

# 2024 Men's College World Series

Wednesday, June 19, 2024

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

**Florida Gators**

**Coach Kevin O'Sullivan**

**Jac Caglianone**

**Pierce Coppola**

**Brody Donay**

Postgame Press Conference



Florida - 15, Kentucky - 4

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: Want to congratulate Nick and his team for getting to Omaha for the first time. I know how difficult this process is. And for Nick to be able to do this for the first time in school history, they have tremendous amount of things that they should be proud of.

I'm just happy for them that they've gotten to this point for the first time. Like I said, it's not easy.

As far as the game today, our team, obviously we got off to a quick start. I think we scored seven in the first and Jac got it going with a single in right center field. And we strung together a bunch of good at-bats there in the first.

I thought this is the best Pierce has thrown all year long. His stuff looked really crisp. Maybe him not throwing in the Supers, giving him a little time off, probably helped.

He had the best start he's had all year. And obviously the two guys behind him kept their pitch counts down so if need be we would obviously have them in the cart tonight as well.

We're looking forward to playing the opportunity to play Texas A&M again. And we'll get off our feet for a couple of hours and be right back at it.

**Q. Jac, first of all, congrats, record-breaking home run today. Obviously that's a big deal. Just after the ball left your bat on that home run, just what moment do you take, whether on the field or in the dugout (indiscernible)? What moment did it hit you that you**

**had just become the all time home run hitters?**

JAC CAGLIANONE: In the dugout. Chuck gave me a hug, congratulated me, and Sully (lost audio) and stuff. And all the teammates followed. It kind of hit me there. It was really cool. In the moment I was just trying to help my team add more runs to the win.

**Q. In your last meeting with Kentucky, you mentioned that you were a bit frustrated with some of the so-called mind games that they played in the dugout. Just bearing that in mind did that add any extra motivation today to bring it harder than ever before, for lack of a better word?**

JAC CAGLIANONE: No extra motivation. They beat us at home in the weekend series. We knew we had to kind of get some sort of revenge, I guess. There's no better opportunity to do it than on this stage. All the guys were pretty pumped up about it.

**Q. Coach always has gone back to the Georgia series to kind of where this run has started. Any other specific moment, game that you kind of realized that this is clicking and this could be a special run?**

JAC CAGLIANONE: Probably after we lost that one game at Oklahoma State. We knew there were no second chances after that.

That was probably when everybody kind of bared down and knew what we had to do just to keep our season alive and get us where we are now.

PIERCE COPPOLA: I mean, I think after the first game at Georgia that we lost, we just came together and started picking each other up better. One guy followed another. Someone makes a mistake, the next guy comes in and picks him up. That's what we've been working with, and it's been going good so far.

BRODY DONAY: Basically when we lost our first game to Oklahoma State and then that following game, our backs were up against the wall again, and we just knew, like Jac said, we had no second chance.



**Q. Pierce, being staked to the early lead, pitchers have a different way of handling that. How did you channel in and continue to execute your game plan with that? And what was your mindset like when you were up 7-1?**

PIERCE COPPOLA: Just throw strikes, get ahead of the counts and don't fall behind. When you fall behind, it's easier to hit. I just kept throwing strikes and hopefully they didn't hit the ball out of the park a lot.

**Q. Pierce, career high in innings pitched, strikeouts and total pitches. What does it mean to you to be able to pitch on this stage and perform the way you did after your long journey? And what was working for you today?**

PIERCE COPPOLA: I mean, it means a lot. I told, Cop (phonetic) told me, what took you so long to get your first win. It's been a long journey.

But today my fastball felt good off the hand. I was able to go in and out with it and just be able to draw my slider in whenever I needed to. It's hard to hit when you've got a couple of pitches working. I just kept going with that.

**Q. Brody, on that grand slam, were you looking for anything specific, pitch coming out of the hand? What was your mindset going through that at-bat with the bases loaded?**

BRODY DONAY: Going up to that at-bat in a big situation right there you've just kind of gotta go in and do something for your team, whether that's put the ball in play or draw a walk or anything there. I tried to get a swing off early. And obviously a great thing happened.

**Q. Jac, what was it like hitting lead-off for, I believe, the first time in your career? Did you talk with the coaches about it and confer about it? And just your comfort level there and the decision there to have you bat lead-off?**

JAC CAGLIANONE: I had an idea given the track record of the last time we played Kentucky. Sully called me last night. I kind of knew where it was going. I was all in on it.

Swiped a bag showed off the wheels, I was kind of the lead-off guy that everybody wanted me to be. I kind of embraced the role today.

