

2023 Men's College World Series

Saturday, June 17, 2023

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

Stanford Cardinal

Coach David Esquer

Carter Graham

Joey Dixon

Postgame Press Conference



Wake Forest - 3, Stanford - 2

COACH ESQUER: In line with the first two ball games, it was a good ball game with a thrilling finish. Didn't go our way this time. But I thought it was a great ball game against two really good clubs. And the level of game was really high.

And you know what? I told our team at the end, if we break it down to the smallest level, they got two guys on, they got a bunt down and a base hit. They executed in order to win that ball game. You've got to give them credit for doing that.

We had plenty of opportunities throughout the day with runners in scoring position. Could have got that same hit and widened the gap or extended the lead. And just weren't able to do that, a lot because of the good pitching that they provided.

Joey did an outstanding job getting us started, got us started for the first four. Handed it off to Drew Dowd and I guess they played a way better two and one thirds innings than we did there after the break.

So my hat's off to Wake Forest. To beat the No. 1 team in the country you'll have to play a pretty flawless game. And we kicked a couple of opportunities early in the game. But we'll come back. We'll learn from that and be ready to go next game.

Q. Joey, Wake is one of the top offenses in the country. How were you able to keep them off balance?

JOEY DIXON: I think it was just mixing early. I think they were looking fastball early. Throwing a lot of changeups, a

lot of curveballs. Just keeping them off balance. Throwing anything at any count really helped.

Q. Carter, what was that break like? Did it sort of -- I don't want to say momentum, but did it disrupt the rhythm and how hard was it to get going afterward?

CARTER GRAHAM: We obviously don't want to point the finger at any delay or any single play. We tried to keep our rhythm and momentum, stay loose. We were playing hacky sack in the locker room, trying to stay together and have a good time because that's what we're here to do.

Q. You guys have fought back from elimination games in both rounds to get to this point, what is it about this team that seems like you guys rise up when your backs are against the wall?

JOEY DIXON: I think it's just us playing together collectively, knowing we have guys to do it. It's the same game, whether it's an elimination game or not, you should still try to have fun no matter what. We have a guy tomorrow, Quinn Mathews tomorrow. I like our chances.

CARTER GRAHAM: Like Joey said, we have a really balanced team. We really believe in each other. And like Esqy said, they got the big hit tonight, but we've got guys all up and down the lineup that have been getting that hit all year, so we believe in it.

Q. Joey, you mentioned Quinn coming tomorrow, but what does it mean to you that you were trusted with the start today? Not only that, you were able to go out there and hold one of the better offenses in the country to such a low output?

JOEY DIXON: I think there was plenty of guys on our roster that could have done that. If you would have given Drew Dowd the ball in the one, I think he would have given you just as many innings or outs today. I think we have a lot of guys that can do that for sure.

Q. Carter, threw a ton of pitches in that first inning, fouled a ton off. What was your all's approach to the start?



CARTER GRAHAM: We went into this game knowing we were facing a dude, Lowder is a great pitcher and had a great year. Our goal was nameless and faceless -- we're going to get in there and get the best swing off on a pitch that's over the plate. Doesn't matter who they throw or what they can do. And that's what we did.

Q. Carter, expanding on the earlier question about elimination games, you guys went 5-0 this year. I think you won five last year. When you're in an elimination game, what's the vibe? Does it feel more urgent? Why do you think in those situations you guys produce so well?

CARTER GRAHAM: I think we do a really good job with our backs against the wall of just not forgetting that it's the same game we've been playing all year. I mean, I think a mistake in those games is to think that you have to do more or try harder and worry about failure.

I think we trust our guys up and down the lineup -- the Alberto Rioses and those guys who have been getting the big hit all year, they just come together and do it.

Q. Both of you guys have been on the rosters now for three consecutive College World Series. Carter, I know you just mentioned not trying to do anything special with this. But is there anything in particular that you guys have learned now that this is your third time in Omaha that you try and bring a little extra to the ballpark?

