

2025 Men's College World Series

Wednesday, June 18, 2025

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

Coastal Carolina Chanticleers

Coach Kevin Schnall

Colby Thorndyke

Walker Mitchell

Riley Eikhoff

Postgame Press Conference

Coastal Carolina - 11, Louisville - 3

THE MODERATOR: Joining us are the members of Coastal Carolina, head coach Kevin Schnall and student-athletes Riley Eikhoff, Walker Mitchell and Colby Thorndyke.

KEVIN SCHNALL: As a leader, I think all great leaders are people that others want to emulate, and Dan McDonnell is that guy or is one of those guys for me, what he did as an assistant coach at Ole Miss and last 19 years as the head coach at Louisville. He's probably one of the most successful head coaches in the country, somebody that I look up to.

To do what we did today versus that team, as well coached as that team is, is really amazing. The Chanticleers are one of two teams in the entire country still playing.

It's incredible, but it's not unbelievable. It's incredible but it's not unbelievable. And it's not unbelievable because we've got really good players, really good players.

But the separator is these players are willing to drop "I" and "me" for "we" and "us." When you bring a group of people together with that mentality, this is what can happen -- 25 straight now, 26 straight, excuse me; 56 wins, school record; 176 hit-by-pitches, NCAA record broke today. Absolute selfless group that did unbelievable things this year.

Another reason that we're in this position is because we have an athletic administration that backs our program at the highest level. What I mean by that is they enabled us



to hire an elite coaching staff that would rival any coaching staff in the entire country. They give us the resources to put our players in the best position to become the best players that they can be. And it's an absolute team effort.

The last thing that I want to say is the reason that I'm in this position was our former athletic director, Matt Hogue, back in 1999, I'll never forget the job he did for the recognition I received as a player. He continued to recognize me as a coach. And if it wasn't for him, obviously Coach Gilmore, I would never have been given this job. And I'm forever grateful to him.

Q. Colby and Walker, another big first inning for you guys. You just keep seeming to come up with hits in big situations for your team. Talk a little bit about that and the approach you have in coming up in those big situations.

COLBY THORNDYKE: Yes, well, we always preach scoring first. Anytime you have a chance to score first you'll get a bunch of momentum dumped in your dugout.

This time Walker made it easy on me. He didn't make me do it with no runs scored. He got two runs for me. It made it a little easier.

We always preach when the bases are loaded, the pressure is on the pitcher. It's not on the hitter. He's got to throw three strikes. If he throws four balls then it's a run. So we always preach the pressure is on the pitcher. And when you stick to your approach and you believe that it makes it easier.

WALKER MITCHELL: Know where the pressure is. Coach Schilling says that to us all the time. Going up there with a slow heartbeat and get the job done for the boys, it's huge.

Q. Colby, you're on an incredible tear in the postseason, not just the NCAA tournament, but the Sun Belt Conference as well. You tallied at least one hit and one run scored in all but two NCAA tournament games. What's your approach like at the plate? Walk



me through the first-inning at-bat, an incredible job getting a couple RBIs across the plate, but the celebration also towards the dugout?

COLBY THORNDYKE: Yeah, we practice sticking to an approach. And I think a little bit earlier in the season I didn't really have much of an approach. I'll admit that. Once I figured out what approach worked for me and worked best, and I could stick to it, it makes things a lot easier.

And the celebration is something we've had since I think weekend one. We don't really know where it came from. We just kind of came up with it. Whenever we have a chance to do it, we're going to do it.

Q. Riley, you've been on the mound with a lot of those early leads that your team grabbed. Today was obviously a big one. What does it do for you as a pitcher to pitch from ahead consistently as you've been doing during this winning streak?

RILEY EIKHOFF: Offense goes out there gives you a big lead, it's big pressure off yourself. You go out there, just do your thing, try and make pitches. I made quite a few pitches today, and the defense made great plays behind me. Without them, the score wouldn't be the same today. They made a lot of great plays behind me. So grateful for them.

Q. Riley, 45 pitches on Friday. I think 98 today, 90-something. I think it was 98. Were you running out of gas a bit in that sixth inning? And how did you try to get through that?

RILEY EIKHOFF: I wouldn't say I was running out of gas. Obviously every pitcher gets a little tired as the game goes on. Just lost some feel. Tried to get it back.

But Louisville, they've got a bunch of good hitters, and they made some good swings. All I could do is focus on myself, try and make pitches. And they made good swings on good pitches. Props to them. A bunch of good hitters with them.

