

2025 Men's College World Series

Monday, June 16, 2025

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

Arkansas Razorbacks

Coach Dave Van Horn

Charles Davalan

Ryder Helfrick

Gage Wood

Postgame Press Conference



And proud of the team bouncing back after a tough loss the other night. That game had a lot of hype. Didn't go our way. But we're still here, and we still have a chance.

Q. Gage and Ryder, 19 strikeouts. Third no-hitter, amazing. Anything special going into today's warm-up? You knew it was working? Seemed like the slider was working. You were spotting right where you wanted to. And, Ryder, follow up after Gage answers?

GAGE WOOD: I don't throw a slider. It was a curveball. Throw a cutter. I only throw that at odd times. No, the only special thing was I didn't want to go home. That's it.

RYDER HELFRICK: I think it was, feel about it the same way. Just a game. Don't make it more than it is. I'd want nobody else on the mound in win-or-go-home than him. So it was awesome.

Q. Ryder, Gage, take me through the moment right after the final strikeout?

GAGE WOOD: We're not going home. We get to play tomorrow night. It was pretty cool.

RYDER HELFRICK: Yeah, it was really special, I'd say, I think for him to do that and just be able to catch the last ball, give him a big hug. It was awesome. I think everybody was really fired up for him. The main thing is we're still here and we're still playing.

Q. Gage, the 18th strikeout was the one that broke the College World Series strikeout record in a game. You ended it with 19. But the 18th one came against Conner Cunningham out of Batesville High School in Arkansas. Could you describe your relationship him? Also, if you include him in the answer, could you pronounce your high school coach's name?

GAGE WOOD: My high school coach's name was Kelly rush. But Conner, he transferred to Batesville the year after I graduated. So I didn't get to play with him. But the past couple of years in the offseason, since he's went to

Arkansas - 3, Murray State - 0

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Arkansas head coach Dave Van Horn and student-athletes Charles Davalan, Ryder Helfrick and Gage Wood.

DAVE VAN HORN: I don't know where to start, really. You think about how he pitched today, I mean, how Gage pitched. And I thought Ryder did a great job calling the game. I don't think a lot of people realize that we let our catchers call the game. We'll give them some educated suggestions and the pitcher can shake.

We feel they grow in development by letting them do that. And obviously our catchers have to earn that a little bit and follow practice. And Ryder's been great at it. He has a good feel back there and he kind of knows what's up.

And Gage just executing pitch after pitch, getting ahead in the count, breaking ball low in the dirt. Not a problem because Ryder's back there and he blocks everything. And elevating his fastball in and out. Just what a great job.

And then the few plays that we had to make behind him -- I think we had to make, like, I don't know, nine, maybe, eight; how many did you strike out, 19? So just glad we made all those plays. Just so close to the perfect game.

I'll be the first one to say it: There's nothing being said or talked about our dugout whatsoever. We're just going to let him roll.

And, no, there was no chance he was coming out after eight. And he did a super job. So proud of him.

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college, he comes in and plays catch with me every day that I need to play catch. He works out with me. He stands in on bullpens, gives me feedback.

When I'm home, there's not much in Batesville, if y'all don't know that. I think there's 10, 11,000 people there. So there's no nice place for me to go throw on a track man with these other college guys. It's me and him.

He helps a lot when I'm home. So I wanted to go tell him that I loved him. I had seen him in the offseason and to keep working and I was proud of him for making it here for the first time, and it's my first time, too. And he's just a freshman. So, who knows where he'll end up.

Q. Where is the ball, Ryder and Gage? How quickly did you give it to Gage or where is the ball right now?

GAGE WOOD: I gave it to my dad. Said, happy late Father's Day.

Q. Gage, at what moment in the game do you realize what's going on? And did you feel any added pressure when you know you're working on a no-hitter/perfect game in the later innings?

GAGE WOOD: When I hit the guy in the foot I knew I screwed it over.

Q. Murray State really likes to hunt the fastball early, and yet you guys weren't afraid to call that pitch. Yet it felt like they couldn't get the swing on it because you were locating it so well. Number one, was that the plan, to locate it on the corners and edges so they couldn't really get a good swing on it? And is that what you guys felt like was happening?

GAGE WOOD: I was just hearing fastball middle in my ear and throwing it over the plate.

RYDER HELFRICK: From a pitch-calling perspective, it's just go with his best pitches. And today the fastball was working, the curve was working. The cutter was there when we needed it, the change-up. It was all there. It's really good to call it.

But I think if they're a good fastball-hitting team, make them prove it. But just hunt what his best pitch is and call it a lot.

Q. Charles, their pitchers did a nice job. You had to scrape out some runs. Got a couple opportunities slip by. Curious about Silva especially and their reliever, what they did to hold you guys down, and what made that challenging today?

CHARLES DAVALAN: Silva did a great job. He has a slow slot and the ball runs and sinks a lot. I think we had a good game plan going in. We got runners in scoring positions and on base early. I think we were just missing that big hit. But apparently we panned through another -- their two pitcher has really good stuff, and they did a great job of putting it on the plate and making us earn it.

