

2023 Men's College World Series

Friday, June 16, 2023

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

Florida Gators

Coach Kevin O'Sullivan

Wyatt Langford

Brandon Sproat

BT Riopelle

Postgame Press Conference



your mind where you see six innings go by and it's a one-run ball game. It's not like it's 9 to 8 or something. It's a 1-0 ball game.

The wind is blowing in and the ball wasn't flying and helping us to our advantage. It was a little frustrating, but all you can do is just move on. Your best players have to play the best in the right moments to win games. And we did that tonight.

We've done it, like you said, in the past and it definitely gave us confidence. But what a tough game that was. Virginia's a fantastic opponent.

Q. How much juice did Ty's at-bats give you, for a guy that maybe didn't necessarily think he was maybe part of the game plan tonight to come in have the ABs that he did late in the game?

WYATT LANGFORD: Ty, he's put in the work all year. Like Sully said, he's probably disappointed with the amount of playing time, but he's stuck it out. And he knew his time was going to come. That's just how this game goes. We have so many guys on the bench that can perform. And he was the guy that got his number called tonight.

BRANDON SPROAT: Being a pitcher, a guy looking outside/in, I noticed Ty -- he's put his head down and grinding. Even when he's not playing he's been being one of the best teammates in the dugout, and -- being one of the best teammates in the dugout when his number is called. That swing there gave us so much momentum.

I wasn't in the lineup at that time and I mean I knew we were going to win that game. With that home run.

BT RIOPELLE: For me, Ty is a fantastic person. He loves every guy in that dugout, 1 through 9, guys off the bench. He loves the coaches and the program.

He showed it last year as a freshman. He didn't play until the Mississippi State series and came up with a backside homer and a couple hits the next day. He's proven he can do it.

Florida - 6, Virginia - 5

COACH O'SULLIVAN: It was obviously a really well-played game. We knew going into it that it was going to be a very fundamentally sound game on both sides. Virginia played really good. Didn't give us anything.

But proud of these guys, the way they hung in there. Brandon was great tonight. Neely was really good for two and a third, really efficient. Threw 30 pitches or so, 32 pitches.

But, you know, if Sproat and Neely don't do what they've done it wouldn't have given us a chance there in the ninth. And obviously we had some big at-bats by Wyatt and Ty Evans. What can you say? This guy has hung in there, he's battled. Probably a little disappointed with the amount of playing time he's had this year, but had a big double and big home run tonight.

And obviously BT had the big home run. And obviously Luke Heyman came up with a 2-0 count and stayed in the middle of the field and got the winning run in.

Special things happen this time of the year. Awfully proud of the team the way we battled.

Q. BT, I'm wondering if you were thinking in the back of your mind, we did this kind of two weeks ago in Hoover. Did you guys kind of summon that kind of energy or just the fact you know you've been able to do these things before?

BT RIOPELLE: Absolutely. But it is kind of in the back of



To piggyback on them, he's not happy that he didn't play all year, but it doesn't mean he's not excited for his teammates to do well. And whenever he gets in we're very excited for him, too. And like Wyatt said, he's the guy that got his number called today, and we're super excited for him.

Q. During the bottom of the ninth inning tying the game up, Wyatt, what were you thinking in your zone, just locked in and everything else? And also Caglionone got it, strung with utilizing the bases loaded. What happened with the winning run for you guys?

WYATT LANGFORD: Going up to the plate I was thinking the same thing I always do. I was going up there to compete and get on base and pass the torch for the next man to eventually lead us to winning the game.

Like Sproat said, after Ty's home run and even before that we all knew we were going to win that game. It's just a matter of doing my part.

Q. BT or Wyatt, what is it that keys these comebacks in the ninth inning? This is not even close to the first time this has happened. What enables this?

WYATT LANGFORD: It's hard to describe, really. It's kind of the makeup of our team. We've proved it many times throughout the year that we're able to come back in these games and we're never out of a baseball game.

BT RIOPELLE: We have a lot of good hitters that line up together in the group down the line, 1 through 9. Whenever another team has a lead and, say, we're a home team or whatnot, we have the last chance to go at it, the pressure isn't on us.

As much as we're not really out of a game but like the pressure isn't on us; we know what we can do. Shown it multiple times.

