

2024 Men's College World Series

Monday, June 17, 2024
Omaha, Nebraska, USA

Florida Gators

Coach Kevin O'Sullivan

Jac Caglianone

Brandon Neely

Tyler Shelnut

Postgame Press Conference



Florida - 5, North Carolina State - 4

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: Another well-played game, obviously, by both teams. Another one-run game. I guess we broke the curse of the walk-off.

Just proud of our team's resiliency today. Obviously everybody knows when you get in the elimination brackets it's about emotion and keeping your energy going and we did that today.

Congrats to NC State and their season. Elliott and I have been really close for a long time. I know how difficult it is when this thing comes to an end, but congratulations to NC State as well.

Q. Obviously continue a historic Matt LaPorta and your name in the record books again for the Gators?

JAC CAGLIANONE: It's a great feeling. Mr. LaPorta has reached out countless times throughout the year. He's here with his kids and family, watching that.

It was a special moment for sure. But at the end of the day I was too caught up in trying to win keep staying here, surviving and advancing.

Q. Jac, do you think this is the last time you get to take the mound? And how difficult was it to come out and still be able to deliver on the bat?

JAC CAGLIANONE: Definitely didn't have my best stuff today. But I know I still had opportunities at the plate to step up for my team. I didn't really put that into

perspective. Hopefully it's not. But I just knew that I had opportunities at the plate and I wanted to take full advantage of them.

Q. Is it a physical thing, injury?

JAC CAGLIANONE: No.

Q. Brandon, this stretch of pitching in the postseason has been remarkable. Has a switch flipped for you? What's the biggest difference since postseason play started for you?

BRANDON NEELY: It really comes down to team effort. Everyone stepping together, stepping up this postseason. And me having one of the best defenses behind me. And being able to attack hitters and let my defense work. And knowing they'll pick me up if I don't do the best.

It's definitely beneficial having a good defense behind me. Just how we're playing together as a team is what it comes down to.

Q. Jac, Fritton struck you out in the first at-bat, and then he got ahead 0-1. What were you looking for there, and how did you get a good swing on it, do you think?

JAC CAGLIANONE: Saw three heaters my first AB. It was just a little late. Second AB, watched one. Just knew it was going to come back to it. And was just on time for it that time.

Q. Tyler, could you talk about your home run and hitting one out of here in this ballpark in this tournament and what that means to you?

TYLER SHELNUK: Obviously it's a lot of fun to hit a home run here in Omaha, but biggest thing it helped us win that game. That's a really good team, and they play hard. We play hard. We're at a point where we're playing for our season. When the season is on the line you've got to have your best at-bats.

I knew his change-up was his best pitch. So just really



trying to see the fastball as deep as I could, give me time to recognize it. And I was able to and put a good swing on it.

Q. The bats weren't as fluid as usual for the team as a whole today. Did you just feel, when you took to the plate what was your mindset trying to get the team a spark with that solo shot?

TYLER SHELNUT: To be honest there's never a mindset that I'm trying to hit a solo home run because it can take a bloop and another infield single or something to get things rolling but. It's just about having good at-bats in the right places and seeing good pitches to hit, putting good swings on the ball and trying to get things rolling.

If it's a home run, it's a home run. If it's a single, it's a single. I was just able to get something good to hit and hit it in the air.

Q. Sully, you've talked about this team being able to be resilient. Can you talk about just their no-quit mentality in these close games down the stretch in the season a little bit?

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: I think the obvious thing is, I've said this before, we've been playing seems like for our lives like the last month of the season, going back to South Florida, a mid-week game. We were fighting the SEC record and we were fighting the overall to get over .500.

So I think that put us in a pretty tough position. And it probably helped our team to get mentally tougher, to be quite honest with you.

Q. Jac, first starting pitcher to hit a home run in the College World Series since Tim Hudson did it in 1997 with Auburn. What's it mean to be in elite company like that and just helping your own cause out there in the top of the second inning?

JAC CAGLIANONE: I didn't even know that, to be honest with you. That's pretty cool. Definitely something I don't take for granted at all. That's sweet.

Q. What is there about this program that you guys have such an extraordinary record in elimination games going back this season, last season?

JAC CAGLIANONE: I mean, when you commit here, whether that be out of the portal or out of high school, you know what the standard is here. The end goal is to be here and to be the last team standing. Growing up watching Florida, every time I looked, it seemed like they were here.

