

2025 Men's College World Series

Monday, June 16, 2025

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

Murray State Racers

Coach Dan Skirka

Jonathan Hogart

Dustin Mercer

Carson Garner

Postgame Press Conference



Just, again, thanks to everybody. This journey, I heard all these guys saying it -- don't be sad that it's over, smile because it happened. And Hogie might have summed it up, "Or both," because we're sad but we're really glad that this happened. And so many people were a part of it.

Q. What are you guys going to remember most about this season? Is it the two conference titles? Is it the Omaha, Oxford, Durham? Can you guys explain?

DUSTIN MERCER: I just think my friends. I mean, this experience has been awesome. I mean, all those wins are nice, but I love these guys, man. And the hotel room and all that stuff, that's what I'll remember, at least.

JONATHAN HOGART: Yeah, the wins are phenomenal. We had a lot of them. You just can't match the culture we have here. I'm going to miss Coach, I'm going to miss these two. I'm going to miss every one of these guys.

Strap on the cleats to go to war with these guys was such a blessing this year, and I'll never take it for granted. The whole entire journey. I can't pick just one. It's all special to me.

CARSON GARNER: They summed it up. But this was a cool experience. The regional, super regional and then getting here, I think it's something that every baseball player dreams of.

But the best part is being able to do it with these guys. I told somebody the other day, I get to wake up every day and go play the game I love with my 40 of my best friends. That's what I'll remember most.

Q. Guys, obviously not the result you were looking for today for you guys. Could you talk a little bit about what Gage was doing? I know you guys are big first fastball-hitting guys. What did he do special today that made it so you guys couldn't get after that first-pitch fastball today?

CARSON GARNER: It comes from our approaches. We're always on the fastball, and I think we proved it all

Arkansas - 3, Murray State - 0

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Murray State head coach Dan Skirka and student-athletes Carson Garner, Jonathan Hogart and Dustin Mercer.

DAN SKIRKA: One of my wife's favorite movies is "A League of Their Own." And they said there's no crying in baseball. Well, throw that out the window. There's no way I'm making it through this right here.

What these guys mean to me and my family, I can't put it into words. After Duke, we gave glory we'll give glory in defeat. This journey, God's great. It's unbelievable the support we've gotten. It's just been unbelievable.

After we beat Duke I got 1300 text messages. All the social media and other -- I was just blown away, just hearing from people I haven't heard from in forever. Some people I didn't know that tracked down my number.

It's this journey and what these guys have done to inspire people, to inspire kids to play baseball, to inspire families to watch together, to inspire families to come here and visit and be a part of it. That's what's so special about this. It's so truly amazing.

Hats off to Arkansas. I think Gage Wood made himself some money today. Holy cow. With our offense and what we've done all year to a lot of really good pitchers, I'll take the blame; I didn't prepare these guys for what we saw today because it was special. They've been special all year.



year. Going down to Ole Miss, no matter who they threw we were always on the fastball. Same thing in Durham.

But I think today Gage got us in between -- don't get me wrong, phenomenal pitcher -- but the thing that he could do was he could throw 97 at the top of the zone and then run breaking balls and sliders off that. When you can do that, and he was attacking the strike zone all day. Only hit one guy.

But yeah, I don't know how many three-ball counts it was, but it must have only been like two or three three-ball counts. He was on us all day.

JONATHAN HOGART: Looking right here, he threw 119 pitches and only 83 strikes. That's electric. He was laying the two, three, maybe even threw a fourth one in there for strikes. But flipping the curveball in there whenever he needed. And the fastball, he had a little crossfire with the ride at the top. Looked like it was down the middle. It looked like it just kept rising away from you.

The dude was electric tonight. 19 strikeouts, that's coming from a team that doesn't do that a lot.

Hats off to him. Like Skirk said, he probably got paid a good amount after tonight. Kudos to him, and he was just really good tonight. Nothing else you can really say.

Q. You guys have been so good all year long, as far as at the plate. Was there confidence that this team would finally break through at some point after seeing Wood two, three times through the lineup?

DUSTIN MERCER: We never lose faith in each other. Usually when a couple of us are struggling, the other guys pick each other up.

The guy had his stuff today. And he never lost it. I think he hit 98 against Hogie on pitch 117. Tip of the cap to that kid. That's super impressive.

But, no, I don't think we ever lost faith. We were trying to grind at-bats. And like Hogie said, he pounded us with a ton of strikes, we couldn't get ahead in the count. And pitchers are going to pitch when you're behind the whole time, putting us on the defense.

JONATHAN HOGART: A lot of it, too, was the strikes weren't just over the heart. He was executing -- we have a ball system -- he was executing the corners, like it was 1 and a 7. He was living there to me.

