

2022 College World Series

Saturday, June 18, 2022

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

Ole Miss Rebels

Coach Mike Bianco

Kemp Alderman

Dylan DeLucia

Kevin Graham

Press Conference



Ole Miss - 5, Auburn - 1

MIKE BIANCO: We played very well. I mean, I think that's obvious. And it always starts on the mound. And I thought Dylan was terrific, as he's been not just down the stretch, but probably since we've injected him into the rotation. He was terrific.

And I thought tonight, against what we consider a really good Auburn offense, I thought he just mixed his pitches so well, fastballs in and out, a ton of sliders for strikes and then able to move the slider to get some punch-outs.

He was able to elevate his fastball. He was able to do just about anything tonight. And you could tell they had a tough time figuring him out. But a lot of people do.

And on this field, with the wind gushing in, runs are a premium. It's tough to score. And we didn't face Gonzalez in the regular season but watched from afar how good he is and knew that we were going to have to be very opportunistic and get the big hits. We got several of them.

Of course Kevin had a terrific night. Big hit with two outs by Kemp. And then later in the game we had some balls fall for us. We had some good fortune, which you need. But just proud of the way we played.

Q. When you go through a groove like today, retiring your first 14 straight how much in your mind are you thinking about what you've done up to that point, or is it kind of a short memory?

DYLAN DELUCIA: Just moving on to the next pitch, really, just forgetting the last pitch and just attacking the zone again.

Q. Kemp and Dylan, what was that locker room like? What was the energy like after y'all pulled this one out?

KEVIN GRAHAM: Great. It's how it's been the last few weeks. Just ready to keep playing some more baseball.

DYLAN DELUCIA: What he said.

Q. For you, I know obviously everything has been working, but just to see your team plate two runs in the top of the first, how easy it for you to exhale at that point and pitch more comfortably, I guess?

DYLAN DELUCIA: It helped a lot, really. It just calmed me down and allowed me to pitch again.

Q. Four of the five runs with two outs today. It's been a big thing for you guys over the last few weeks, over this surge you've had. What's the biggest difference in that department with those timely hits?

KEVIN GRAHAM: It's just sticking to your approach. But that's something we've emphasized since I got here, is getting that big two-out hit. With two outs, even with nobody on, there's a lot of inning left. And just keep grinding out at-bats and winning pitches. And those two-out runs can be huge. They can be back breakers.

Q. How will you guys keep up the momentum against Arkansas on Monday night?

KEVIN GRAHAM: I think just keep playing baseball like we have been. Just keep winning pitches and keep competing.

KEMP ALDERMAN: It's just another game. We'll go out there and make pitches, have tough at-bats and make good plays and just play like we've been playing for the last month.

Q. Dylan, we've talked about your command all year, but I think in the postseason 31-3 strikeout-to-walk. What is working for you when it comes to command and control right now, and how have you developed



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that?

DYLAN DELUCIA: I would say mostly just I just want to keep my pitch count low. So I'm just throwing it in the zone. That literally was my game plan, throw it in the zone, let them hit it. If they don't hit it, good for me. Just put the ball in play and let my defense work for me.

Q. Kemp, thinking back to some inner squads maybe against Dylan, as a right-handed hitter and you're facing a guy with that kind of slider, how hard is it to hit that pitch? Looked like it was giving the Auburn hitters a lot of trouble.

KEMP ALDERMAN: I think I faced Dylan eight times in the fall and I think he got me out all eight times. He's got a wipeout slider, but if you're a left-handed hitter, he also has a change-up he can throw. He can throw his slider to the lefty's back foot.

But the most effective thing for Dylan he can throw his fastball in and out on the plate. And as a right-handed hitter he can start it off the plate and run it on the black, the edge of the plate.

Q. Dylan, what's the backstory about the development of that slider?

DYLAN DELUCIA: Beginning of the year, just kind of just, my thumb was just misplaced on it. And we just slid it up a little on it, to put it -- instead of being on a seam it was now on leather. It caused me, instead of it just tucking it, it just caused it to go out of my hand the right way. That's really been the key to it.

Q. In that seventh inning when Mike came out to visit with you after those three straight hits from Auburn and they got on the board with that run, were you campaigning for yourself at all to stay in the game there, or was that all coach?

DYLAN DELUCIA: No, I wanted to stay in the game. But he had complete confidence in me. He said, listen, just throw strikes and get out of this without giving up a run. And that was the point.

Q. Kevin, we talked about that Auburn series as the start of the turnaround. And facing them now in the College World Series, how does the team feel about getting to play them again?

KEVIN GRAHAM: Good. At this point in the year it doesn't matter who you're playing. Everybody is good. Everybody can beat everybody. We're just ready to get compete again. It's a fun group of guys to go play with every day.

Q. You talked about some of your family being around Omaha tonight. Who was all here and can you talk about how special it was to win in front of them?