So kind of the way Sully has built this culture and this program to where it's at now is probably the biggest drawing factor to everyone who wants to come here and everyone who is here.

It's nothing that we players kind of take for granted. We know what standards we're held to and how we need to play. And thankfully we're doing it at the right time in the postseason.

TYLER SHELNUT: I think Jac nailed it. It's the standard around here, and it's our responsibility to uphold that standard, to play winning baseball and to get here to Omaha and be the last team standing.

Anytime we're in a spot with our backs against the wall we've played our best baseball, hands down, without a doubt. I think knowing that we have confidence in ourselves going into these games, there's never a moment where we panic or feel that pressure. We know we're going to play our best when our backs are against the wall.

Q. The decision to pull Jac after one inning, what went into it and what did it say about Cade giving you the length to get into the sixth inning as well?

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: It was pretty obvious he didn't have his best stuff after the first. And honestly he battled the last week against Clemson without his best stuff.

And I could just tell there's a different look in his eyes a little bit. And I didn't want to push him today because I knew we were going to -- didn't look like it was going to be an offensive day because of the wind. And we had Cade fresh, and that's what we decided to do.

Q. Going into this one, Coach Avent talked about how you guys are great friends off the field and it goes out the window when you're playing against each other. Now that this game is in the books, could you talk about (indiscernible) what it means for him and the Wolfpack program to get back to Omaha?

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: Elliott's done this for a really long time. He's built their program into -- they're in the postseason every year and got to the World Series a couple of years ago.

But he and his staff do a terrific job, a terrific job. And you're right, me and Elliott go back a long ways. He's a dear friend of mine, and I was really glad to see him out here. I haven't seen him in a while.

Q. In the Texas A&M game it's a slow start for you



guys offensively. Could you talk about how important it was for you guys to jump on their starting pitcher and get four runs in the second inning?

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: That was pretty much the only message other than to check the wind throughout the game, the outfielders. It seemed to change two or three times during BP.

In elimination games, there's a lot riding on it. One team is going to move on and play the next day. And one team's season is going to end. That's the only thing -- I said to the team it would be nice to get out to a lead and get a little bit more comfortable. And that obviously Jac's home run did that for us.

Q. Historically, you guys haven't been one of the last couple of teams into the tournament. So what has been the biggest difference or just a big difference for this team rather than or compared to the other teams that you've taken to Omaha?

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: I think every team is different. You're right, usually we're playing at home in the postseason and we're in the Regionals and Super Regionals, that type of thing. So this one is a little bit different.

But when it's all said and done it will be one I'll reflect back on and feel really proud about. And we'll be in this position again at some point, and we'll struggle -- hopefully not for another 17 years.

But it's a great learning experience for everybody involved, even myself, to have to go through this for the first time.

So really proud of our team the way they battled. And when you look back at it, to have to go on the road win two out of three at Georgia that's where it started. And the guys have really fed off each other and continued to stay in the fight and here we are.

Q. Another clutch performance from Brandon tonight. What do you think gives him the confidence to succeed in these high-pressure situations during the season?

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: It takes a different person to close out games. And they're hard to find at this level, even at the big league level. But for whatever reason, he really takes to that role.

And I think tonight's win was -- it had to be in everybody's mind that there's been, what, three walk-offs out of the four games or whatever it's been.

So I'm sure that was probably somewhere in everybody's mind watching the game. But when he went out there and attacked, got the lead-off hitter in the 2-hole and then quickly got 0-2 on their 3-hole hitter, who hit the home run early in the game, I think says a lot about his mentality.

And you look at his pitch count, threw 23 pitches on Saturday but feels like he threw 50 because he was so efficient. Tonight I think it was 43 pitches or so in three innings. But he's so efficient that you don't realize how low his pitch count has been, but he's been just outstanding for us. And those types of pitchers are really hard to find. You have to have stuff and have you to have the mentality.

Q. How do you see your pitching setting up for tomorrow?

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: Of course, I'm sure we're probably going to start Pierce. That's going to be the message tomorrow. We're going to need some help. We can't afford, like today Cade helped us. We needed a performance like that. And it wasn't perfect but he gave us some innings. The same thing is going to be said tomorrow.

We're going to need some guys that haven't pitched go out there get three or six outs for us because we can't keep going to Brandon in the seventh inning, obviously.

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