

2022 College World Series

Wednesday, June 22, 2022

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

Arkansas Razorbacks

Coach Dave Van Horn

Brady Slavens

Hagen Smith

Postgame Press Conference



the ball over the plate, just throw strikes because I know I've got to throw strikes to give us a chance. If I walk people, I want to go long, deep in the game and help our team.

Q. What did you throw today?

HAGEN SMITH: A lot of fastballs, a lot of sliders, and a few change-ups. More sliders than I usually do.

Q. Brady, Hagen, both of you guys could answer this. What was it like in the dugout the bottom of the ninth? What was the emotional response, I guess?

HAGEN SMITH: It was a crazy feeling. We knew Zack was going to get out of it. Everyone in the dugout had faith in him. Nerves were high, but we knew he was going to get out of it.

BRADY SLAVENS: Zack's been clutch for us all year long. He's done a great job. We all had faith in him. We all had belief in him. He didn't have the best start that he wanted the other day, but he came out and proved himself tonight.

Q. Brady, what were you looking for on the home run? Was that maybe the hardest or longest ball you ever hit?

BRADY SLAVENS: It was 1-0, and I was just looking for a fastball over the plate. Luckily I got it. It might be the furthest one I've ever hit. I'm not sure.

Q. Brady, I wanted to ask about the opportunity tomorrow. They've already announced Dylan DeLucia, their ace. You guys might be able to throw Connor for a chance to win it all. Just your thought about what tomorrow brings.

BRADY SLAVENS: He's been really good this whole year. It's going to be tough for us. We're going to have to fight. It's going to take all of us to win, and it's just going to be a battle between the two teams.

Q. Coach, just what did you think of Hagen Smith's outing? I know you touched on it a little bit earlier, but

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THE MODERATOR: Start with a statement from you, Coach.

DAVE VAN HORN: Just a great win for our team obviously. Back against the wall and a lot of drama there at the end.

I thought Hagen Smith did a tremendous job tonight, gave us five really good innings, gave up a couple hits, struck out eight.

I thought Gaddis did a really nice job for Ole Miss as well. He kept us off balance with a lot of off-speed pitches. We hit two balls out of the park, but other than that, we really didn't do a whole lot against him, leadoff double.

It ended up coming down to the bullpens a little bit. Credit to Evan Taylor came in, did a great job for us, got us out of a little bit of a jam, and then obviously Zack Morris came in and finished it up for us. So big win for us.

Q. Brady, obviously it was a crazy 24 hours for you, the lineup change, and then tough day yesterday, and then to bounce back and hit the monster shot. Just curious about what you've been through mentally the last couple days and your focus today.

BRADY SLAVENS: Yeah, obviously didn't have the best day yesterday, but you can't control the past. You've got to look to the future. Facing elimination, you've just got to do whatever you can for the team.

Q. Hagen, just your mental approach to today, how you felt, and then just executing. Can you talk about what your repertoire was today?

HAGEN SMITH: My mental approach today was just throw



what did you see from him, especially given his last couple starts hadn't gone as long and been as strong?

DAVE VAN HORN: He's had some really good outings, but it's been at the end of the game for the most part. As far as starting, he had a little bit of a roller coaster down the stretch. He has great stuff. Obviously I thought he was outstanding.

He had two little spurts in there that he just lost the strike zone, and I think both times with two outs. Had a couple outs, four balls in a row, two balls on the next guy. Coach visits him, he throws three strikes for a real good strikeout. It seemed like it happened one other time, but other than that, he was pretty good.

They fought him pretty good, got his pitch count up a little bit. For the most part, really proud of Hagen. He hadn't been feeling good, sore throat, tested him for strep throat and a lot of things the last week, but he didn't have it. You could even hear him talking a little different. So just a really good job.

Q. I wanted to ask you about navigating through the ninth and the fact that Morris gets to come in and gets the team that roughed him up the other day and closed it out for you.

DAVE VAN HORN: There wasn't a lot of navigating there, just holding on, it looked like to me. Morris did a tremendous job. He talked to me last night after the game and said, I want the ball again. And I said, Just be ready. I appreciated him talking to me a little bit about it.

