

2023 Men's College World Series

Sunday, June 18, 2023

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

Florida Gators

Coach Kevin O'Sullivan

Hurston Waldrep

Luke Heyman

Josh Rivera

Postgame Press Conference



Florida - 5, Oral Roberts - 4

COACH O'SULLIVAN: Well, obviously a well-played game came down to the last out in the ninth and started on the mound with Hurston. He was outstanding, struck out 12 over six. And offensively we hit some home runs early to get to a 5-1 lead.

And we knew Oral Roberts was going to be really difficult to deal with. They've got an older lineup, but Cade came in and shut down things for us. We're excited about being 2-0 and looking forward to playing on Wednesday.

Q. Luke, I'm curious what you were looking for in that pitch on that homer. And what does it mean to have another day particularly early on where you guys used the long ball to kind of build some offensive lead?

LUKE HEYMAN: I think we started off good with getting a couple of balls we could handle and driving them over the yard -- out of the yard, kind of setting the tone early. But that at-bat mainly, I think he got me 0-2 on two changeups and I was kind of thinking here and reacting to a changeup. I wasn't going to let a heater get by me. Luckily he threw me one over the plate that I was able to drive.

Q. Hurston how would you evaluate your stuff tonight? Obviously a very good performance.

HURSTON WALDREP: I mean, overall the end result was good. And that's all that matters. But took me a little bit to settle in. It's a big stage. And obviously a lot of feelings -- a lot of adrenaline and emotions that come with this game. So able to settle in.

Obviously didn't have the best feel for my fastball, command of my fastball. So to be able to have the three off-speed pitches and rely on those and work with B.T. really well, just to be able to control the game from there.

Q. Josh, you guys obviously are where you want to be. Just what's it like to have these close games? And as a player especially tonight with strange sequence, just take us through maybe that last inning.

JOSH RIVERA: It's very intense. Like Sully said, we knew Oral Roberts was going to be a tough opponent. They've been good all year and beaten good teams all year.

It was a very intense game, but we've got to stay together as a team. And that's something that we always talk about in the dugout, staying together as a team and trying to just move forward no matter what happens.

And that last inning was very intense. We had a couple of guys on and fortunate enough we got a ground ball that we were hoping to turn a double play. But chopped a little too high, so we were able to get the second out there at second.

We had complete faith in Cade Fisher. We knew he was coming in there to do his job. And that was just amazing for him to come in there and fill up the strike zone get that last out to Mikey.

Q. Josh, (indiscernible) you got out a little early. What was the scouting report on the pitcher, and how did you all attack it?

JOSH RIVERA: We knew that he was going to slow the ball down against us. But early on in the game he was beating us and pitches up, so everything up in the zone.

And once we got through the lineup the first time we noticed he was going back to his fastball quite often. For me at least my approach my second at-bat, I didn't want to get beat with the heater. So I took that first-pitch changeup and I was sitting dead red heater because that's what he beat me on my first at-bat for the strikeout. Luckily a got it,



caught it out front and kept it fair.

LUKE HEYMAN: Definitely we were thinking, based on what he's done all year, he kind of likes to slow the ball down, but the heater also plays a little different. As it showed early on, people were getting beat by it. I'd say like what he said, I didn't want to get beat the heater. So I was reacting to the off-speed but sitting on the heater and was able to get the heater over the plate and drive it.

Q. Hurston, how does it feel to have a catcher like B.T. be such a workhorse throughout the course of the year?

HURSTON WALDREP: It's a really big advantage that a lot of people don't understand the value of and the value in. And having a guy with so much experience and seeing what he's done over the past two years, you talk to any pitcher on the staff, any player on the staff, he manages the staff really well and manages the game really well are.

Any moment in the game he'll make sure, he'll talk with his infielders, no matter what. He'll get on you any moment. But he's also there to support you. He'll get you through the game.

I know there were a couple times this year where I didn't have my best stuff, but he was there to push me through the game.

And he's really good with call pitches. And he handles the pressure of ball games really, really well. And it's been really nice to have him behind the plate.

Q. Hurston, you said last week against South Carolina you probably had what you thought was your worst bullpen of the season. How did you feel before today? And then, second, what's really -- these last three starts for you have been pretty tremendous. Just what does it mean to do it on this stage?

HURSTON WALDREP: I think the bullpens -- a lot of starting pitchers probably say this -- but the pregame bullpen is one of those things you don't put much stock or thought in it. It's one of those things where you feel your pitches, you feel the spin and get a feel for the body -- how are you feeling that day.

But at the end of the day it's all about stepping on the mound for the first pitch of the game. And just going from there forgetting everything that's happened before that. Everything that's happened before that first pitch doesn't matter.

And so being able to step on the mound and forget that,

have a clean slate.

And I think that's what I would say has helped me through the past three starts and past couple of starts is just being able to step on the mound and throw strike one, and trust the guys behind me, trust that we're all going to have a good game.

Q. Josh, you guys get the first two. Now you're in a pretty good position, you have rest until Wednesday. What does this do confidence-wise for the team to be able to pull up these first two and get to in a good position to get to the finals?

JOSH RIVERA: Definitely builds a lot of confidence, but we can't overlook anybody we play. No matter what the outcome is of the next game who we face on Wednesday, we've got to come in with the attack mentality and try to focus on one play at a time one inning at a time.

It definitely builds a lot of confidence, but we had a lot of confidence coming into this World Series. And the biggest thing is we just can't overlook anybody because anybody can beat anybody in baseball.

And these past couple of games that have been played early on in the World Series have been kind of like thrill seekers towards the last couple innings.

