

2022 College World Series

Thursday, June 23, 2022

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

Arkansas Razorbacks

Coach Dave Van Horn

Connor Noland

Cayden Wallace

Postgame Press Conference



drive up the middle and just let the off-speed get in our bat path.

I thought we hit the ball well as a team, but it just didn't work out for us today. Sometimes that happens.

Q. Connor, what was working for you today? Was there any pressure when DeLucia's on his game as well, going up against a guy like that?

CONNOR NOLAND: Just using both curveballs, sliders and the normal curve, that's the big thing. Yeah, I mean, he's pitching lights out, and I knew it. I was in the tunnel for most of the game, but I could hear the crowd going crazy.

There was added pressure, but I already knew that coming into this game.

Q. For both players, just how would you kind of sum up this season on the whole? We've talked a lot all season about expectations and ups and downs and then finishing the way you did. How would you kind of encapsulate what the season was like for both of you?

CAYDEN WALLACE: I would just say it's been a blessing. We've had a lot of ups and downs throughout the year, and we just never gave up on ourselves, and coaches never gave up on us. Just I would say it honestly ended unreal. We're very fortunate to make it this far and be three runs from making it to the championship.

I'm just very thankful for this team, and we're very tough. This is how Coach Van Horn has his teams. They're very tough and all good and all talented. He does a good job coaching us.

CONNOR NOLAND: I think the same thing. We had a team meeting down at the SEC Tournament, kind of game together and decided that we had to turn things around right then. You saw he answered that calling. This team has so many tough players, tough individuals, and tough coaches. I think you saw that throughout the postseason.

So I'm just really proud of these guys and thankful we had

Ole Miss - 2, Arkansas - 0

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with a statement from Dave and then student-athletes, Connor and Cayden. Give us the overview, please.

DAVE VAN HORN: What a great pitchers' duel actually. I think both pitchers, they gave it everything they had. Connor, seven innings, gave up seven hits. You look at DeLucia, the same thing, four hits, seven strikeouts. Connor had seven strikeouts.

We had a couple opportunities, but just kind of baseball, the way it works, we hit some balls hard in the middle innings, and we just kept hitting the ball at them, and they made the other plays. Dylan just did a great job over there. He didn't walk anybody. He didn't give us a chance. We didn't have a leadoff man on one time in nine innings.

It's hard to score against good pitching when the leadoff man doesn't get on here and there. So just disappointed that we lost, but so proud of my team. Just proud of the way they fought really the last four or five weeks to get back to where we knew we should be, and that's here in Omaha.

I told them after the game how proud I was of them. I'm not going to -- I had a little trouble talking, but I told them that I'm not going to cry. I'm not going to cry when you finish your season in Omaha.

Q. Cayden, what was the general approach based on the scouting report on DeLucia? And it looked like you did some early swinging sometimes. They maybe tried to take a few, but just couldn't get him off stride?

CAYDEN WALLACE: Tip my hat to him. He did a good job keeping us off balance and throwing strikes. He threw well, mixed up in and out. Our approach was to hit a line



the opportunity.

Q. Cayden, what was your take on Connor's performance tonight on four days' rest?

CAYDEN WALLACE: It was unbelievable. He let up two runs, and they were honestly just very unfortunate runs. Just flipped through the infield. He pitched his heart out for us just like he did all year. We knew he was on short rest. We knew he was going to give it everything he's got, just like he does every outing.

Our offense and defense knew he was going to give us the littlest amount of runs possible. He's been a great leader for us all year and has been a huge role in our success.

Q. Connor, you hit that rough stretch down the end of the regular season but were phenomenal during the postseason. If this is the last year in an Arkansas uniform, how proud are you of the way you're able to finish this season?

CONNOR NOLAND: Super proud. Just to make it to Omaha is a tough feat. So I think for myself, I just want to be a leader. My freshman year, Isaiah Campbell was a big role model for me, and I got to see him lead that team.

So I just hope that the players here, they think the same, that I was a good leader, a good person, taught them about the game. That's really the most important thing.

Q. Connor, the pitch that Graham hit to score the first run down the first baseline, do you remember what the pitch was?

CONNOR NOLAND: Yeah, it was a curveball right down the middle. I was just trying to get ahead on him, and he's a good hitter. They had a good approach on that. They were just sitting soft the first pitch. It's unfortunate I got away with it during the game, but he turned on that one.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Congratulations on a great season.

Q. You've seen a lot of baseball here. Is this as good a pitchers' duel as you've ever seen? As a baseball guy, even though it didn't turn out the way you wanted, is it kind of special just to be a part of a game like that?

DAVE VAN HORN: Yeah, it's one of the best pitchers' duels I've seen up here. I've been up here a few times and very fortunate. The game lasted two hours and ten minutes or something. Pitchers were just throwing strike after strike and defense. We did what we did all year long,

we played defense and turned a couple double plays.

