

2023 Men's College World Series

Wednesday, June 21, 2023

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

Florida Gators

Coach Kevin O'Sullivan

Jac Caglianone

Cade Kurland

Josh Rivera

Postgame Press Conference

Florida - 3, TCU - 2

COACH O'SULLIVAN: First of all, want to congratulate TCU on an unbelievable season. Put a freshman out there, biggest game of his life. And catcher's a freshman, and the big lefty they put in, Abeldt, is a freshman.

They couldn't have asked more from their young players and all of their players. To get to this point is an unbelievable accomplishment and I know they're disappointed. But they certainly belong here and I need to congratulate them on a great year.

As far as the game today, Jac was really good. (Indiscernible) pitchers as we need to, and he'll probably say otherwise, but at the end of the day he bent but didn't break if that makes any sense.

He made some big pitches. And I think Ryan Slater coming in and recording five outs is huge. We didn't have to go to Cade as early as we possibly wanted to. And Brandon did his thing at the end.

Excited to be moving on. Obviously Cade's hit in the 6 hole was huge, put us ahead. Really pleased with how Brandon bounced back from the eighth. And obviously Josh's two-run home to put us on the board was really good for the momentum. Played really good defense. And just look forward to getting started again on Saturday.

Q. You've hit a lot of balls on the button at people. Did you get a sense you were due, or what was your mindset in the ninth inning with that at-bat?



CADE KURLAND: A lot of times in baseball things may not go your way, but I think baseball always has a way to come back around. It's really important to stay in the moment for when you do get the opportunity. And that's why, he got me 0-2 quick, and I just knew he wasn't going to get me out. I wasn't going to go down.

Q. Josh, can you talk about the home run? What was going through your mind once you hit it out of the park?

JOSH RIVERA: Yeah, got into the at-bat, we knew he had a good fastball that played well up in the zone and he could command his off speed pretty well.

I wasn't really looking for anything specific. But I was just trying downtown for the heater and he came first pitch slider. And I didn't let that take me away from my approach. I stayed on the fastball and luckily I saw it pop out of his hand and got a hanging slider that I could put a good swing on.

It was huge for our momentum definitely to get us up early in the game. And I just think it was a very big moment for my team. So it was special.

Q. (Indiscernible) Josh, runner on second, you placed that ball in the gap. You hadn't been sending runners on kind of those in-between balls there, but they sent theirs. How did that sequence play out in your mind once you got the ball on the relay?

JOSH RIVERA: It was an aggressive move on their part. And that's sometimes what teams do, good teams do to try to steal a run, especially with what happened the other night with Oral Roberts when I got caught sleeping.

They sent it to right field and the right field got it in as quick as possible. As soon as I caught it I kept my head on a swivel, turned around towards home plate immediately. And luckily I had enough time to set my feet to make a good throw home.

It was a tremendous tag by B.T., and it was just a great opportunity for us to get an out and not allow them to tie



the game.

Q. Jac, how did you feel on the mound today with your built-in composure alongside your mechanics today? And also Michael Robertson's game-winning catch at the wall to help you guys punch a ticket for the first time since 2017 in the College World Series final.

JAC CAGLIANONE: I felt good out there, honestly. I obviously didn't have my best stuff today, but like Coach said, bend but don't break.

But Mikey's catch was awesome. That ball off the bat, I'm sure everybody thought it had a chance to go out. And seeing him not be afraid of the wall was huge.

Q. Speak to the defense overall. Your throw, obviously Mike's catch in the outfield, the (indiscernible) call at third base. How important was it to make those plays and to get the lead?

JAC CAGLIANONE: Obviously the double play, that was huge. And again saw Richardson, Josh and Cade doing what they do best. Making it quick and making it easy helping me out in tough spots. That's the way this team has played -- everybody has each other's backs. And that's how we have gotten to this point.

CADE KURLAND: Our defense has been really solid. And I give credit to our bullpen, too, for keeping us in games the whole time we've been here too.