Like I said, anything can happen. We've just got to come in here with a win mentality and attack whoever we play.

Q. Josh, there were a lot of weird plays, where the game kind of stopped for a second. How do you stay locked in those moments?

JOSH RIVERA: The only thing can you do in those moments is push them to the back of your mind and just focus on what's next. For instance, that inside-the-park home run, you've got everybody going crazy. And this wonderful, loud stadium, it's tough to figure out what's going on.

We made some mistakes defensively setting up that play. We've got to learn from that and move on. And just like my error, when I missed the ball and they got closer to tying the game up and stuff like that, you've got to move forward because you can't dwell on what happened in the past. If you do, bad things are just going to come rolling down.

We've just got to keep our head on a swivel and move on to the next play.

LUKE HEYMAN: I feel like you've just got to be able to move on from those. If you let that hang in the back of

your mind, it's not going to put you in the position to have success for the next couple of plays that are coming your way.

I think you've just got to be able to move forward on those because you know the ball is always going to find its way back to you. So being able to forget about that is going to put yourself in the best situation to be successful.

Q. I think the last bad start that Hurston had, I think I saw him at A&M. Since then he's been really good. From your perspective what have you seen in his progression week in, week out to get him to the level that he's at today?

COACH O'SULLIVAN: I think he's been able to make adjustments in game. You can kind of tell they were swinging early in the count. And he's had the ability to throw his curveball and his slider and a split early in the count.

I think maybe through the first half of the year his split was more of a two-strike pitch. Now he's been able to slow the ball down. And when people are swinging early in the count like they did, he's got multiple weapons he can go to.

Q. The mound-visit situation, do you have someone charting that in the dugout or how did that get kind of lost track in the eighth inning?

COACH O'SULLIVAN: We keep it in the dugout. And I had a brief conversation with the umpire before the inning. It was totally my mistake. And no one feels more terrible about it than I do.

But at the same time, it's like a player that has a bad game or gives up a run there in the ninth or something, extra innings. You've got to move from it.

But I told the team, I apologized to them at the end of the game. They just said they had my back.

And on the flip side of that, Cade comes in from Friday night and is put in a really tough position. Probably has never pitched in an environment like that or in a situation like that.

So the one positive there is, he should feel really good about himself. I know the team was fired up.

But I'm fairly hard on myself a lot. But when I wake up tomorrow morning. I'm going to get these guys ready to play on Wednesday. That's the bottom line.

Q. You used Neely in the first game tonight, how do

you feel about his arm going forward?

COACH O'SULLIVAN: Who is that?

Q. Neely, the closer.

COACH O'SULLIVAN: He's fine. We've used him in back-to-back nights before this year. But now everybody has two days off. Obviously Jack hasn't pitched yet. He didn't pitch the Supers. He should be ready to go by Wednesday, for sure, obviously.

Q. Not only as a participant, but just as a college baseball guy, how good is it for the game? This College World Series has had great finish after great finish after great finish, just how good is it for the game what's happened the last three nights?

COACH O'SULLIVAN: I think it just shows you the parity of college baseball. Every game seems to be really, really exciting. I think, obviously, LSU and Tennessee last night, it was a three-run game. Everything else seems like it's a one-run game.

I think it's great for the game. Obviously it's very exciting for the people to watch, like I said. But the eight teams are here for a reason. It's not easy to get here. Not only are you playing good teams, but really good teams are playing their best at the end of the year.

Q. You've been out here enough to know that when you win your first two it makes life easier. What would be your approach and just message to these guys the next couple of days?

COACH O'SULLIVAN: We've got to keep our edge. We haven't done it yet. So, sure, we're one game away from the finals, but we've still got to play one more game. So they've just got to stay the course and what we've done the entire year and don't take anything for granted and be ready to go on Wednesday.

Q. The home runs tonight, you guys broke the school record. You're now at 135. But just how much did that give you a jolt or lift to be able to knock their starter out in the fourth inning?

COACH O'SULLIVAN: You would like at some point maybe get couple guys on, hit a three-run homer. Solo ones. But certainly our team is built different this year than maybe it was some other years.

We've been fortunate, to where the wind on Friday night, the last three innings, it died down and tonight the wind was in our favor as well.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

We're prepared if we've got to change the way we score runs and play more hit-and-run and run the bases a little more aggressively, that type of thing, to manufacture runs, we do have the ability to do that, too.

Q. Just talk about Cade Fisher, he goes out there a little bit quicker to get ready on the mound than he's used to usually doing in the bullpen, and a tense situation there in the ninth, just the job that he did as a freshman, just pressure cooker situation?

COACH O'SULLIVAN: I think that's the one silver lining in that whole thing. I mean, I'm sure he's never pitched in an environment like that or in a situation like that. And coming back from Friday night's outing and him to be able to do that I think speaks volumes to his maturity, his competitive spirit; and like I said, he needed to throw the ball across the plate and he did. Like I said, if there's one positive thing that came out of my mistake was Cade being able to get the last four of our outs.

Q. Back to Hurston for a minute. He didn't want to talk about his stuff too much. But to do what he's done in these three starts in this tournament on this stage, you've been around the game, you know good pitching, what's this say about this guy?

COACH O'SULLIVAN: Well, you can't get to this spot without having Sproat and Waldrep and now Cags has to follow up on Wednesday and we have a guy to the back end of Neely.

And I mean, when we've been in this position and we've won the first two, or we've gotten to the finals, the starting pitching has been really good, and both Brandon and Hurston have been just outstanding.

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