But it was a great pitchers' duel. It's one of the better ones, obviously, that I've seen up here, that's for sure. I like offense. I like defense. I like good pitching. I just like good baseball, and that was a good baseball game.

Q. Coach, you started six seniors today. Just talk about the contribution of that senior class.

DAVE VAN HORN: It was a veteran group obviously with a couple of younger guys mixed in and a draft-eligible sophomore that won't be back. I told them after the game how proud I was of them. They gave us everything they had and came up a little bit short.

I also mentioned that there will be a lot of new faces in our program next year, and some of the guys that didn't play a lot this year are going to have to step it up. Always thinking about the future.

But for the guys that won't be back that are graduating or are going to be drafted, obviously we wouldn't be here without them. They brought some pretty good leadership, that's a fact.

Q. I wonder about the scouting report you had on DeLucia. Had some early swings sometimes, and then when you took pitches, they looked like it was strikes. How did he pitch to the report?

DAVE VAN HORN: Well, he did a great job of throwing strike one. He threw a lot of sliders. He threw a lot of fastballs. He mixed it up. In, out. Two of our hitters, he got Webb out all day with fastballs in, and he got Lanzilli out with fastballs in, but he'd also thrown some breaking balls away, and he was throwing it for a strike. He gets you leaning out over the plate and busts you in.

His stuff wasn't overpowering today. What do you expect, he's on three, four days' rest. Normally he's probably 92, 93, 94, maybe a little more every now and then. You go off of the board over there, he's right around 90 every pitch, but he located and he pitched. That's what it's all about, it's about pitching, and he did.

Q. Dave, you've coached against Mike's teams for a long time. They've been knocking at the door for so long. What stands out to you about this team that kind of got to the point they did?

DAVE VAN HORN: Experience. I mean, thank God I don't ever have to see Kevin Graham hit against us again. It seems like that guy is always up. I have nightmares about him, I'll be honest with you. Elko, what a great kid. Man,

full-grown man. Seeing him in the batter's box makes you nervous.

Gonzalez, he'll be back. He's incredible. They've got incredible power. Alderman, he's only a sophomore. You can go through their lineup, and it's just tough.

They had a little rough patch there, and it happens, especially when everybody starts telling you how good you are. It's just human nature. I've seen it. I've lived it. They kicked it into gear. It took them a while. I mean, when they left our place, we were all going, wow, that's one of the best teams we've played all year.

We squeaked out a couple wins against them, but it could have gone either way. But playing against Mike's team, you always know what you're going to get. He's always such a good baseball coach. He's hard to beat. Guys who played him in the last 19 years, because in 2000 we didn't get to play, we've played each other almost 70 times, I think. Someone pointed that out to me at the SEC Tournament, and I just kind of shook my head.

Add it up, we played each other Super Regional in our place. We got it in Game 3. I felt bad for them, but I was ecstatic for us, but I felt bad for them. That's just the way it is. They've got a family. I know exactly where he's coming from, and it hurts.

It's going to be a good series for them with Oklahoma. Oklahoma is going to be rested and have all their arms loaded and ready to go. But the way Ole Miss has been playing down the stretch, it might not matter.

Q. Dave, Connor, it seemed like he flipped a switch in the postseason. What did you see out of him during this stretch? Was it just a matter of experience, or what do you think happened there?

DAVE VAN HORN: I think Connor got a little tired. He just hit the wall there about three-quarters of the way through the season and had a couple, three bad weekends. Not really bad, he just didn't throw as good as he normally does. He got hit around a little bit, and he wasn't commanding his fastball.

Teams got him. We had to get him out of the game. I think getting him out of the game early probably got him the rest he needed, and he flipped the switch there and just -- I mean, he's a good athlete. He's a competitor. Once he got the rest, I think he bounced back and just did what physically he could do, and he did it.

Q. What's your kind of wrap-up on this team, the achievements of this particular team?

DAVE VAN HORN: There's so many cliches. I don't feel like we overachieved. I feel like we had a good team, but I think we ended up where we should have ended up, which is in Omaha.

I didn't feel like we had a ton of depth position player-wise. We went with the same guys all year because that's what we had. Thank goodness nobody got hurt really. Just a team that -- I mean, they showed up every day and played. They really gave us a great effort. I told them that a lot this year.

Even when we lost or it didn't go well there in May, it's not because they didn't want to. It's not because they were done. They just didn't have a good month. It happens.

I don't know. I'm sure that I'll meet with the media back in Fayetteville in a few days, and I'll be able to give you a better answer. Right now I'm just so happy that this team got to get on that plane last Wednesday and come to Omaha.

THE MODERATOR: Dave, congratulations on the year.

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