

2025 Men's College World Series

Saturday, June 14, 2025

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

UCLA Bruins

Coach John Savage

Roman Martin

AJ Salgado

Dean West

Postgame Press Conference

UCLA - 6, Murray State - 4

JOHN SAVAGE: Hard-fought win. Murray State is very competitive. We knew when we put up a 4 in the fourth, they probably wouldn't blink an eye, and they didn't. They kept battling back.

It wasn't an easy victory. We pitched out of some problems today. We got ourselves into some problems, the bullpen did.

I thought Barnett was solid, gave us what he had. Kind of cramped up there at the end and probably left him in there for one hitter too long. Probably should have taken him out. He wanted to stay in there. It was the fifth inning, 6-1, two outs. You think you can squeeze another out.

But at the end of the day it was a good team win and first game of hopefully a long tournament.

So hard-fought win, very hot out there today. I think our guys dealt with that a little bit. I thought the outfield communication was really, really good. A little breezy. A lot of noise. I thought we handled all that pretty well. I know that's kind of coach talk a little bit, but at the end of the day it was a good win for us. And certainly we can learn from it.

Q. Dean and Roman, you guys really shut this team down. Murray State has been able to take advantage of people making mistakes defensively and miss-playing some balls. You guys were really solid defensively today.



ROMAN MARTIN: I say we take a lot of pride in our defense. That's something that we know is never going to go away going game to game.

Yeah, we knew it was going to be tough. And defense is really a separator especially in these big games. Yeah, just really sticking to what we've been doing.

DEAN WEST: I agree with Roman. Coach always talks about good championship teams have good defense, and that's something we take a lot of pride in.

Q. It seems like you were seeing the ball really well and being really patient at the plate, going 2-for-4 with a walk, especially early on. How are you able to maintain your composure so immediately, especially on one of the biggest stages in college baseball?

DEAN WEST: I think it's a lot of trust in myself and then the approach that our coach gives us in the beginning of the game, and kind of just sticking to it and just believing in it.

Q. You guys hopped on them, got a really good beat in there early, but then it seemed like the last couple times around in the batting order just couldn't find the same success at the plate. What was different in those plate approaches and what their pitchers were doing to keep you off guard in the last couple of innings?

AJ SALGADO: I thought our hitters did a pretty decent job the rest of the game. I think we hit a lot of balls hard. With the wind, it kind of killed a few, and we hit the ball right at people, I think.

Q. What challenge is it pitcher Schutte where you know he's going to pitch deep in the game regardless, you're not going to knock him out? Is that more of a challenge because you know you'll have to hit him at some point and you're not going to get him out of the game?

ROMAN MARTIN: I'd say it's definitely a challenge, especially at these levels. Those pitchers have a lot of



success, and we know that.

I think really just sticking to our plan and trying to outlast guys, keeping it pitch to pitch, that's always huge when you're facing a guy like that. But, yeah, I'd say just outlasting them, having 1 through 9 giving him a tough at-bat is really the only way.

Q. Dean, your catch in the inning or the catch on the dive was one of the biggest plays in the ball game. Tell me how it developed.

DEAN WEST: What was the situation, was it runners on first and second and two outs? I think that's what it was. And I knew because of the pitch called he was going to throw a change-up and that was probably going to be the only opportunity I would get to catch the ball. So I made sure I went out and go get it.

Q. You said it was a big team effort, but it felt like your No. 9 hitter, in all phases of the game, was electric tonight. Phoenix Call, the two plays early on defensively, the sac bunt, going first to third right in the face of the left fielder in the fourth inning, sparking things before that. Could you talk a little bit about Phoenix's impact overall and how he's such a spark plug for the whole team today?

JOHN SAVAGE: Phoenix is a phenomenal athlete. He's a high school shortstop. He can play center field with anybody probably in the tournament. He's a phenomenal athlete.

You can see him move -- we've seen him move as the season goes along here. He's getting more confident. He's getting more familiar with the position. He's never played second in his life. He played short his whole career, young career, and then center field, because he can really move and run.

He's not your typical second baseman, I guess, in some ways, but he's a dynamic player and we have him in the 9 hole. And he's almost like a lead-off guy in many ways.

And he can swing the bat. He had a really good Cape Cod last summer. He really grew up last year at YD and that's really carried over to this season.

Most of his errors were really early in the year. He's been phenomenal, really, from about early April on. But he can run. He can bunt. He sprays the ball all over the ballpark. He does have a little power at times. So he's coming into his own. He's still a very young player, but he's an elite player.

Q. You mentioned in your opening statement, you phrased it as you pitched out of plenty of problems today. Barnett, four walks in 4.1 was the most this season. I was very impressed in the pitching staff in general being able to pitch out of so many jams today. And then you look at the super regional as well, the final 16 innings of that series, zero runs. Could you talk about the strength of the pitching staff lately?

JOHN SAVAGE: We finally got to know ourselves probably about April on, middle of April. And we're not going to blow anybody away clearly, you can tell that. Hawk can do that a little bit, and a couple of relievers can do that.

But we've got to pitch. And it was pretty unusual for Mike to walk four guys. That's very unusual for Mike. I think the first five hitters were 3-2 counts. It was, like, oh, boy, 28 pitches in the first inning. It wasn't quite like Mike.

But they all have a little niche. They all know what they can do. I have a good feel for them in terms of pitch calling. It's a blend. It's a change. It's a breaking ball. It's a slider. It's a cutter. It's a fastball. It's not just one go-to pitch.