MIKE BIANCO: My personal family? I think we've got them all here except for one. My oldest, Michael, is coaching in Atlanta. So, yeah, they're all here, the last one, Drew, flew in this afternoon. And so we got everybody here. My father's here. My brother, who missed the opportunity in '14, has never been to Omaha. Played college baseball. So he's loving it. Him and his wife are here. So just about all the Biancos. We're about 92 percent.

Q. I think that's 12 runs surrendered now over the six postseason games from the pitching staff. Just what's been the biggest factor for the pitching this postseason?

MIKE BIANCO: I don't know what the biggest factor. If you watch Dylan and you watch, I would probably have to say just being ahead in the count. The guys are pitching with tremendous confidence.

I thought that was Dylan today. And Kemp, I think, said it the best, you can look at that slider and the slider can be really nasty. He can throw a really good change-up -- not many lefties in the lineup, so I think we threw maybe one or two changeups today.

But the fastball can be so dominant. You look at the board, it's 90 to 93. He'll bump it 94, 95. But there's a lot of low 90s, which is good, but it's not, I think, impressive when you look at the scoreboard like you see some other guys that are throwing the ball mid to upper 90s.

But he commands it. It's got good run on it. And it makes them very uncomfortable. And he can throw it on both sides of the plate. When he's ahead in the count like that, you can see that they they're not able to barrel up the fastball. And when you don't do that, then it's tough to get to the breaking ball.

And Mallitz, of course, at the end has been, is as good as anybody that we run out there. And it's a shame we've had a couple, because of the spread, we haven't run Johnson out there at the end. And part of that is because of the lead. I get uncomfortable bringing your closer in with a five-run lead or four-run lead.

But they've been good and I guess the answer is a lot of strikes.

Q. I guess it's pretty good if you don't have to use



your closer that often. But at the plate you guys are hitting .300 this postseason. I'm sure the plate approach hasn't changed that much from the postseason compared to the regular. But what's impressed you about your approach at the plate?

MIKE BIANCO: The most important factor in winning a baseball game is dominant pitching. We've talked about that and we've pitched it well. But the second most important factor is the timely hit. And not just the batting average, but being able to hit with runners in scoring position.

And Mike Clement has a knack for getting the kids to believe -- Kevin and Kemp said, with two outs, there's 33 percent of the inning left.

When you start looking at that, there's a lot of inning left. And through the last three weeks or so we've had some really big two-out hits.

Q. It seems like you would know this better than we would, but you're the only undefeated team in the postseason --

MIKE BIANCO: I didn't know that.

Q. -- and they just walked up there and they just won a game in the College World Series, and it seems to me like they have a very "just handle your business" kind of approach and not getting too high as a coach, how crucial is that for players to have that approach, especially considering you've been around a while?

MIKE BIANCO: I think part of it is where they've come from. And we've talked about that story and the 7-14 and being able to handle it and it didn't look good. There's so much pressure. Just, I think, their own demands; they want to succeed. And then the fans. And it's tough. And we were in a tough spot.

Once we got in, I think the slate's clean. And what I mean by that is they were fighting uphill and trying to stay alive in the deep end for such a long time, that once they got in, now everybody's even. And everybody's 0-0. And they've got another opportunity. Not a lot of times you get another opportunity.

And it's a team that played well. It's not super surprising because we played so well at the beginning of the year. This wasn't a team that came out of nowhere. This was a team that was ranked No. 1 at some point for a couple of weeks in mid-March, not the beginning of the season, but a month into the season. And a team that kind of lost itself and were able to come back. And I think once they got

that new life in them, you can see the confidence in the way they played.

Q. What were you thinking on the way to the mound in the seventh when they got the three straight hits and still nobody out? And then can you talk about the conversation you had with Dylan?

MIKE BIANCO: One, I think if I'm not mistaken, it was three hits in a row. I think it was a double, single, single. And a guy that -- I just wanted to make sure to check him emotionally. He's tough as heck, but, man, he can be emotional. And I just wanted to make sure that we kind of calmed him down a little bit got him back into the strike zone. That was it. I knew his stuff was good, and I knew at that point, I think, if I remember right, he was like in the 80s pitch-wise.

And so I didn't see a reason for him to come out with that lead. I wanted to make sure to get his emotions under control and make some pitches. That's why you see he's good. The good ones make pitches and get off the field, they don't just let it blow up on him. And he did that today.

Q. What was kind of the approach to Gonzalez a little bit? Two weeks in a row, he and Hall kind of stayed on that sinker and were pretty aggressive when need be but didn't chase it too much?

MIKE BIANCO: Just to try to get it up. We liked what we thought the left-handers could do. And so when that happens, usually it's a good thing. We've got some good left-handers in our lineup.

The right-handers needed to see that ball up. You could see they made an adjustment after the first inning or two, which allowed him to kind of roll there for about three or four innings, where he started running that sinker inside and we started getting fisted.

And I think he probably went a little more offspeed and a little more away early on, and it gave us some opportunities to get some balls up and get some good swings on them.

But you could see that Tim Hudson calling the pitches and, of course, Gonzalez delivering the pitches, they made an adjustment. And it enabled him to kind of roll through some innings there in the middle.

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