Q. Gage, as an Arkansas kid, you're on the biggest stage. You have the state on your back. You go out there, you have that historical performance. Do you have anything to say to Hog Nation back home?

GAGE WOOD: We're not done yet.

Q. Gage, saw you walk over to Murray State's dugout, give Hogart a hug and Cooper a hug. When did you decide that you were going to do that and what was that moment like?

GAGE WOOD: Conner, but after I hugged all my teammates and they were telling me great job and everything, that was all I could think of. I was on cloud nine. But one of my great friends, his season ended. So, I mean, I feel like any normal person would do that.

Q. Charles, today you went 4-for-5 on stolen bases as a team. Coming into the field of 64 in the NCAA Tournament, you guys as a team ranked 56th out of 64 in stolen bags. What did you guys, as a team or maybe the staff, notice in the scouting possibly? And how did you plan to attack that in today's game?

CHARLES DAVALAN: I think, you know, this ballpark's really big. So we've gotta do some different stuff just to get runs. The pitchers, Coach Polk does a great job just laying out the scouting report on pitchers and time to plate.

We knew coming in that the running game would be in action. When usually, in season, we didn't have to use it. But now, bigger ballpark, we've got to do different stuff.

Q. Ryder and Charles, is it difficult in the dugout not to talk about what's going on? What's it like dealing with that superstition? And kind of what are the emotions in the field kind of watching Gage go through what he did today?

CHARLES DAVALAN: I think no one talked about it in the dugout except for G-Baby, our batboy. I guess, apparently going -- he came back after at the eighth and we went one, two, three, whatever. He said, G-Baby said, "Is Gage going out for the no-no?" So I guess he said it.

But, no, I think it was in the fifth I knew he was going to do



it. His stuff is so good. He's worked so hard. I'm really proud of him. I know everybody's proud.

RYDER HELFRICK: I, for sure, wasn't saying anything. I guess Gage said something. But it's just talking with him, making sure one pitch at a time, one out at a time, one inning at a time. Don't get too far ahead of yourself and keep making your best pitch. I think that's what I was telling him in the dugout, but I definitely wouldn't say anything.

Q. Dave, Gage has pitched so much this year. This was his first time going more than six innings. What was different for him? And what gave you the trust to let him go and just we're going to let him throw 120 pitches, whatever it might be?

DAVE VAN HORN: What was different, I'll start with that one, he was landing his breaking ball as much as his fastball, really. And they couldn't figure it out. And it makes his fastball look harder than it is.

If he's not landing the breaking ball, they can just let that one go. Just straight heater and take the other one. They couldn't do it because he was throwing it for a strike.

I mean, really just like everybody here, you just use your eyes, you see what's going on. The game will tell you what to do. We didn't need to take him out.

Q. In a historical performance like that, it's not just today. It's the entire year. It's going back to even recruitment. Can you speak to the pitching staff that goes in the development of players like Gage Wood, because since the second inning of the game of World Series, as a team, 16.1 innings, 33 strikeouts, just two walks, four hits?

DAVE VAN HORN: First off, my pitching coach, Matt Hobbs, he's the best. And the guys who work with him on analytics and different things, they do a tremendous job. We work really hard in strength and conditioning. And it's not all about lifting, it's about conditioning. There's certain routines that go on, but guys get better.

There's a lot of culture in our program about getting better. If you saw our facility where we have everything, our locker room and weight room and nutrition, everything is just right there. And the guys live there. We love it. We say it's their fraternity. And we're lucky to have that.

But there's a lot that goes on there. It's coaching, but it's also a lot of hard work from these players, obviously.

And I say this all the time, they're the ones that win the

games. They're the ones that put in all the work. They're the ones that get the credit. But we've got them surrounded pretty good. And there's a lot of good leadership amongst the older kids when the new guys come in.

Even these days with the transfer kids coming in, we talk to them about a lot of that before they get here or before they even make a decision where they're going what we're going to do. We have a plan for them. And we don't want them to show up in August, we want them to be here like now, move to Fayetteville, get ready to roll, start using our stuff and here we go.

Gage, you think about what went on, he was throwing great coming out of the chute then he tweaked his arm the second weekend, didn't pitch for two months or more. We didn't know if we were going to have him back. And for him to do what he did today is special, obviously, especially doing it up here.

Q. We talked yesterday at practice about the heat and how long you expected Wood to go. Obviously went a lot longer than anybody expected. Just curious in the situation you guys have having to get to three in the weekend what that does pitching staff-wise what opportunity that gives your team?

DAVE VAN HORN: Yeah, having him save our bullpen was great. If we get down today, we might have to go with a guy that's going to be starting tomorrow. And now we can sit on it tonight, make a decision tomorrow on who we're going to pitch, see who wins tonight and go from there.

But I just tell our guys, the only thing we have is tomorrow. That's what we did at practice yesterday. We got them out early. Got up early and went out there and stretched, casually did what we needed to do, kind of moved on, talked about today, and not really worrying about the next day or the next day because we had to take care of today. So same for tonight. Relax, get ready for tomorrow.

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