I maybe got one or two pitches over the plate the entire day. That's not hard to come by. So the guy was as good

as you could possibly be tonight. He definitely earned it, for sure.

CARSON GARNER: We never lost faith. Haven't all year. We're not about to start now. About halfway through the game, I think we realized that, hey, this guy's, he's dealing, he's throwing a perfect game.

But a couple of those innings where you see who's coming up, Hogie leading off, it's, like, all right, this is our inning right now.

And then even in the ninth, never lost faith. Three-run ball game, we've made that comeback all the time. So never lost faith. Just couldn't come through today.

Q. Talk to me about what the special guys and this team has meant to you and what you take away from the season as a whole moving forward in your coaching career?

DAN SKIRKA: Man, they really challenged me to be a better coach. I know we've talked, 28 newcomers this year and all walks of life, all backgrounds. And just reflecting on it a little bit this morning, that's kind of what came to mind.

We had seven freshmen. You've got to coach freshmen different than you do grad transfers. We had some guys cut from other programs. We had some juco guys. A lot of talent. Guys, they're good baseball players and just a lot of different stories.

And I think in the fall, when we did our presentations and the guys started opening up and sharing some of their life stories, kind of opened my eyes about some of the things they've dealt with on and off the field -- or maybe not dealt with. And some of the guys have had some easy lives and nothing wrong with that.

But just knowing who they were and trying to get through to those 28 guys as well as the returners and build those relationships and get them to gel as a team.

I tell them the very first meeting, I want them to leave as the best versions of themselves; and the bad part, some of these guys you only get one year with some, some two. Carson and Dusty, I'm lucky to have four with those guys. You feel like you did, you made an impact.

The other guys, you don't know for sure. Again, that was part of the cool thing getting all those text messages from guys; some of them I didn't have great relationships with when I coached.

You only get to talk to so many guys in a day and be

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

around them and build those relationships, but then they get inspired through this team and they remember their teammates and what a joy it was to play and what the game did and how it got them to wherever they are in life.

So that's the biggest thing for this team I think that I'm going to take away is getting those 28 new guys to gel with the returners, all 40 of them, and to hear them share how they feel about each other and obviously the ride they went on.

Like I said, they made me a better coach, they made me a better dad and a better husband.

Q. What does this run mean for the future of Racers baseball?

DAN SKIRKA: I have no clue. I have no clue. It's a really good question, but I have no idea. Just everybody said to enjoy it out here but at the same time I was talking to Coach Van Horn before the game, you do want to enjoy it, but at the same time we're competing, we're trying to win this thing.

I haven't really thought about future at all. I don't even know our schedule to get home or when I'm going to pack.

So tough question to answer right there. I just know, again, really, really blessed to be part of it and hopefully everybody keeps supporting these guys moving forward because they showed that they can, and we're going to encourage them to show out next year at Johnny Reagan Field like they did here.

Q. I asked the three players their favorite memory of the season. They all mentioned the camaraderie around the team. Being that it's Father's Day weekend, being that you had your son Keegan up there on the stand with you and then he took off with the boys, can you explain the relationship with those guys, also maybe the support systems that your players have that came out and support, also the community too?

DAN SKIRKA: Yeah, hard to put into words. Like they said, the bus rides, sitting around a hotel, the stories, just celebrating with them, those are probably going to be my best memories, because we put so much into this. Everybody, the parents, traveling all over the place, providing for these guys. Nobody is on a full ride on our team. Nobody's making money on our team. So the parents are sacrificing so much and the guys are putting so much into it.

To see them get to celebrate -- you say at the end of the year only one team's happy. That ain't the case this year.

There's definitely more than one because these guys, the run they went on and you're not going to be able to wipe the smile off their face for a really long time. That's what I told them. They're going to share this for ages and people are going to ask them about it for ages, and that's really the cool thing.

Q. I was going to talk about the game from y'all's perspective. Even though Wood was absolutely electric, you guys were still in this game because of your own pitching staff. Talk about their job.

DAN SKIRKA: Kudos, that can't go unnoticed. Silva, Kelham, did what they do all year, gave us a chance to win. If you would have said three runs, I would have took it going into today because our offense all year has scored more than three runs. I don't know what the numbers are, but it hasn't been often that we scored less than three.

But Wood, hearing the guy's coming back, it was like -- somebody said, "Man, that one had ride." The next one that came in, "That didn't have ride; it cut." Then he got some guys with his breaking ball. Just everything was working for him today and just kept us off balance and we couldn't get on the barrel at all.

But yes, Silva, Kelham, man, they were as good as they've been for us all year and they're the reason we got here and they pitched great. I feel terrible that they didn't get a win.

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