

2022 College World Series

Saturday, June 18, 2022

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

Arkansas Razorbacks

Coach Dave Van Horn

Connor Noland

Chris Lanzilli

Press Conference



Arkansas - 17, Stanford - 2

DAVE VAN HORN: I thought we played just a fantastic game. I mean, started on the mound with pitching. Outstanding. A lot of strikes. Defense behind him was outstanding as well. Turned a couple of double plays. Made all the plays that pretty much you would expect our team to make and maybe a couple you didn't expect. We did a great job.

And offensively swung the bat extremely well up and down the lineup. Got production 1 through 9. I think everybody might have had a hit today or a couple. And just played a really good ball game.

Q. Chris, I imagine you guys probably saw their starting pitcher's comment that he would take their lineup any day over yours. To what extent did that add to the motivation for you guys to put up a bunch of runs?

CHRIS LANZILLI: It didn't add much motivation. Coach Van Horn has been saying, stay on us. We're all about us the past few weeks. And we've been hot the whole time. It's been working. We don't think about what they think. We think about what we're doing and what we're thinking. And it's definitely working.

Q. What does it do for the team when Braydon Webb leads off with a triple on the first play of the game?

CONNOR NOLAND: I think you can see it. Gives a lot of momentum to us and I think it gives everybody a lot of confidence -- obviously on the hitting side; I wasn't part of that. I could feel the energy in the dugout. It leads to good things.

CHRIS LANZILLI: That ball was smoked. The wind was blowing in. Hit a ball off the wall, lead-off, gets the game

going and brings us energy, obviously. So it was huge.

Q. Connor, Coach Esquer said that they've not been much of a take team all year, and it's hard to change your plans. You knew that from the scouting report, go at them, keep it going. Could you talk about the multiple innings with sub-double-digit pitches that helped you out today?

CONNOR NOLAND: I knew they were going to swing the bat. They're an aggressive team, they like to put the ball in play. We had the wind blowing in. I get a lot of ground balls normally.

I just stuck to the plan. They're very aggressive. Didn't get a lot of two-strike counts. They just put the ball in play, and I let the defense work behind me.

Q. Chris, your brother Cam wasn't in the building today. What do you think his reaction to your home run would have been and could you talk about your relationship with him how it's helped you grow as a baseball player?

CHRIS LANZILLI: He definitely would have gone nuts, but he wasn't unfortunately not able to be here. I think he was watching from wherever he was. He's helped me -- there's no words to say how much he's helped me. We talk on the phone every day about what's working, what's not working. He helps me make adjustments in my swing. He's huge for me. Best brother.

Q. Connor, we've talked a little bit about your last couple performances and you said didn't really change much. Things are working well. How would you compare and contrast -- you had a new one today, seven innings plus -- with those last couple of outings?

CONNOR NOLAND: It's a lot of the same. Just filling up the strike zone, that's the biggest thing. Getting ahead in head counts, getting them to take uncomfortable swings, that's really been the big thing the past three weeks. Just get ahead and let my defense work. And it worked today.



Q. Chris, when you transferred to Arkansas I'm sure you envisioned being in games like this and being on this stage. What's it like hitting a home run in that spot put you guys over the top and start the big runs ahead?

CHRIS LANZILLI: To play on this stage is really who I came here. And to do something like that is awesome. And to win the game is even better. I just want to keep it rolling.

Q. Connor, obviously you've been on this mound before. You take any comfort in that or was it just a new day in going out there and pitching?

CONNOR NOLAND: It was a long time ago. But it definitely helps to be at the park before. Another new day to take on a new team and a new ballpark for this team this year. So it was a fun opportunity to start us off right.

Q. A lot of Razorback fans in the crowd today. How did the energy of the crowd reflect on your guys' performance today? What does it mean that so many Razorbacks showed up to the College World Series once again?

CONNOR NOLAND: I think we have the best fans in the nation. We show up here in Omaha, and I think their presence here today was felt. They were loud. I could hear them for sure. And I think the other team could hear them too.