When he came in, I just said, Hey, man, can you do this? And he said, Yes, sir. And I just said, Okay, here you go. Go get it.

He had a little different look to him tonight than he looked like last night, so I was proud of him. Sometimes you don't know until you experience it, and you have to get knocked down a little bit to have success, and I think he really genuinely wanted the ball tonight.

He probably didn't see himself pitching in that situation, but that's what it was. Really nice job.

Q. Dave, you mentioned Slavens has been kind of struggling at the plate. What was different from him today at the plate? What did you see out of him, especially on that home run?

DAVE VAN HORN: Well, I knew he was going to have a pretty good night when he walked his first at-bat. He took some pitches. He laid off a 2-0 pitch. A lot of times he'll

get a little jumpy at that 2-0 pitch and try to hit it 438 feet or whatever he hit that ball to center field tonight. He swings a little bit too hard, but when he laid off that, he ended up drawing a walk, and I thought, okay, back to the way he was a week ago.

He put a really good swing on a fastball, light breeze pulling in really. It was all Brady. It was a little bit flatter swing, and he tried to stay through the middle. That's what we kept talking to him about today in pregame in the batting cages, stay through the middle. Just think the other way, middle, and that's pretty much what he concentrated on, and he did it.

Q. Coach, does winning a game like this that was this close and this stressful kind of help confidence for tomorrow, or how does it influence the way you approach tomorrow?

DAVE VAN HORN: I think at this time of the year it's just about winning games and hanging in there. If we would have done this maybe a month and a half ago, two months ago, I would have told you it's really going to help our confidence moving forward. But at this time of the year, I think the team's really confident and pretty loose.

How about the play that Jalen Battles made? Nobody's really mentioned that. What an unbelievable play. Hat's off to Coach Thompson having the left field flared up with two strikes? How about Zach Barr and having the stuff in front of me where I can put the shortstop more in the hole? There's a lot that goes into it. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't.

Michael Turner called an incredible game. I don't think we called a pitch for him tonight. A couple suggestions, but it's unbelievable. You hold that team down to five hits and two runs with what they've been doing the last two weeks, three weeks, very good.

Q. Coach, obviously it's all hands on deck tomorrow, but I'm assuming Connor Noland, have you made the decision he'll start tomorrow?

DAVE VAN HORN: Yeah, Connor will start.

Q. And Evan Taylor, just a really good performance from him tonight. What did you see in him? Going into the ninth inning, did you know you were going to have a short leash on him going in there?

DAVE VAN HORN: Obviously hindsight is 20/20. He was throwing strikes and feeling strong and he wanted to go back out. We obviously discussed it a little bit, but he's older. So we sent him out. Got to give Alderman credit, he

did a great job tonight. He got three hits. He just took what he gave him. He spotted a fastball away and just slapped it to right.

He knew they were down more than one run. A home run wasn't going to do him any good. He needed to just get on, and he did it. That was a professional at-bat.

Then we decided to go right-handed, and obviously it didn't work out so well. But yeah.

Q. Dave, you mentioned going with Connor. What did you expect from him on maybe short rest? Was that kind of the plan all along to have him for tomorrow?

DAVE VAN HORN: That was the plan. If we could get to tomorrow -- I mean, we weren't going to use him tonight or we would have used him. Give him another day. He's been preparing for it and working out, just like their guy. He was long tossing today. We saw him. We watched. We knew that he was getting ready for tomorrow if needed.

Yeah, that's the plan. I don't know, again, the game usually tells you what to do. We'll see what we see from him and see what kind of stuff he has, see what type of swings they're taking, and we'll go to the next guy.

Q. Maybe just a quick comment on Lanzilli. He's got three homers here. Just what you've seen out of him here.

DAVE VAN HORN: He's really confident. He's gotten behind in the count a bit and gone the other way. The ball he hit out of the park today, that was on a change-up, but he really barrelled it up. He's strong. I think he kept it below the wind a little bit, and it just got out of the park.

I think he's just enjoying it. He knows this is it. Going up there and letting it fly a little bit, I like it.

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