**Q. What's it like being a part of this team? All of the answers that you guys have given, they've been humble and unselfish. There's records being broken,**

**individual pitching performances. It all circles back to the team. What's it like being a part of a team like that?**

JAC CAGLIANONE: Yeah, I mean, it's everything. You know, I talked about it a little while ago. It's why you come to Florida. You have a great group of guys. You know there's talent top to bottom on the roster.

And honestly, like the biggest thing is just playing for each other was kind of our motto and what we've been running with this postseason, despite all the ups and downs of the regular season. None of that matters now. And now it just kind of falls, next game, just leads into that.

PIERCE COPPOLA: I think it's pretty easy to be humble when you've got, like, the best player in the country on your team that's very humble. He keeps everybody in check, I guess.

BRODY DONAY: I mean, when we play for this team, everyone's committed to the same goal and wanting to win. And everybody coming out and competing their butts off just means a lot. And kind of shows what we all want at the end of the day.

**Q. What went into the decision on the lineup changes this morning? Seemed to pay off. But what were the coaching staff thinking about during the day and formulating the plan going into the Kentucky game?**

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: It was a couple things. Number one, we haven't been real productive the first two games offensively. That's the first thing.

But the second thing, you know, they keep walking Jac. So it's like at least maybe for one at-bat they won't be able to do it when he starts the game hitting lead-off. It certainly worked its way out that way by scoring seven.

I think Ashton had been struggling a little bit in the 3 hole. This is his first time starting for us over the last few weeks. And obviously this is the biggest stage in college baseball.

Just got to move stuff around. I felt Shelnut was seeing the ball as good as anybody. And sometimes you make lineup changes and decisions like this and they work out and sometimes they don't.

But I felt we were at a point where we had to do something different because what we had going just for the first two games was not very productive, honestly.

**Q. What is in this team's makeup that allows them to play so freely, almost play better, when their backs are**



## **so far against the wall?**

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: I think we've got some really good leadership. I do. I think we've got some really good stories. Obviously just the guys that are sitting here, Jac's story, and how he's handled this year. Pierce, the adversity he's gone through for two years to get back to where he's now able to pitch. The Ashton Wilson story. The Brandon Neely story, how he was in the pen, started and then back in the pen. I just think there's some really neat stories on our team that have really brought this team together.

The whole goal is to play your best at the end of the year. And we've been fortunate enough to have been able to do that.

Let's face it, we were battle tested throughout the year. Our schedule was the hardest schedule in the country, and we got through it. And we had to get through the Georgia series, like we keep talking about, we had to win the series.

And then I think that Oklahoma State series, when we lost that Saturday night game, when we win those next three games, I think that was a huge turning point for us.

## **Q. For perspective, Jac came here as more of a pitcher almost -- seemed like he had a lot of room to work with. Could you talk about today compared to the guy who got here as a hitter?**

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: He was scouted more as a pitcher, and you don't see very many high school pitchers that can throw 94, 95 from the left side.

We really didn't know what we had with him offensively or what he was going to turn out to be. We did recruit him as a two-way. But I didn't even realize the record that he broke today until they just started talking about it. I would have gave him a hug, too.

But he's an unbelievable athlete. And I think that the thing that really sticks out to me is everything he does and says and the answers he gives is all genuine. That's who he is.

And, like I said, obviously we're all extremely happy for him with how he's performed this year. But this stuff that he says and to flex all the attention towards his teammates is what I'm most proud about.

## **Q. You're going to play Texas A&M for a fifth time. Not many teams do that during the year. So anything different you're telling your guys? You have to beat them twice. Anything different you're telling them?**

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: Hu-huh, no, we'll be ready to play, and I know our players are excited they've got another chance to play another game. We'll go home, get off our feet for a little bit and come back and look forward to playing again.

## **Q. Going back to pitching for a second. Alex Philpott, first appearance since breaking his hand. How important was it for him to fill the gap and preserve for Neely looking to game two today?**

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: Honestly, when we kind of opened the game up there, the only guy we had loose in the pen was Clemente, because I think we had an inning where we scored those five runs in the fifth. But at that point the game was not out of reach, certainly. That's why we went to Clemente. He already got hot.

I just told Jake, listen, keep your pitch count around 30 so you'll be able to help us tonight in some capacity.

And Alex, he did the same thing. And I was really pleased with how they both threw because sometimes you can get a little sloppy when you get a big lead, but they both did exactly what we asked them to do.

I thought both of them looked extremely comfortable. Obviously Jake looked a little different than he did his first outing, and sometimes that happens with pitchers, takes them an outing to kind of get comfortable and relax a little bit. But he was good and Alex was great. He did exactly what we needed him to do. So our bullpen should be in great shape tonight. We'll start Liam again, obviously, threw 52 pitches on Saturday.

Our bullpen should be in good shape for tonight, for sure.

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