CHRIS LANZILLI: At first we were wondering which fans were ours because they were all wearing red. When the game started we sure heard them. So it was awesome. The place was packed.

Q. Chris, if I'm right, was there a wicked rendition of "Happy Birthday" out in the stands?

CHRIS LANZILLI: Yes, there was.

Q. What are you going to do tonight to celebrate?

CHRIS LANZILLI: I'm going to get some rest definitely. I think that's what Coach Van Horn wants to do, right?

Q. I want to talk about Connor with you. Obviously his performance in the postseason has been incredible. How has what he's been able to do set the tone for postseason play?

DAVE VAN HORN: You said it. He set the tone. He sets the tone for the whole weekend. When you get to these tournaments you've got to win at least three the first round

and two the second round and obviously maybe five total here.

So for him to pitch like he's pitched in game one and give us a chance to rest our guys and feel good about using our bullpen a couple of times really from maybe the sixth or seventh inning of his first outing on three times in a row, it's been big.

And he wants the ball. He's not going to go out there and blow you away but he knows how to pitch. And we like it when other teams are hitting it and we're fielding it.

Q. Is it the best you've seen Connor this season? And also when he's going out there throwing seven, five pitches an inning, was there a thought maybe letting him try to go the whole distance?

DAVE VAN HORN: First question, I don't think it's the best I've seen him. He's had maybe a little better stuff a couple of times. But as far as competing, the temperature, the stage we're on, you add all that up, and probably nothing's been better.

But just as far as stuff coming out of his hand, it's been a little better here and there. But it was really good. And it was pretty much located. And that's a big strong physical team. And it's hard to keep them down.

Q. What are you seeing differently from this team just their overall approach of the last three weeks? From your standpoint, have you taken the stance of kind of like hands off on this a little bit with these guys, given the experience?

DAVE VAN HORN: What I've seen from them is a team that was disappointed how the regular season ended. And once we got into postseason play, I just felt like the team, they didn't want to fail. And they took a step forward, got over all the negativity and just said, we're going to fight you to the end and hopefully it will go our way.

Offensively, I've seen us hit the ball in the middle of the ball a lot more, advance runners, move runners around, use the whole field. We had a bunch of backside hits today, sac fly.

I mean, we're running a pretty good offense right now. And I don't know.

But as far as hands off, I just try to give them some advice on how to handle everything, whether it's the Regional or the Super Regional or even up here.

But as far as changing anything, not really changed much.



Maybe just the way we start our pitchers, other than that it's the same old stuff. We did make an adjustment in the lineup. Flipped it. And it's worked.

Q. What's it like when the depth of your order showing up like it has in the postseason, which it wasn't right at the end of the season? The second part, Robert Moore, I think he reached base five consecutive at-bats. Can you speak to when he's going, what that does for you?

DAVE VAN HORN: Hitting's really hard. And sometimes you just go through a period where it's not going your way. Their team's pitching well. Maybe you're a little tired. There's a lot of things that play into it because we don't just play once a week. We play a lot. We play a lot of games.

I've said this before, maybe just someone who watches baseball a little bit, they don't understand why you get beat by teams you're supposed to beat or lose on a Tuesday night because you're not playing all your guys or whatever. It's because we're trying to make sure we have guys ready to play at this time of year, in some cases.

Robert, great day, three walks, double, single. And then even his groundout advanced two runners with no outs. So it was a very productive at-bat. That's what we're trying to do right now.

He's hitting in the 6 hole. A switch hitter. Hitting after Lanzilli. If we can keep him going, it's big. And you can go on down the lineup a little bit more. Just a lot of production. But if Robert's going, it really helps us.

Q. With guys like Chris and Michael transferring in, older guys, how do you go about doing the evaluation of fit for the program and this specific team? And what has allowed them to fit in so seamlessly with this group?

DAVE VAN HORN: The way it all went down with both of those guys, with Lanzilli, number one, Coach Hobbs had been around him for a year when he was coaching at Wake Forest. We knew what we were getting, for the most part, as far as makeup.