CARTER GRAHAM: I think that -- Esqy says it the best, we just try to stay as long as we can. I think if we can fight together and scratch a couple of elimination wins and hang here long enough, I think we can get our rhythm and get hot and really surprise a lot of people.

JOEY DIXON: I think he said it best. Just sticking to the course. Just playing the same game.

Q. Just going into this game, knowing you're going against a pitcher like that, it seemed like early on you guys were taking some early swings. Was that kind of the game plan as far as like kind of attacking before he got deep in the count?

COACH ESQUER: We wanted to be aggressive for sure and kind of use the middle of the diamond, to kind of hold that line to the middle because he's got such good off-speed stuff as well. So it would keep us on that if we were out front.

And then we got in some plus counts and got some base

runners on and just looking for that hit to kind of extend. And I think we jumped on him early. Got his pitch count up. And was able to get him out of there in five and a third, which is if we get to the pen some, who knows what could have happened if we could have extended some of the relief pitchers?

Q. With Joey's outing, saw a lot of called strikes, a lot of whiffs, not much contact even with foul balls. What do you think he was able to do today with that lineup to keep them a little bit hesitant?

COACH ESQUER: You know with that lineup there's very little margin for error. You've got to be able to tunnel your pitches and you've got a small, narrow window that you've got to put the baseball, otherwise they can hurt you.

He missed out over the plate to, I believe it was Wilken, and he made him pay for that. That was just from trying to go in the middle/away to a little bit middle/in.

I thought Joey did a really good job of spotting up not only his fastball but his breaking pitches as well because, again, you've got a small window, that if you missed out over the plate, they're a great offense and their numbers prove that.

And he did a great job just with pitch mix and keeping them off balance. His off-speed stuff was really good today. And I thought Drew came in did a nice job as well.

We held the lead going in with an out in the eighth. And they got Corona with a big hit. They got a bunt down, too, so give them credit for executing and winning that ball game.

Q. What sort of is the emotional impact of losing that way, to be up most of the game and then up through an hour and a half rain delay? In real time you guys were ahead for three hours and then to lose sort of suddenly, is that any impact to that at all jarring for your players?

COACH ESQUER: Good way to think about it, we were only behind for three or four minutes. Yeah. I wouldn't want to check with what time of game was. You're right.

Yeah, you know it hurts no matter what. You come this far and you play with your guys. And that's why I appreciate our team. When people ask why we're so good in elimination games, I think a lot has to do with the culture of on your program.

They don't want to give that jersey up. They don't want it to be the last day they spend with their teammates. I think they fight harder knowing that that's a possibility. And I

think that's kind of hats off to the brotherhood and the culture that our program has.

Q. Joey just gave up one mistake to Brock Wilken in the second inning. And nonetheless he pitched really good to keep you guys in it. What's it going to take for you guys on Monday just to eat up some innings out of Quinn Mathews out of his last 156-pitch performance?

COACH ESQUER: You know, it's obviously -- giving Quinn that extra day, we'll see what we hope he can bring us, get us into the sixth or seventh inning. And then we'll have to rustle up some magic in the back of that bullpen, which has been a little bit of a mix and match.

It very well could be Quinn's last outing. I know he'll want to give us his best. And we'll face a good lineup no matter who it is. Whether it's LSU or Tennessee, it's going to be a really good lineup and a big challenge for us.

So I'm glad that Quinn's going for us. And I'm looking forward to seeing him give us another great outing.

Q. What did you see from Sullivan with his pick-off throws? When he came in the game, he got two off first base.

COACH ESQUER: I didn't think anything special. I think we did more wrong than he did right. And one of those things, we have to learn. You make that mistake, you just learn. I was teasing the coaches: This gives us an opportunity to learn what we need to be on top of in the future. Maybe more our base running. Not in a situation either one of those -- none of them are running. It's just a secondary lead. And we should have been safe getting back. If we stuck to our fundamentals, we shouldn't have been picked off there. But in a big game with the game moving fast, sometimes you lose your fundamentals.

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