way. Kenny had a good hit down the right field line. And it worked out for us.

KENNY TOWNS: We had some video on those guys from like the last time we faced them. It's hard to say that they pitched like the exact same way. But we were able to figure out what sort of stuff they did in certain situations. It gave us a little bit of insight about it. But they came out there and kind of pitched in a different way today. We were able to kind of to stick to our main approach and go out there and hit some balls hard.

**Q. Kenny, you're down 1-2 against Jackson. Most guys don't survive that. Could you go into depth about that at-bat and what was going through your mind and just how tough he is and you get a hit; and if Coach O'Connor could address that at-bat, too, and how he came through for you?**

KENNY TOWNS: He had some good stuff. I saw like his fastball and his breaking ball, but he got ahead on me. I was kind of in the defensive right away. When I got to 1-2, I was just to make sure, like Danny was saying, gotta put the ball in play with two strikes. And I was able to take some close pitches and get myself in a better count, a full count, and was able to see that breaking ball pretty well and put a good swing on it.

COACH O'CONNOR: Certainly I thought it was the at-bat of the game. Jackson's their guy. Kenny's driven in runs for us all year long. Certainly falls down and works 3-2. What a great two-strike approach he had for those last three pitches. And Jackson throws him a 3-2 breaking ball and he's got a great approach and just hits the ball the other way. Those are the kinds of the things that your players that have talent like Kenny does, and they need to rise up to win games like this. The difference between winning and losing is so fine, that's the big reason why we brought Josh Sborz in in the seventh inning. And sometimes it's one hit like that that makes a difference and Kenny certainly delivered it.

**Q. Coach, you mentioned earlier you wanted to come out and be aggressive today. But the stolen bases, you had like 62 stolen base attempts all year long and today you attempted eight -- was that part of the game plan, coming into the game, were you trying to test them on the base path?**

COACH O'CONNOR: We saved them up, 60 stolen bases throughout the year isn't very many for a team that ends up being here certainly. So we kind of lulled everybody to sleep all year and decided we'd start running today. No, but really, we got some good athletes. Certainly Danny did a nice job having three stolen bases. We were aggressive. Our plan was to be aggressive from the start if the situation presented itself. And we maybe didn't get here today being in Omaha playing it close to the vest. So here we are and few chances taken today and they worked in our favor, most of the time. Three times they didn't. But kept trying.

**Q. What is it about the postseason stage that kind of makes you kind of brings your game up obviously, you've set the program record for postseason RBI? And then for Danny, does it surprise you anymore, is that the guy you want up there in that type of situation, how confident are you when you see Kenny in the postseason in a tie game?**

DANIEL PINERO: No, I mean having Kenny up there in a tight ballgame, whenever it is, at the end of the ballgame, too, I have total confidence in him to get the big hit. I really didn't think he was going to get out. I just knew he was going to get a big hit. And he did it. He was down 0-2. And he came back and put the ball the other way. It was a great at-bat.

KENNY TOWNS: I think I just feel comfortable in the postseason. The games are usually on the line this time of year. It's nice to come through for your club. I think in the past couple of years I've been here we've always been in the postseason. I think I've kind of

gotten used to it and got comfortable in those situations and you obviously want to rise up for your team, give them a better chance to win. So just fortunate to get those opportunities and able to succeed sometimes.

**Q. Coach, just how big is it to get in the winners bracket early in the tournament like this and have you thought about a Game 2 starter?**

COACH O'CONNOR: Our Game 2 starter will be Brandon Waddell. I think it's really important, certainly, we showed that by going to Sborz in the seventh inning. We have a lot of confidence in Josh. He's really talented. Connor was at 90 some pitches and that was a pretty hard 90 some pitches. And I'm sure he wanted to stay in the game but we felt it was the right move to go to Sborz who has been our guy all year long. So I feel it's important when the first one obviously, you win the first two, it makes a big difference, we were in the position last year. We'll see what happens on Monday night.

**Q. Back in the third inning, Daniel I'll start with you. The decision to steal third, was that -- did you go on your own? Was that called? Also the steal for second, too, and if it was called for the steal to third, Brian, could you talk about the decision to do that with the heart of the order up?**

DANIEL PINERO: I knew the pitcher had a high leg kick. I kind of want to take advantage of that. And I was creeping a little bit towards third base. And I got a good jump. And it worked out in my favor. It was a bad slide, but it worked out.

COACH O'CONNOR: So that was on his own, just so you know.

**Q. Does that freak you out when he does that?**

COACH O'CONNOR: Yeah, a little bit. He did it last year in the World Series. I'm not quite sure why he did it last year. But Danny is a heady player. He's got really good instincts. And it was a good play. Certainly there's one out. If he can get there and Thaiss can hit a fly ball, it's the difference between a run or not. And so earlier on when he was on second base with two outs he was jumping around I thought he was going to go. And I was in the dugout saying please, Danny, not now. But good aggressive heads-up play.

**Q. What makes Josh such a dominant closer, and what did you think of his performance today? Maybe for any one of the players, how good do you guys feel when you got a lead in late innings of the game?**

COACH O'CONNOR: Josh's stuff is really good. Certainly he's got a fastball on some days that touches 95, 96. He didn't have his real good fastball today.

Whatever reason. But maybe will the next time. Has a good slider. He has a curveball that he uses every so often. But he throws strikes. He attacks you. That slider is, what, 84 to sometimes up to 87, 88 miles an hour. It's pretty darned good pitch. So you have a lot of confidence in him that he's going to go at them and give his best. And he's been pretty darned near as good as you can be all year long for us.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

**Q. Can one of the players talk about how good you guys feel, how good do you guys feel when Josh is in there?**

KENNY TOWNS: Especially when you've got Josh going out there, especially the way he's been pitching recently, it's huge for us. We know we have that confidence like we did today we run out Connor Jones for six innings and throw out Sborz for three. I challenge anyone to put up a better couple of guys than that. Sborz, he goes out there and attacks them. He's the guy you want in that situation. He's shown it the last couple of weeks and especially of late. He wants to be that guy and gone out and done the job for us, many times.

**Q. Danny, I think you stole third last year on an intentional walk. You enter today, I think, with just six steals. How much are you eager to get the running game going sometimes and how important was that at the end of the day in winning this game?**

DANIEL PINERO: I don't know, I saw something I could take advantage of, and I got a huge lead and I just kept creeping. It was like: All right, let's go, whatever. And I knew having a person on third base with one out and Thaiss up, it was almost a guarantee and I just wanted to be in a good position for him. I went on my own and it worked out.

**Q. You dealt with a lot of injuries this year. But seems like especially in big moments throughout regionals of late, regionals today that the experience has kind of helped you in moments late in the game especially, how important has that been to get to this point and going forward?**

COACH O'CONNOR: Well, I think experience is very, very important. These guys all sitting up here have experience. Danny and Kenny were our left side of the infield Omaha last year. So it's like anything: If you have experience doing it you're going to feel more comfortable, feel more confident. I believe that's the way our guys feel, and I really feel like we've had very, very good leadership on this team, especially down this stretch run. And lastly, I'd say that part of our success in this postseason this year has been a very relaxed but confident attitude that this team has carried, and I think it's served us well and hopefully it does moving forward.