Baseball, you can see it. You can watch video and watch 100 at-bats or whatever you want to do.

With Michael Turner, we did a lot of evaluating of his catching to see if he could catch first. And it was all done with the computer, just watching, pitches how did he catch. We graded him out really high. He didn't catch all the time.

I thought it was a little unusual. When we made contact with him, we knew he could hit but we needed a guy that could catch as well and maybe catch more than hit, honestly.

And made a few phone calls and did a couple Zoom calls with him and his parents. And he told me basically, I remember, he told me you just give me a chance, because people weren't beating his door down to take him.

And that was a pretty good move by us taking him. (Laughter).

Q. Coach Musselman was in attendance this afternoon. Could you speak about the family atmosphere at Arkansas? Seems like everyone is always supporting each other.

DAVE VAN HORN: Did he have his uni on?

Q. He didn't. I think he had workout clothes on.

DAVE VAN HORN: Figures. (Laughter) I feel like our athletic department is -- it's a fun place to work right now. Sports are winning.

I feel like the coaches all support each other. I mean, I think Hunter's in here, so I'm not going to say too many nice things about him, because he'll think I'm smooching up to him or something.

But he does a good job, makes everybody feel like they're important and their sport matters. And I believe they all do.

And it's fun to see football, basketball, soccer, softball, I could go on and on, just playing really well and winning.

And we've had -- I know last year was incredible. And I think this year may be even better, which I didn't think we could beat last year's however many championships we won. And it starts at the top with Hunter and his staff.

Q. Your defense has been good all year, but in the postseason you've been making all these incredible low-percentage plays that most of the time don't get made. I'm curious about the preparation, what you guys do. Obviously got some talented guys in there, but it's pretty magical what's happening defensively right now.

DAVE VAN HORN: We have good players, obviously. The infield has been solid all year. Catcher solid. Center fielder solid. Outfield has been good.

When we get to it, we catch it. At this time of the year, you

just don't do too much. You just don't wear them down.

We've changed some things up lately as far as our pregame routine. We don't take a lot of ground balls. Some days, if we take ground balls when we hit, we don't take pregame in and out. Because why do you need to take pregame in and out?

And I talk to the players a little bit about it. Today, I talked to the infielders, this is what I'd like to do but tell me if you don't want to do this: I don't want to take all ground balls before batting practice starts. Let's just take a few.

We have a routine that's normally pretty intense. We didn't do that. I said but I want to take in and out. And they were all about it.

And so we mix it up a little bit, but I listen to them because they're the ones playing. It's 95 degrees or whatever.

Q. Last time you saw Stanford, you had not been through the SEC grind. And I know it's oversimplifying to say that that was the difference in the two scores. But how much of an impact does that have on your kids, especially your young kids, to have been through that this year and get to this point in the postseason?

DAVE VAN HORN: I think any coach, there's a few teams from the SEC West here, and they'll all tell you that going through the league prepares you for anything you're going to run into. It doesn't mean you're going to win, but you've seen it before, whether it's a big-time lefty with velocity or a right-hander with a plus slider. You're going to see it. Offenses like Stanford. They're really good.

And they beat us early in the season. And they out-toughed us that day, honestly. And we saw it. It was really cold. I didn't like the way it went. We threw a freshman with a really good arm. And they got all over him.

It didn't go real well. We lost 5-0, and it felt like it was 10-0, honestly. And we had to play a game after that in that same temperature. Found a way to win. We walked out of there, limped out of there going, wow. And we thought Stanford probably doesn't think we're very good, because we didn't look very good that day.

And today's score got out of hand. And I think Coach Esquer was -- he didn't want to say it -- but he threw some guys they wouldn't normally pitch. Those last three innings we scored 10, 11 runs. You can take those off the board a little bit. He's trying to get through this where we may play again.

So I have a lot of respect for him and his team. Like Chris said, it's all about us right now. We're just trying to stay focused on what we can do and do well. If we do that, we've got a chance to win games here.

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