

2024 Men's College World Series

Saturday, June 22, 2024

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

Tennessee Volunteers

Coach Tony Vitello

AJ Causey

Dylan Loy

Postgame Press Conference



Texas A&M - 9, Tennessee - 5

TONY VITELLO: Pretty straightforward. The team that played better won the game. They appeared more prepared. But I think that was a result of Gavin puts a good swing on a pitch. It's kind of the third time in a row we beat our guy that particular way.

And then couple things don't go our way. And it kind of got emotional there, a little more emotional than it usually does, but for a proper reason, with the situation. But I think the basics come.

They played better. And even though we didn't bring our best, we're within striking distance against their guy there at the end of the game.

Q. Dylan what was working for you tonight.

DYLAN LOY: I would just say breathing and calming down and trusting my guy behind the plate and feeling through what he was going through and trying to match our mindsets up. And I think it worked well tonight.

Q. What gives you confidence that you all will be able to bounce back tomorrow and be prepared by the time the first pitch rolls around?

AJ CAUSEY: For me the fact that we've done it before. We're not new to this. Obviously we've got some of the best hitters in the country. So, yeah, we've done it before.

DYLAN LOY: I would say the same. The guy on the mound for us has proven himself.

Q. AJ, I know this was the second straight third inning

that was kind of rocky. Was this familiar to Florida State or different? And how did you kind of work through that today?

AJ CAUSEY: Just keep throwing pitches. I think it was a little different. Just keep throwing pitches.

Q. AJ, tough coming into the first inning and how you had to adjust, and Schott reaching on the fielding error by your shortstop. How do you feel the defense needs to hold and three errors tonight, and what lies ahead for tomorrow?

AJ CAUSEY: It's nothing like too serious, like it's not that serious, like we have to fix a problem or anything. We just have to play the baseball we can play.

Q. Your coach said that maybe the dugout was a little more emotional tonight. Was that unavoidable in some ways, or is that a disappointment to get here and have that happen?

DYLAN LOY: I wouldn't say it's a disappointment. But I would say it kind of catches you by surprise whenever you get to this stage, I would say. I wouldn't say it's a disappointment. I think we'll be right back in the dugout just like we normally are tomorrow.

Q. The same question has been asked the players, what gives you confidence that you guys will respond the right way tomorrow?

TONY VITELLO: I think we can definitely play better. I mean, that's one thing. And this isn't a traditional series against an SEC opponent or just a good opponent, whether it be Illinois or everybody else that's on our schedule.

But you go through the season and you welcome competition for a reason; it will make you better in a few different ways. You find out different ways to respond, and you can either get frustrated that tonight went the way that it did, or you can get more determined. And we've got guys that have done that a lot in the past where determination kicks up, play kicks up.



Q. That's three errors in two of the four games while in Omaha. You've only done it once the entire regular season. Can you put your thumb on any reason why defense has maybe been an issue here?

TONY VITELLO: No, I think there's certainly been a few quirky plays. I don't even know what happened on the ball up the middle. That was a clean hit by Appel. I don't know if it hit the bag or whatever it did.

But guys have put the ball in play against our guys, and they're going to continue to do that. We don't quite have the strikeout type of staff that we did last year. We get our fair share. But guys put the ball in play. And they found some holes tonight, as did Florida State. And also there's been some unique ones, to be fair to our guys.

So I think it's about getting familiar with the ballpark, which by now our guys should be. And then just playing ball. Like I said, I think tonight maybe a little bit more credit to the game than you should give it, which is crazy to say based off the crowd we had, but I think that's a true statement.

Q. Have to imagine that there's no one but Drew you'd want on the mound in this situation with your backs against the wall, given his experience and his demeanor.

TONY VITELLO: We like anytime he gets to throw for us. It's kind of been that way since his freshman year, and the fall was slower based off how he entered the program. He was recovering. And then hasn't looked back.

There's been some ups and downs but it's not like it's been a roller coaster. He's been a blessing to have in the program as far as the approach he brings to the dugout or just the facility, in general, in how he works.

And usually when your leaders embody what you've got going on and it's a positive -- I didn't say that appropriately -- but when your leaders have the right characteristics, it usually bleeds into the rest of the team in the dugout.

And, again, he's an unselfish kid that likes to compete. That, again, has bled throughout the rest of the dugout, especially with the younger guys that have learned from him like D-Loy.

Q. What's the benefit of making their bullpen work late like you did tonight? And does it remind you of the game against Evansville?

TONY VITELLO: A little bit. I said earlier, as crazy as it is

that Evansville game was a little bit good for us. This time of year you're only going to be able to go on a streak for so long. And I think you need to be reminded every now and again of certain things you need to do.

That Evansville game did that to us, and this was similar. We were within striking distance. We were able to see what they had available in the bullpen.

But A&M has some guys that are unused. I'm not sure they've even announced a starter tomorrow. They're not going to run out of guys, but it certainly helps to have an idea who you'll face and to stay in the fight. Ideally this is a three-round bout that you're in. And every inning has some weight to it when you're finished.

