

2023 Men's College World Series

Friday, June 16, 2023

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

Virginia Cavaliers

Coach Brian O'Connor

Griff O'Ferrall

Nick Parker

Postgame Press Conference



Florida - 6, Virginia - 5

COACH O'CONNOR: Certainly a very tough loss. I give credit to Florida. They have a really good lineup and they stayed in it and certainly put some big-time swings on the ball in the ninth inning. They're a dangerous lineup.

I thought Nick Parker did a terrific job of battling, and he was at about 90 pitches. It was time to make the change. And they did a tremendous job against our bullpen.

I have zero regret. Jake Berry has done the job for this team all year long. He's been tremendous when we've had a lead and closed games out for us. And they did a terrific job against him and got his pitch count up and executed very, very well.

So certainly a challenging road in front of us. But we'll regroup at practice tomorrow and be ready to go on Sunday and looking forward to that opportunity we have.

Q. Griff, obviously a tough way to lose. What will be the key to putting this behind you and getting ready to go Sunday?

GRIFF O'FERRALL: This team has bounced back all year long. We started in Supers after going down the first game. Just the way this team comes together and fights, it's been one of our key morals all year long. And it's something we talk about all the time.

It's just one thing about our team, we're not going to go down without a fight. I think getting back tomorrow in practice and getting our plan ready for Sunday, I think we'll be good to go.

Q. Nick, they have a tough lineup, obviously. You were very effective. What was working for you today, particularly?

NICK PARKER: Today I thought was a grind for me. They have a good offense and kind of fell behind early. But just found a way. This point of the year it's just finding a way, any way possible, keep moving forward.

Q. Griff, can you talk about what it's like facing a guy that throws 100 and what your approach is at the plate?

GRIFF O'FERRALL: He was great today. We haven't seen many guys with his stuff all year. That's what makes this point of the year so awesome, just facing the best of the best.

So we knew we had quite a challenge ahead of us going into the game. I thought we did a good job of creating some havoc. I thought he did a good job of making pitches. It was iron sharpens iron.

Q. Were you able to use the entire zone today against that offense? And do you think that's why you had as much success as you did pounding outs together?

NICK PARKER: Felt I did a good job of mixing in and out and making big pitches when I had to.

Q. Griff, Florida cut it to 4-3, and then you got the RBI triple from Harrison to make it 5-3. What was the mood among the players and what were you thinking at that point?

GRIFF O'FERRALL: Harrison Didawick has been huge for us all year, but as of late he's really put together great at-bats every single time. So seeing someone like that who is in his freshman year in this stage come up like that was awesome. Just to see the smile on his face and the team obviously rallied behind him.

Q. Griff and Nick, you had the conference out in the outfield. What was said in that conference?

GRIFF O'FERRALL: Kind of what we talked about at the beginning, just this team has fought all year long. And obviously no one wants to lose the first game. But it is what it is and we're going to ride with our guys no matter what. So basically we're not going to put blame or be down on ourselves. We're just going to get back to work.

NICK PARKER: Not ideal to lose the first one, but who cares, right? Going to come out, keep winning ballgames. That's what we're going to do.

Q. Florida had hit 129 home runs coming into the game. You kept them from doing that early in the game. How big a concern in the back of your mind was that?

COACH O'CONNOR: Certainly we're very aware of their aggressive offensive approach and their ability to hit the ball out of the ballpark. And they did a great job of that in the final three innings.

I thought Nick Parker battled. I didn't think he had his best stuff. But in the first part of the game the wind was blowing in a little bit. It was tough to get a ball out of the ballpark.

But it showed, their power showed and their approach showed the back part of the game, and they did a great job. And certainly you hit that many home runs, at some point it's going to show up, hopefully when a couple of those solo shots, other than the last one by Langford, I was hoping -- I'd rather have that than a two or three-run home run. We managed around it and were still leading by a run. But Jake Berry just couldn't finish them off.

Q. Looking back at Langford last week, didn't have a hit in the two games at South Carolina. As a coach, when you see him come up in that situation, you know how good he is, are you thinking, geez, at some point he's got to break out of this?

COACH O'CONNOR: That's a good question. I don't think about those things. I think about more execution of pitches. And he did a great job, it appears to me, on a 1-0 count that he sat on the changeup, and that's what Berry gave him.

That's the approach that I'm talking about. That's what high-quality hitters at the elite level do and you have to execute with starting to get ahead in the count and executing that pitch.

He showed right there in that at-bat how great of a player he is. And he's been a great player all year for Florida and certainly rose up at the big moment when his team needed him.

Q. You used five pitchers tonight. How do you feel about your bullpen going forward?

COACH O'CONNOR: Certainly I don't feel great about how we pitched out of our bullpen tonight. And it's been a little bit of a mixed bag all year. But the plan coming into the game is, if we had a lead in the eighth inning, was to go with Jake Berry. And that formula's worked for us a lot this year.

I don't know for sure, but I would be surprised if all year that we've lost a game putting Jake Berry in in the eighth inning or beyond with a lead. And, so, that said, when you're in this situation that we are on Sunday, we'll do whatever it takes to win that game to try to advance on to the next one.

And we have other guys that haven't been used that have done the job for us all year long. So it's going to take a collective effort by our entire group. Blanco and O'Connor didn't throw many pitches today, and we have several other guys. But it's going to start by getting a high-quality start on Sunday, whoever that is and then piecing it together.

Q. Being undefeated, non-conference play during the regular season now it's a new element being here in Omaha, what's the adjustment for you guys to minimize the innings out of the bullpen on Sunday?

COACH O'CONNOR: I don't think there's an adjustment. We're going to do what we have done all year long, and that's why Jake Berry was in the game at the end of the game. So what I think is really important that you don't change things much when you get to this point. You've got to, as Griff said, ride with the guys that got you to this point.

We won't do anything different. Certainly Jake Berry threw a lot of pitches so he won't be available on Sunday. But we've got plenty of guys that we have a lot of confidence in to finish a game.

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