Q. Riley, what was working so well today, obviously, against such a great offensive hitting team like Louisville?

RILEY EIKHOFF: Offspeed was helping me out a lot. I was able to keep them off balance, get weak contact and let the defense make plays behind me. Whenever I don't have to do too much and the defense takes care of business behind me, it makes my job a lot easier.

Q. I was going back to reading Aaron's (phonetic) fall report on you guys. It did not sound like a team, from your perspective, that looked like a national championship contender in the fall. What did you see from this team in the fall and what are you seeing now that may be a little different?

KEVIN SCHNALL: In the fall we clearly felt like we were going to have a really good pitching staff. Couple guys were down in the fall. We knew they were coming back.

But the truth was we just had to figure out, we lost three of our four top hitters from last year. We lost a hall of fame head coach. We had to figure out who was going to fill those gaps. And those three guys that we lost offensively are tough to replace.

Truth be told, Sebastian Alexander stepped up in a big way. He's got the tools to be a great player. We knew that all along. But he's just never really put it together. Now he's batting in our 2 hole. And he's done a big job for us to kind of fill some of that production that we had from last year.

But I can't say that we felt it was a national championship contender. We knew it was a really good team. We knew it was a championship-type team. We were picked fourth in the Sun Belt. No problem. We'll move forward, keep our head down and keep grinding. That's what this team did.

But we clearly felt like this pitching staff was going to be the best pitching staff we ever had.

Q. I was hoping if you could expand on what you said: It's not unbelievable; it's incredible. And for me, what I notice it's just a very consistent ballclub. Everybody in that lineup got on base today. In the NCAA tournament, 8-0, you've nearly tripled your opponents in run differential in games could you just talk about that consistency?

KEVIN SCHNALL: Well, it starts with frees. Today we were able to earn 10 frees, six walks, four hit-by pitches. That's where it starts. We've got to earn frees.

I thought we ran the bases exceptionally well. It was bang, bang at third. Wells going first and third on that hit. Tip your hat to their right fielder.

But Blake Barthol coming through with that big two-out hit right there after they got the big inning, something we've done a great job of. I think it's 12 straight games in a row, we haven't given up a big inning. We give up a big inning to Louisville today.



And you've got to give them credit. They got two infield hits that we just couldn't get our glove to. And then they get two two-out hits in a row. Bottom of the order got two two-out hits in a row to get them that third run.

That's a big deal in our program is winning that big inning war. Even though we were up 6-0, all we were talking about was we were up 1-0, we're up 1-0 in the big inning war. And Dean Minos coming through and getting that big two-out double to get us that seventh run. Again, that scoring first, winning the big inning war and getting to seven are three really important parts of our offense.

Q. With the sheer number of hit-by pitches, wondering what do you attribute that to. Is that philosophy approach? What do you attribute the hit-by pitches to?

KEVIN SCHNALL: They don't eat if they get out of the way. (Laughter). No, it's just something that our guys have bought into. Our guys are obsessed with getting on base. They understand the way you score runs is having guys on base. And any way you can get on base helps our team win.

And we got a bunch of humble dogs in that dugout that are willing to do whatever it takes to win. That's why we're one of two teams in the country still playing today.

Q. Is there any kind of specific parallel you can draw between this team and the one you came here with in 2016? Is it something that allows these guys not to let the moment get too big?

KEVIN SCHNALL: I wish I could give you an answer that you could really take off with, but I can't, no. It's different than the 2016 team. That 2016 lineup was so dangerous, 1 through 9 -- power, speed, short game.

This team is different. It's more grind, inside game, first to third, little things like that. And they play really high-level defense, even though we made two outfield errors this week. That's the only errors we made. We're fielding over .980 in the postseason which is pretty tough to do because you're in a lot of pressure situations.

Q. You spent a lot of time this week talking about the contributions all these players have had. But just for you personally, how has this run been? 26 straight, national championship, playing for one, first year as a head coach. Is it almost like a dream a little bit?

KEVIN SCHNALL: It really hasn't hit me yet. I'll be honest. I'm still trying to digest that game. I know we're going to the World Series finals, and whoever wins two out of three

brings home a national championship.

No, it hasn't really hit me yet because one of my, maybe, flaws is I'm rarely satisfied. This is satisfying, but I'm not satisfied yet. And these next two days are really critical if we're going to win a national championship.

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