Q. You saw Prager in the SEC Tournament. And he was pretty effective tonight even though you guys scratched out some hits. What made him good tonight?

TONY VITELLO: The change-of-speed factor is bread and butter. It's not like he did not do that in Hoover. I think the difference was they played a little better defense behind him.

And our guys had to play from behind. And not only was it from behind on the scoreboard, but, again, I think a little bit of a downer early in the game with where we were at.

Having said that, we were in pole position several times to knock him out earlier than we did. And it kind of seemed to be a theme on offense -- one more quality at-bat or guy on base could have altered some things or changed things the way they use their bullpen.

But nonetheless, I mean, the guys did do okay at the plate. You can't separate the at-bats from the rest of the game. You've got base running. You've got defense. You've got pitching. And, of course, you've got the hitting as well.

Q. You mentioned the emotional part of it. In a game this intense, what do you do? How does the team reel that back in when it needs to be reeled in?

TONY VITELLO: I think you just play baseball and make sure that you don't put so much weight on how big the crowd is or the extra cameras and things like that that you lose sight of just some fundamentals or important things that go on in the game, like communicating or focusing on whatever the certain task is.

It's true. And whatever you're going to be talking about, simple is better. So I would kind of summarize it by saying that.

Q. Was it a tough decision to not put Ensley in center tonight? Was it a close thing? Would there be a chance he could be out there tomorrow?

TONY VITELLO: There's a chance tomorrow. And it was close. And you kind of weigh your options. Again, at the very least, I mean, where I grew up in Missouri I had to watch my dad coach -- single elimination is not appropriate for baseball based off sample size and things like that.

So given the fact that we potentially have two or three games to play, I wasn't too comfortable with the idea of him pushing it after a couple of days of nonaction. And, of course, he's got the fighter mentality.

So it was a difficult decision, and I would say go back to the hotel. It's probably one of about seven, eight -- 17, 18, that I could have made better. But it's what we did and it didn't work out. We didn't play well enough tonight. But he certainly had some great at-bats. We'll see what he's got going tomorrow.

Q. Question about Marcus. First College World Series appearance for him tonight. Came in against the top of the lineup. What did you think of his work tonight? And what have you seen his development since coming from Iowa Western?

TONY VITELLO: He's matured a lot. Obviously a fantastic junior college and setup over there. And we thought he would get more development as a freshman, but he just didn't quite stay healthy. And there's so much talent over there.

He came in being a kid from the north, very little experience, a lot of two-way time. He swung the bat for us some.

He's come a long way on the mound. The way we judge him is basically how the ball is coming out. He's either throwing it with conviction or he's not. And he was tonight.

Again, I wouldn't give credit in any inning for management stuff on my end, but he did his first job, and then we kind of went quick to the bullpen on him. It would have been interesting to see how well he could have thrown the ball, but the exciting thing is he's available in the future here for us.

Q. Big picture thing, when you take in this atmosphere, soaking it in and tickets are being scalped, and the popularity, you've talked about it, the popularity of college baseball is phenomenal. And there's this dynamic that our attention spans are

getting shorter and shorter. When you think about some of these games and how long they are, how do you relate the popularity of college baseball and the lengths of these game with the attention spans that we all have that are shrinking?

TONY VITELLO: I get it. The 20-second clock has been productive. But I'm not so sure people wouldn't come to the park anyway. Heck, everyone's attention span is brutal because of what we hold in our hands all day long with our phones.

But, man, this thing has turned into a monster. The draft is shorter. There's fewer minor league teams. There's more resources that these kids see. I don't want any scouts to slash my tires, but it certainly makes sense for a lot of guys now to go on to school.

Grahovak is the size of probably some of the trucks on that campus down there. And the guy behind him is bigger. You look at our infielder, not one of those four guy looks like a n infielder, other than Blake Burke kind of looks like a big first baseman.

These little kids, but also adults have these guys that -- you could go pay a ton of money and watch the Braves play. But you can get right up close to these guys. And they're the next guy on the Braves or the Phillies or whatever it might be.

And then you sprinkle in the constant drama all season long that you kind of only get in MLB and the playoffs.

So, like I said, it's turned into a monster, and a lot of it is because of the celebrities that I get to throw BP to, or that we get to stress about getting Charlie Condon out or whoever it might be.

So I think you could make it two and a half hours, you could make it four hours, which if it's a big game, it's probably going to be four with the commercials and all that BS. But I think you show up and you have your hot dog. If you want to have a beverage, have a beverage. And you yell stuff at me if you're wearing maroon. And the orange people yell crazy stuff at the other team.

I don't know that you would want it any other way. Obviously we would have liked to get the win tonight, but pretty damn good stuff. But unfortunately we don't get to enjoy it like you guys; we need to try to do our jobs. And we certainly need to do it better than we did tonight, at least I need to.

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