And a lot of these guys are somewhat starters that are relievers. Some guys are three- and four-pitch guys. Even if it's one inning some guys are throwing four pitches which is a little unusual nowadays. Usually you see two pitches, right, out of a reliever.

So, we do have some guys that really have starter profiles, but not big stuff. That's why we can get into trouble a little bit because they can get hit.

O'Connor got in trouble. Moss got in trouble. Souza got in trouble. Really the only one who didn't get in trouble is Hawk.

It's baseball. It's Omaha. You expect trouble. If you're not expecting trouble, you'll be out of here pretty quick.

So you better be able to pitch with traffic and pitch out of problems. That's the nature of championship baseball.

Q. Historically in your time at UCLA you've really liked to have roles on the pitching staff. This one has been different for you. Is that more based on personnel or more based on an evolution for you and the way you think about it?

JOHN SAVAGE: We have roles. We have a long guy. We have a left-on-left. We have a seventh inning, eighth inning, ninth inning. A lot of times our starters aren't going

six innings. We're not getting the quality start we normally would.

We would take four innings out of our starter. We have that much confidence -- our bullpen, our pitching staff is built from the back to the front.

And it's not a UCLA true model, but at the same time, Delvecchio went down, so he went here; Moss had a back. I mean, we do have some traditional starters, but for one reason or another -- Barnett's won, he could have won his 13th game today. He's had a phenomenal year. But is he a true Friday guy? I think there would be certainly some conversation on that.

But at the end of the day, they're winning pitchers and they know how to make pitches.

Even the guys that pitched out of some problems made some massive pitches today -- 3-1 slider, 3-2 slider, 3-1 change, 3-2 change, 3-2 inner half. If you really look at the game and look at some things, we didn't pitch poorly, but we didn't pitch -- I wouldn't call it good-good -- but we pitched well enough.

Q. I was wondering if you could give any insight into kind of what the starting pitching might look like later in the week given that both Moss and May threw today?

JOHN SAVAGE: It's a tournament, so you don't label your rotation in a tournament. You kind of like look at match-ups and you look at video and you determine what happened the day before.

We still certainly have Stump available. Stump is ready to go. But we'll have to see and look at it tonight and make a decision more likely. We've got to see who wins tonight's game, too. It's tournament time; you go day by day.

Q. First and third, Roch comes up; safety squeeze. I think that took a lot of people by surprise. Was that a planned effort there or was it situational, time to do it?

JOHN SAVAGE: I said on ESPN, "Fans, do not harpoon me. Please, please." That was on his own. That was not us. I'm like, "Come on, Roch, what are we doing here?"

But you know what, it's a baseball play, and he did that in the Big Ten Tournament. If you saw that play in the Big Ten Tournament, he pushed with first and third, got a double out of it. He pushed it a little harder and this clearly wasn't hard enough. But it led to four runs, kind of the difference in the game.

And you know, how can you blame a guy for playing baseball? But it was not -- let's be clear, it was not called from the bench.

Q. Will you watch the game tonight as a staff or have you guys scouted both teams; are you done with that?

JOHN SAVAGE: We've scouted them, both teams. A lot of synergy. But it's nice to get a feel for what they're doing in the ballpark, right? Ballpark plays different.

So you've got one eye on synergy and you're writing a report on and you've got one eye on the live game. But for the most part, it's several hundred pitches per hitter and you're really digging deep, but you do kind of like to see what's going on in Omaha.

Q. You have a really young lineup. A lot of people see that as a disadvantage. How do you see that as an advantage?

JOHN SAVAGE: Got good, young players. We've got to keep them. We've got to hold on to them. Gotta keep on retaining them. They're very good players.

We wore it last year; we clearly did. We did not win many games last year. I didn't think we were going to win as few as we did.

But at the end of the day, it's paid off. We played a lot of guys that probably weren't quite ready -- Dean West did not play very much last year. He was hurt. Dean played the last weekend of the year, I think got on base 11 times against Stanford.

He has one of the best hand-eye coordinations in the country, best zone disciplines in the country. Phenomenal player.

He didn't play very much last year because of injury. V played a lot. Roch played a lot. Roman played quite a bit. Phoenix played a little bit. Cash played quite a bit.

We're kind of getting the payoff now, clearly. And I don't like to say that we're young. I said this in the press conference a couple of days ago, a lot of these guys have played over 100 Division I games, 115 Division I games. You can't play the young card too much. I think that's a mistake.

Good, young players that are coming into their own, you can talk about that, but you see a lot of sophomores. I'm sure you guys saw that little thing that went out. We have 37 kind of homegrown players that we recruited.

So right now, it's a pretty good formula. Last year, it wasn't a great formula. So it evolves and anything good takes time.

Q. I believe I looked at y'all's record. I think you're all defeated in the postseason right now. How much confidence does it give you all coming here to Omaha?

JOHN SAVAGE: Well, I don't want to talk about it. I don't really want to talk about it. You know, that's what the postseason -- there's a lot of teams up here that haven't lost that are still up here.

It's one game in a four-team bracket. So where do you want to be? Do you want to be here? Yeah, you want to win the first game, no question about it. But we've got a long, long ways to go.

But playing good baseball. I thought the Big Ten Tournament really kind of kick-started it. We played well against Northwestern after Friday.

We won the league, co-champs with Oregon. Came here, I thought we played really well. We didn't play well against Nebraska. We learned from that, and we haven't lost since. We've just got to keep going one day at a time.

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