

# 2023 Men's College World Series

Monday, June 26, 2023

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

**Florida Gators**

**Coach Kevin O'Sullivan**

**Wyatt Langford**

**BT Riopelle**

**Josh Rivera**

Postgame Press Conference



LSU - 18, Florida - 4

COACH O'SULLIVAN: Congratulations to LSU. They certainly earned it today. A really good team that played one of their best games all year at the right time. And tip your cap to them.

Offensively, we didn't really have an answer for them on the mound today.

I think these last three games, you know, we didn't get as much as we probably needed to out of our starters. We put a little bit too much pressure on our bullpen early in games, and we were probably playing with fire the last couple of games. And obviously it got to us today.

So we had a great season. One game is not going to define the hard work and all the accolades that our team has gotten, both as a team, as individuals. Certainly right now it's very disappointing, but it's certainly not going to take away from the accomplishments that these guys to my left and everybody else that's in the locker room right now.

It's a hard pill to swallow right now, but glad we had an opportunity to come back, play for a national championship. And I would expect us to be in the same spot next year.

**Q. BT, Jac in the first inning struck out the final two. Seemed like he was throwing the ball really hard in a really good groove. What changed in the second inning in your mind? Did you try to get him dialed back in in visits? What unraveled for him in the second there?**

BT RIOPELLE: I don't know. It was a really our day all around. I think Sully hit on that. It just wasn't our day.

**Q. Josh and BT, just given that you both had opportunities after the last season to move on and do something else but decided to come back, what does this run and making it back here and putting Florida back in this spot meant to you both?**

JOSH RIVERA: It's meant the world. I thank the Lord Jesus Christ for allowing me and Sully for allowing me to come back. It's meant the world to make this a memorable run. And yeah, I mean, we worked hard all offseason. We worked our butts off all year during the season.

And it's nothing short but a blessing. And just to be here and compete for a national championship, and I wouldn't choose anybody else to go to war with. They're my brothers. It's a tough pill to swallow, but it's nothing but a blessing, for sure.

BT RIOPELLE: Yeah, it was the easiest decision in my life to come back here last year. I mean, forever indebted to this program, coaches, players. It was seriously like a no-brainer. Honestly, it's been the best years of my life and very grateful.

**Q. Wyatt, this is also your last time with this team. Just what did this year mean to you and what's going through your mind?**

WYATT LANGFORD: Obviously going through my mind right now, I'm pretty disappointed. But I mean I'm just thankful to be here. I'm thankful to have this opportunity and just to be able to play with these guys.

**Q. The foundation you guys laid, it was five years since you guys got back to the College World Series. You guys make a deep run. What do you think this is going to do for the future of the program?**

JOSH RIVERA: This is definitely going to inspire the next team to work harder than we did and especially just try to get back here next year. I have no doubt in my mind, Sully

and the rest of the coaching staff are going to bring in a good group of guys.

They're going to be just as talented, if not more talented than we were this year. It's just a testimony to how hard they work, how hard we worked this year with our strength coach and all the coaches all around. And how we took it upon ourselves individually to come in day in and day out and give it our all.

They'll learn a lot from that, especially the guys coming back. Those guys will push the freshmen and all the other younger guys to be right back in this position next year.

BT RIOPELLE: I think one thing that sticks out in my mind is Chuck always talks about how he's practically just a gatekeeper as a coach of this program. And it's really this program's really in the players' hands.

And when you move on 10 years, you come back, it's like, do you want to see the players play as hard as you did and play the game the right way and play for the right reasons and with the right people, it's like -- so when you talk about getting a program back on track, I know when I first got here, the program wasn't talked about very highly. It was in a bad place.

And I think one of the things I'm most proud about is I think this program is back to where it needs to be, not only competing for championships, but it's made up of great people. It's made up of family men. It's made up of people that truly care about each other and play for something bigger than themselves.

Number one, being Jesus Christ, I think, and then number two being the Florida Gators. And three is the name on the back.

I think really everybody on this team has bought into that. And anybody else that comes into this program now, I think they're going to have a pretty good understanding of what they need to play for the they want to wear the F on the chest.

WYATT LANGFORD: BT hit the nail on the head. I think the older guys have left a good foundation for the younger guys. And just having the experience for those guys and knowing what to expect whenever a lot of us are gone.

**Q. Wyatt, on that note, what did those guys to your left -- and Brandon -- coming back this year, what did that do to the clubhouse and the leadership that they provided for you and the younger players just this season?**

WYATT LANGFORD: Yeah, that meant the world to all of us. Having those fourth-year guys back that we weren't sure if they were going to come back, that meant everything to me. And I know it meant a lot to the other guys.

Just having these guys and being able to play beside them meant the world to me.

**Q. Coach, I guess a question similar to BT just about Jac's first inning, comes in, strikes out two. Looks like he's in a really good place. What did you see in terms of him maybe unraveling in the second or what transpired there in the inning?**

COACH O'SULLIVAN: I don't know. His bullpen was really good before the game. I thought our team was in a really good place. I thought BP was good. And that was good. They were loose.

