

2025 Men's College World Series

Sunday, June 15, 2025

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

Arizona Wildcats

Coach Chip Hale

Tommy Splaine

Garen Caulfield

Smith Bailey

Postgame Press Conference



And obviously, like, my time as a Wildcat, I had the second most at-bats in school history behind this guy over here. There's probably no other school I'd want to play for. And I'm super thankful for the staff for keeping me that long. That's all I have to say.

TOMMY SPLAINE: I'm just thankful for everyone. All the coaches and staff and everyone that got me here, but especially Chip. We wouldn't be here without him. It was just a few things today. But just as a whole I'm just really thankful to be a Wildcat and I wouldn't change a thing.

Louisville - 8, Arizona - 3

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Arizona head coach Chip Hale and student-athletes Smith Bailey, Garen Caulfield and Tommy Splaine.

CHIP HALE: Obviously it's not the way you want it to end. Really the only way you want it to end is to be the champion. Unfortunate. We played as hard as we could. We just didn't play fundamentally sound baseball today.

That's the frustrating thing as a coach and as an instructor of baseball. It got really ugly at the end there. I take the blame for that. I have to have the team better prepared.

But it doesn't mean we didn't have a great season. These kids played until the end. They did everything they could. I'm really proud of them. I'm proud of their families for putting up with me as their surrogate father for this season. And nothing but good things for the Wildcats in the future.

Q. Could you tell us about the run you made at the end of the season and what it's meant being a Wildcat here being you're the seniors?

GAREN CAULFIELD: I'd say it's meant everything to Tommy and I and some of the other guys that probably won't ever play a baseball game again. But, it was probably the most, the last month, being on the road, I think we've been home for 24 hours to 36 hours, but I wouldn't change it for the world. That's probably the most fun I've ever had playing baseball this last month. I'm super grateful for it.

Q. Smith, fourth straight kind of elimination or championship game that you've been involved in. How did it feel out there, and you seemed to work out of traffic a lot. What were you doing to keep yourself poised?

SMITH BAILEY: Felt the same as every other outing because I do everything the same. I tried to execute my pitches and keep my composure with any hits or anything that happened that didn't go our way.

Q. Smith, being a freshman here at the College World Series, what can you take from this experience, especially the way you performed?

SMITH BAILEY: I'm just going to take from this experience to be a leader for our team next year and try to bring us back next year and hopefully get a little bit of a different result.

Q. Smith, this was not the first time you faced Louisville this season. Opening weekends, four innings, five strikeouts, no walks, no runs. Can you describe kind of seeing that lineup again? Did you notice any adjustments they may have made against you? But once again you had a very successful outing.

SMITH BAILEY: I think they're just a great hitting team. I think throughout the season they've adjusted and just improved throughout the season. I think I had a little bit of an advantage just because I knew what some of the kids



could and couldn't hit.

But I could definitely tell that some kids just kind of fought a little bit more fouled some balls off, hit some grounders. Just a great hitting team. I had a little bit more confidence coming into this outing just knowing that the first game was a little bit successful. So I think that was pretty good.

Q. Smith, as the others in the room pointed out, strong freshman season from the jump in February. What's that number one say about you that you were able to have a strong year right away and also the health of this program?

SMITH BAILEY: I think it's great. I think it's something that everyone can look at, recruits can maybe look at and see that Vance and John and all the coaches have done a great job with development.

Beginning of the season or before the season started, it wasn't the best. And then John and Vance did a great job helping me improve throughout the season and getting me to where I am today.

Q. Some of the mistakes that happened in the eighth were from Mason and Tony who had been so big for you all year. What kind of things did you say to them after the game or after that inning to deal with that?

GAREN CAULFIELD: I think it was the same message all year with this group. Some stuff spirals and we put guys like Tony in tough spots. And then, yeah, you could feel the momentum right there when the bases were loaded and everything.

But what I told them, I told Mason just keep your head up; you're going to get another one. I saw the ground ball that led off the inning, and it was low the whole time and kicked up right at him. Sometimes that happens.

I told him just take a deep breath and try to stay in this one because he's going to get another one.

Q. Garen and Tommy, what are you going to say to -- what can you say to the younger players? This is a great experience, but you guys have been here for a long time and have worked here as seniors. What advice are you going to give those younger players?