I'm very confident in that guy. And I know he's almost salivating at the mouth to get up to the plate to be able to win a game for us. So I'm super excited for him.

Q. BT, we've been talking about this, but what word comes to mind to describe this winning mentality you guys continuously bring? You talked about it on Thursday that you guys have molded this mindset of winning. What's been going on with this?

BT RIOPELLE: It's just embedded in us. It's been drilled to us or preached to us since the first day we got on campus with the group of guys that we have this year, that

we're always bringing the attack to our opponent. We don't let the opponent dictate the pace of the game or the way we play or whatnot, we dictate that.

And obviously when we lose we don't do those things. When we feel we have the most confidence in ourselves and the most success on the field is when we play the game that way. And just have a bunch of really aggressive guys on our team and I think it shows.

Q. I'm curious what you guys were seeing from Berry in the ninth inning. Was there a lot of communication in the dugout for what pitches to look for during that rally?

WYATT LANGFORD: That's one of the things I think we really do well as a ballclub. We communicate with each other whenever it comes to listen or talk about what a pitcher has or how he looks and what he's throwing.

We've done a good job all year and it's kind of shown and that's why we're here. We've been productive whenever it matters.

BT RIOPELLE: The scouting reports are awesome. Everything is available to our coaches and whatnot. But Chuck and Taylor and Sully put together a fantastic scouting reports for us so we practically know the pitcher even before he steps on the mound, even if we haven't faced him all year long or watched him.

They definitely do their due diligence and watch those guys beforehand. They're in there late at night doing that for us. And it's up to us whether we apply that knowledge in the box and use it to our advantage. And I think we did.

Q. Brandon, over 60 percent of your swings and misses came later in the outing. Did you make any alterations to your sequence as you saw those hitters more and more?

BRANDON SPROAT: The first couple of innings we knew they were coming out trying to ambush the fastball. We went out there just to see how they would approach to it. And that was their game plan.

I would say probably the third inning on kind of relied on the off-speed early. Kind of mix and match hitters with the first pitch, whether it was first-pitch fastball or first-pitch change-up.

But what was working for me was, like I said, the off-speed early and often, and kind of the put-out pitch with the change-up.

Q. BT, seven of your last nine hits have been home runs. What are you seeing at the plate right now?

BT RIOPELLE: I did not know that. I'm just getting pitches over the plate and I guess I'm not missing them. I don't know how I'm doing that, honestly. But just kind of clicking for me, I think.

All the times in my life where I've had the opportunity to do things that I'm doing right now and I didn't do them has just prepared me for what I'm doing now. It's sticking to the approach and believing in the coaches and myself and the players around me.

That gives me all the confidence in the world. It's definitely a credit to everybody around me.

Q. After Wyatt had kind of a quiet Super Regional you were still able to win that thing. Do you think in the back of your head you were, like, this is the moment that he's going to break out of this mini slump that he's in?

COACH O'SULLIVAN: It's interesting, because the first six, seven innings the wind was blowing in and I thought we had some good at-bats and really didn't have much to show for it.

Then you look up in the eighth and the flag is not moving at all. It's crazy how that happens. But it happens out here a lot. But he gets pitched tough and sometimes the game doesn't go the way you want it to go, but obviously you guys know how I feel about him. He's one of the best players we've ever had. He has a knack for rising to the occasion with a couple other guys too.

I think the home run by Ty, I think that really gave the dugout a lot of momentum. And we were down to one out and still down a run. But we knew we had Wyatt and Cags and the rest of the guys coming up behind them.

But you don't think as a coach in that situation that he's going to run into a ball; you hope he has a good at-bat and a good result. But obviously the result was huge for us at the time.

Q. You went to your closer down 4-1. What was the reasoning for that?

COACH O'SULLIVAN: That's a really interesting question. We brought in Cade who has been pitching really good for us, left on left, got the ground ball for the second out. His splits for the lead-off hitter, he's actually got better splits against right-handers than left-handers.

But it was a tough decision to make at that point. But the wind was blowing in at that time. Cade's got the knack of getting a lot of ground balls. I felt the way the wind was blowing, if he threw a quality change-up down the strike zone he might get a fly ball because the ball wasn't going anywhere.

Credit their hitter. He hit a line drive down the line. Then he goes left on left and he hangs a breaking ball on an 0-2 count.