Put two on the board the bottom half of the first. Wyatt, again, hits another home run. I thought the dugout was electric. And then all of a sudden, you know, we had four walks and I think two hit-by pitches in the first two and two-thirds innings. And then we had to go to the pen earlier than we wanted to.

Honestly, I think after his first I thought he was going to be dialed in. Don't really have an answer other than we lost control of the strike zone.

If you look at the last three games we played here, we may not have gotten as much out of our starters that we probably needed to, quite honestly. We had to go to our pen in the fifth, in the third, and now today the second.

When you start using the same pitchers in the multiple games in the same weekend, so to speak, a three-game series, you kind of get exposed a little bit. And I think we probably flirted with a little bit of fire with that.

And knowing that today, if that did happen where Jac kind of lost control of the strike zone and we had to go to the pen early, that was probably not going to be in our best interests, quite honestly.

So there was a lot of things that factor into it. But I just think we just didn't command the ball as well as we should have or could have.

**Q. The guys who were up there up with you, what did their effort mean to you this year, especially the guys who chose to come back and could have easily gone professional last year?**

COACH O'SULLIVAN: There's some other guys that maybe had an opportunity to be up here too. But each one of them has their own story, right? Wyatt had four at-bats his freshman year. He's turned himself, in my opinion -- you could flip a coin between him and Dylan Crews. That's my honest opinion. I think they're both tremendous players. They're going to have great careers moving forward.

You've got a guy like BT who was one of the very few transfer portal guys we've had. He's evolved into one of the best leaders, human beings, I know.

You guys all know his story that he's going to move on. And this was his last game. And that's very emotional for him.

And you've got a guy like Josh who's been in our program for four years. You see him develop not only as a baseball player. You could talk about the hitting and the defense, but the maturity level.

So each one of them have their own stories. So I may have a little different perspective. I'm just as disappointed as anybody. But this will sting, obviously, when you're a competitor. But one game is not going to define the success we had in the season. That's the bottom line.

**Q. Just to go on this journey with this group, you kind of hit on it just there, but to be back here because of them, what does that mean to you?**

COACH O'SULLIVAN: Well, for me personally, of course you love coming out here, you know. But it's really about the players and the staff. And I've been here enough; I know how special this place is and how hard it is to get here.

A lot of these guys, this is the first time -- actually all of them, first time they've been here. Now they've at least got a taste of it.

But it's just hard to get here. I mean, you go back, you look at like the Regionals and how intense that was at home. We lost. We had to beat Texas Tech. And we beat UConn. And then we play an SEC team that was playing really good and they finally got healthy at the end, in South Carolina, and it was electric at home.

And you play Virginia. We've got to come from behind. Played three one-run games. We lose a tough one Saturday late. Then obviously we had the game yesterday and then today just got away from us.

So, yeah, it's been quite the journey. And I'm confident,

with the players we've got coming back and the new players we've got coming in, that we'll have an opportunity to come back out next year.

**Q. Can you sum up Ty's week? Set the record for most home runs in the CWS. Just felt like every time there was a big moment, he was the one making the swing.**

COACH O'SULLIVAN: It's one of those stories, it will be told next year. There will be somebody else that starts the season as a starter that kind of struggles for whatever reason. And you just tell them to stay the course, keep working hard, keep being a good teammate. And when your opportunity comes again you'll be ready for it.

That is a really a great example of what happened with Ty. And it's, it's easy to tell the story, but when you've got somebody on your team the other players have seen, now they can see firsthand what you're trying to tell them.

**Q. We asked the players just about the foundation that they maybe have set for next year and how this sets up for you guys. What would you say about that?**

COACH O'SULLIVAN: Yeah, anytime you come out to a World Series and have the run we had the foundation is set. I kind of struggle with the program was in a tough spot or whatever. It's very hard to do this every year. So we go on the run for four years, from '15 through '18, and then obviously '19 was a different year because we were younger.

And then in '20, that was taken away from us because of COVID. And we're 16-1. And then last year it really started to pick up speed again.

So it was really '19 was the year we weren't as good as we wanted to be. Because '20 we were but the season was shortened.

Last year we hosted a Regional when we were 6-12 in the league and we get going again. And this year is obviously a different year.

But these guys have certainly got us back to where we need to be. And quite honestly, the expectations are to get to Omaha and play for a national championship.

I personally love that challenge. And our players do too. That's just the culture that we have.

**Q. Just your thoughts on the fans that came out here and the way that the fans have kind of embraced not only these guys but the whole team this year?**

COACH O'SULLIVAN: You're talking about Florida fans?  
Oh yeah, it was great. It was great. I'll never forget  
yesterday after the game, when they started playing Tom  
Petty. It was really cool. I actually came out and took a  
video of it. But to be part of that was awesome.

I mean, it's not easy. I mean, the unknown if you're going  
to get here and all of a sudden you've got to make plans at  
the last second, flights and hotels. And so I do appreciate  
all the fans that came out. It's not only time-consuming but  
it costs a lot of money to come out here, too.

But we certainly appreciate all the fans that came out and  
supported us back at home as well.

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