TOMMY SPLAINE: I just say keep going. All those guys have done a terrific job, especially Bailey. Just stick with it. And I guess the mistakes and challenges that you make, you really do learn from.

And Garen and I have been here for four years, that's been

a big reason why we got here today, and Chip. Just keep going.

GAREN CAULFIELD: I would say like guys like Smith and I would say Breyfogle and Cain, it's going to be a good core group of guys that have a lot of experience in the postseason.

And I would just tell them to keep the focus on the team and not get caught up in their own personal stats or whatever is going on because the best teams play together and love one another like we did this year.

Q. A lot of runners left on base. Had a couple of guys that were gunned down on the bases. Was Maddox, was that the call for him to run on that?

CHIP HALE: No. The ball's in front of him. He knows if he can make it or not. He just made a bad decision.

We just did a lot of things that were uncharacteristic of us during this run. People ask all the time, you were struggling a little bit in the middle of the year, and we played a lot like this. We made a lot of base running mistakes. We didn't execute on bunt plays. Twice they bunted the ball, we didn't get an out, a run-down. There were so many things.

It just slowly slipped away. You could see it slipping away. Unfortunately, doing everything you can to try to keep the guys positive and keep them with it, but you could see at certain points that there were guys who were starting to get with -- their own disappointments, let that kind of cloud what was going on in the game.

Yeah, we just were very -- and once the tide turned, that's where Louisville takes advantage of you. They're really good with the bunting. They're really good with the base running. They put a lot of pressure on you.

While we were ahead, we kept them at bay. But you've got to give them credit. Once they got the chance, they saw the opening like we did during the other games during the playoffs. They really took advantage of it. So you've got to give them credit.

Q. Obviously not the result you guys were looking for today. But what do you take forward with this really special team that you had here and just the tremendous run you guys made the last third of the season?

CHIP HALE: I mean, I just said it to the club. I hope they can take what they learned in this run. Sometimes, you know, losing, not making it to where you want to get to,



these things are going to happen.

We have guys that are going to play in a World Series in the future. And they're going to lose the World Series. How do you handle it? We have guys who aren't going to play another game of baseball. They're going to have families and be in business. They might be struggling; how are they going to make it so that their family is better, their business is better? And I hope they learn from that.

But it was a great group. They fought. We've said it many times -- I've said it to the media many times -- we felt we started in August, that this team could be in Omaha. And so I'm not surprised we got here. It was a funky way we got here. We didn't play great at times. We had a lot of learning to do. And we over-performed, under-performed in spots we didn't think we would.

But now this is the beauty of college baseball. We get to go back, and the guys who are going to leave, they're going to leave and get drafted. And now we're going to get a new team and have some fun doing it.

We're going to learn how we play today. We're going to do our best -- I'm going to do my best as the head coach not to let that happen.

Q. You mentioned the term "uncharacteristic" in an answer there. Your stopper of the year, Tony Pluta, last weekend, 64 pitches, the most he had in a single weekend this season. This weekend, in the College World Series, just a little uncharacteristic. First at-bat today, bloop single into right field. Pitching coach goes out there for a mound meeting. Could you give us insight? There was a guy warming up in the bullpen, too?

CHIP HALE: I think Kevin wanted to settle him down and let everybody know how we're going to play this with the bases load.

It was a little uncharacteristic. We're using that word a lot, aren't we? Maybe the 60-some pitches last weekend, it's tough on a body. It's a lot of pitches for him.

He definitely was not as sharp as he has been. I know those are some bloop hits and all that, but he gets a lot more swing and miss than that.

It's college baseball. It's a sport, and the ball bounces funky ways. We have to live with it. We got some great breaks along the way, too.

Q. In '85, as a player, you lost two games here and then the next year you won the World Series. Anything

you can take from that, from like maybe what Jerry Kindall handled in that situation that you can carry forward?

CHIP HALE: I like that. I like the way that went. Obviously we didn't like '85. It was tough. Same deal. We lost a really close game. Then we didn't play very well against Stanford.

Yeah, let's get back here and see if we can repeat what we did in '86 in 2026.

But it's so hard to get here. There's seven teams left now, and I wish them all luck. They're great teams. And we're sorry that we're not going to be playing anymore. But it's baseball.

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