So you kind of kick yourself a little bit. But at that point it just wasn't Cade's night. And I felt if we could keep it within three we would have a chance. You kick yourself you don't bring in Neely to face the lead-off leader because the results didn't work out. And then you had a decision to make and would it work out.

I'm sure I'll hear it from Brandon tomorrow at practice. That's fine. Sometimes you make decisions that work out right. Sometimes they don't work out right. The most important thing about Brandon's outing was he kept his pitch count down, he was very efficient. Obviously he'll be able to go on Sunday as well.

Q. Obviously this is not your first walk-off win. What makes this a good comeback team in your mind in terms of the situations, eight or ninth inning, being down --

COACH O'SULLIVAN: We had a chance to hit the ball out of the yard. One swing of the bat, you can hit a two-run or a three-run homer, feel like you can get back. Not like we had to string together three, four, five hits in an inning to score. It was really important.

Even though we gave up the running in the ninth to fall down two, like I said, Ty's home run got us within one. And obviously then Cade came up and struck out. But then I think it was a change-up that Wyatt got that he hit and obviously you guys saw the rest of the game.

When you have the ability -- it's like feast or famine out here. You feel a three-run homer could get you back in the game. But if the wind is blowing in it doesn't work to your favor. I talked to Chuck about the sixth, we were going to probably start to manufacture a run, put a hit and run and hit at some point because the wind was blowing in. Bottom line, you have to have the ability to score in different ways. If the wind is blowing in, it's really hard to get out of here. And it's crazy how the wind just changed, and it doesn't take a whole lot to feel like really big.

I think the wind was blowing in seven, eight miles an hour. All of a sudden he saw the flags, they weren't moving, felt

like, okay, if we can get a walk here and we can get back to the top of the order and get -- because every time we could flip the lineup over and get back to the top, we feel like we have a chance to score that inning. That's how it worked out tonight.

Q. The depth of this team, the ability to go to the bench and get productive at-bats, you've gotten it from Deric and now Ty tonight. How important is it at a time of year like this?

COACH O'SULLIVAN: You have to have special performances from people you don't expect. It happens all the time in any sport.

But Dale had a good at-bat and played good defense. Colby, I don't want to forget about him. He drove in the first run of the game, had a good two-strike approach. Line drive over shortstop's head.

And like I said, Ty, if you're going to have a chance to do something special at the end of the year, things like this happen. Now, we'll enjoy it tonight, but we're playing obviously a really good Oral Roberts team on Sunday night. But the goal is to try to win the first two games. Now we're in position to hopefully do that.

But you're not always going to get the best performances from your best players, so other people have to pick them up. It just worked out the way it did tonight.

Q. Four strikeouts tonight, and just felt like you guys were stinging a lot of balls. Did you feel despite the lack of run production through the first six innings that your pitch selection was eventually going to break the dam I guess?

COACH O'SULLIVAN: Their starter was really good. I was really impressed. There were a lot of pitches that were really close to the strike zone that we laid off.

We did not chase out of the zone, even though we scored one run over six like you said, or whatever it was. But our hitters did a really good job with a guy that has really good command. But we didn't chase.

And I said this the other night in a press -- I knew it would probably come down to a one-run game. That's just the way that these things work. Virginia is not going to give you anything. And we were just fortunate enough to have some really good at-bats there tonight.

Q. Two one-run games today, two ninth inning comebacks. I know you probably didn't get to see much of the Oral Roberts game, but earlier in this

ballpark's history there weren't too many comebacks like that on this stage. How does that change how you have to manage and the tenseness of these late-inning situations?

COACH O'SULLIVAN: I don't think you manage any differently. I mean, Oral Roberts had a tremendous comeback win against TCU. I watched it in the holding room with the team.

But like I said, special things happen to teams at this time of the year to put yourself in this position. And like I said, I was just told we're visitors on Sunday, but that's okay, but I think having that last at-bat, having somebody like Neely that's kind of been there and done that, he's been our closer the entire year, and you need someone like that at the end.

When we're successful, in a couple of those years, especially '17, we had Michael Byrne, who -- he can handle the moment -- and Brandon has proven over and over again that he can handle the moment.

So yeah, like I said, I'll probably hear it tomorrow at practice. I'll give them about a minute or two to get on me and tell them we've got to move on.

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