JOSH RIVERA: Basically to piggyback off them, like Cade said, our bullpen has done a tremendous job of letting us work, especially with our starters. They've done a tremendous job of trusting their defense.

And our defense has played a great factor in where we are today. And it's just huge for us to be able to make the routine plays and also make a spectacular play whenever it's needed, with Colby Halter making a tremendous diving catch and Mikey running down a ball that was hit really well.

It's important for us and it's kind of a point of emphasis as a team. You just go out there and make all the plays we can and just try to help our pitchers out as best we can.

Q. The running game is a big part of TCU's offense, but it just seemed like every time they got on base you guys, for whatever reason, holds them well and not let them get any advantages there. How do you think you shut down the running game today so well?

COACH O'SULLIVAN: That's one of the parts of the game

that Jac has worked on extremely hard is holding runners at first. He's a lot quicker at the plate than he was the first half of the year.

He's worked hard on his pick-off move. We knew they like to run the vault steal, and we knew that. So we got a different pick for that. But overall our pitchers just did a really nice job today.

Q. How much was this result a product of what you and your staff had to do in terms of building the pitching staff, where Jac is out after a four and a third yet you're able to stack bullpen guys one after another and not feel overly stressed in that part of the game?

COACH O'SULLIVAN: I don't know if you could say "not overly stressed." It's a one-run game.

But it takes -- I talked earlier -- it takes a collective group to get this point. Like Michael hasn't played a lot, makes a great catch in center field. Ty has gotten hot for us down the stretch. Colby Halter was out of the lineup for some time and now he's back in the lineup.

It really does take a collective group. And we knew the pitching was a work in progress when we started things, especially the bullpen side of things. That shows you kind of where we are at with our bullpen.

Slater comes in and gets five outs where the other night he didn't have the results we wanted, but he was able to move on. And having somebody like Neely at the back end is huge. Kind of like '17; we had the same situation where we had Michael Burns.

It takes a collective group. It's not easy to get to the World Series, number one, but number two, to play for the national championship.

Q. What does it mean to be back in the College World Series? This is the fourth time, second time for you. And anything you learned about the first series, final series that you think of this one coming up this weekend?

COACH O'SULLIVAN: You learn a lot from all of them. 2011, we played South Carolina. Had the bases loaded, nobody out in the ninth and didn't score. Seemed like yesterday.

And in '17 we lost this game, had to come back with Alex Faedo, as you remember, in the second game to get to the final series. And we got a great performance by Brady Singer. And obviously Tyler Dawson came up huge in the second game.



It's not easy to get to this point. It's just not. I know I overstate it and say it over and over, but we just played three one-run games and they're all nail biters down to the end.

There's a lot of things that have to go right. This team is different than the '17 team in a lot of ways, but in the most important ways for me, very similar. Starting pitching in '17 was outstanding. I feel like our starting pitching is pitching the best they have all year.

We had Michael Burns at the end. Now we have Brandon Neely at the end. I don't think we made an error in '17 in five or six games that we played. And we're playing really good defense right now, knock on wood.

There's some similarities, but like I said, just excited for the guys, our staff, everybody that's involved. Like I said, it takes a whole group of people to get to this point, not just the players or coaches. There's a lot of people behind the scenes from people on our staff to the managers. That staff is cleaning uniforms until 2:00 in the morning. So it's just a really good feeling for having those guys assist.

Q. Would you mind replaying your monologue for us after the bat with Taylor, two outs in the ninth?

COACH O'SULLIVAN: He 0-2, called an up fastball. Obviously didn't get it up enough. Obviously I thought it had a chance, even on a bad day like today.

Maybe the camera got me at the final out. I think I put both of my arms over the rail and just kind of laid there for 15 seconds. I couldn't believe it. It was a typical way to end the ball game the way things have gone. But Michael made a great play. Good for him.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports