

2025 Men's College World Series

Wednesday, June 18, 2025

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

Arkansas Razorbacks

Coach Dave Van Horn

Ryder Helfrick

Gabe Gaeckle

Postgame Press Conference



RYDER HELFRICK: It sucks to say goodbye to everybody. And Charles, he told me, he's, like, I'm sorry. I said, why are you sorry? We wouldn't be where we are today without him, the way he competes, and he's one of the best hitters and people and just all-around best baseball players I've ever been around.

For him to say sorry, it kind of pissed me off because the game's not on him. It's on the team. He's one of the greatest to do it here.

GABE GAECKLE: For me, I love Chuck. I know he probably was -- he was beating himself up. There's no doubt in our minds that we aren't in the position we are without him. Great player, even better teammate. I'm really going to miss playing with him.

Q. Gabe, you came back on short rest after your longest outing of the year. Velocity was good. Had a lot of good moments. How did you feel? And walk us through your performance tonight and what you faced?

GABE GAECKLE: Felt good. Messed up with two pitches and a good team takes advantage of that. They got me on those two. Props to them, they're a good team.

Q. What does it mean to play for a coach like Dave Van Horn? I know you are both sophomores, but what have you learned and how important that's been to you in your careers?

RYDER HELFRICK: It's a pleasure. Every day you show up, you know what you're going to get. He's by far the best coach I've ever been coached by. Excited for next year.

GABE GAECKLE: Yeah, this coaching staff is the reason I came here. Greatest head coach that's ever coached baseball. And we've got an unbelievable staff. Every day we get to show up and work with him we're super grateful. And I couldn't thank him enough.

Q. I wanted to ask you about two plays in the ninth inning. Would you like to have seen Wehiwa try to turn

LSU - 6, Arkansas - 5

THE MODERATOR: Joining us are Arkansas head coach Dave Van Horn and student-athletes Gabe Gaeckle and Ryder Helfrick.

DAVE VAN HORN: First off, congratulations to LSU. Man, they've got a great team. They just kept fighting. We kept fighting. They took the lead. We came back, took the lead. Then they got us.

It would have been nice to win the game, get to tomorrow, see what happens. But that's baseball. It's a crazy game. Seen it all, I think.

But I feel like we played as hard as we could. Third day in a row. Really wanted to play a fourth. Hoping to get to the weekend. But it's just the way it ended up.

But proud of our team. It's hard to say goodbye. I'm not good at saying goodbyes anyway. Great team, fun team, hard-working team. And probably just "team." Man, they were a team. You could tell by how emotional they were after the game.

It was a lot of heartbreak, maybe because we lost the game but honestly probably because the season's over and they don't get to be around each other every day. So proud of them. Proud of the University of Arkansas.

Q. You were pretty quick to go comfort Charles after the way the game ended. What are you able to say to a guy like that in a moment like that? And what kind of synergy does this team have, togetherness, and why is it so important at the end?



the double play on that play? And also what was your perspective of Charles' play in left?

DAVE VAN HORN: The way it all turned out, I guess I would have. I haven't talked to him about it. I think he felt he moved too far to his right for Cam to turn it. I don't know. He's an average runner. He's not a flyer, but he's not slow either. So I don't know.

And then the ball -- I had a straight-on view of it. It was hit hard, obviously. It was kind of hooking and sinking. But it looked like Charles slipped like right at the beginning of taking off for it. When he slipped he probably lost sight of it. When the ball is hit that hard, he's just trying to find it. I'd have to watch it again. We're a long ways away. That's what I saw.

Q. This game kind of felt like a high-speed chase from the sixth inning on. You just think back to the beginning where a ball just bounces over your third baseman's head on a whacky bounce, and the game just never really slowed down. But I want to know, you mentioned you're not good at saying goodbye. You mentioned that a lot of the guys were feeling a little bit emotional. How do you even begin to address a team in a moment like that?

DAVE VAN HORN: Well, I just told them after the game, I told them to get in a little tighter. A lot of guys were distraught. Charles was super upset. I just told them I appreciate the effort all year and the ride they took us on. I just told them how much I appreciated them and that we'd talk again later.

I told them two months ago that this team needed to finish in Omaha, and they did. It wasn't the way we wanted to finish, but at least they got here. They competed their rear ends off.

Lost that first game and win two. And looked like we had a third. We're going to get to tomorrow. You never know. Who were we going to pitch tomorrow? I don't know. Whoever.

But at least we didn't get that opportunity. But it's not a whole lot you can say. They're going to hear it a little bit. But we'll talk again when we get back.

Q. There's 10 minutes of silence right there where you're sitting in the dugout bench. What were you thinking?

DAVE VAN HORN: A lot of things. Feeling bad for Charles because I could see him out there. He's so emotional and everybody hugging on him. It's not his fault.

We wouldn't have got here without Charles Davalan. We wouldn't have gotten close. Guy got so much clutch hits, started so many rallies. You can probably take 10 wins off our SEC. He was unbelievable.

And just watching those guys and how they didn't want to leave. You can get mad at the game. The game's the game. Things happen. There's so many plays throughout the game where you could get a hit here, make a pitch there, a play there. The game changes.

Then we got down to the end of the game, you know, they got the big hit. We got a couple of big hits. They got a couple big hits.

I was just thinking and I told Coach Hobbs, man, this game, it will eat your lunch if you let it. You've just got to learn from everything you do, and you get better at it.

It's like life. It's a roller coaster. But you control it and you've got to learn from your mistakes. If you don't learn from your mistakes, you're not smart. That's the way I look at it.

Q. I was wondering if you could walk us through those two decisions. Did you consider it all going to Gibley against Brown in the sixth? And maybe were you considering walking Jared Jones in the ninth there?

DAVE VAN HORN: We weren't going to take Gaeckle out at that time. No, we weren't thinking about going to him. That was just a clutch hit. You've got to give him credit.

Q. Were you considering intentionally walking Jared Jones tonight?

DAVE VAN HORN: Right on right, I don't think so. We didn't feel like that it was something we needed to do. Hindsight is 20-20. We could talk about all the ifs and butts until we're sick of each other.

Q. Were you able to have a conversation with Chuck? To see a player go through that, how difficult is that?

DAVE VAN HORN: I went down finally made it to the bench before I came up here. He's pretty distraught. But I just told him -- I started telling him how much I appreciated him and we would never have made it here without him.

He said that he was sorry. And I said don't tell me you're sorry. You don't have to tell me you're sorry. And he said it again. It's tough. That kid doesn't have to be sorry for anything. He was our glue, man. He held it together.

Q. Coach Johnson was talking about just the respect he has for you and for the program. Can you just talk about the respect that you share with him and just being able to share this stage with him, really the ultimate game aside from the finals themselves?

DAVE VAN HORN: He does a great job. He's a tireless worker. It's a tough place to coach. High expectations, just like in Fayetteville. And he handles it well.

We've talked many a times off the field. And I appreciate him complimenting us and our program. I feel the same way about their program, one of the top programs in the country year in and year out.

Great fan base. A lot of support. And it's why they've got seven national championships and they're working on an eighth.

Q. What does this say about your team that when the game is over their first instinct was to go check on Chuck and Cam?

DAVE VAN HORN: I mean, that's what we've seen for months now. They really care about each other. Just kind of what I've said. They knew we wouldn't be here without him.

We didn't lose the game because of him. We lost the game because we didn't score early in the game, we didn't make a pitch, we didn't make a play. And we lost. One play might be something that stands out, but there's a lot of things going in that 27 outs.

I appreciate the team going out and taking care of him and comforting him. That just shows you how much they respect him and how much they appreciate him.

Q. This team, you coached a lot of really special talented teams. What has this one meant to you from the standpoint of just not only how the season went but just the guys, the culture, everything that surrounds that?

DAVE VAN HORN: This is one of the top teams I've ever coached, on and off the field, just being around him. It's funny, I've been doing it for a while and people will say things to me like, you know the kids have really changed over the years. I always say, no, they haven't. They're good. They just want to know that you care about them.

Yeah, it's tough, man. Kids are good, man. I love being around them. That's why I do it.

Q. You mentioned you weren't going pull Gaeckle

there. I'm guessing you expected to get some length from him. What did you expect to get from him tonight and what did you make of his performance?

DAVE VAN HORN: Just what we got, 40, 50 pitches. He could have gone back in the ninth. It's like I told him, it's not worth it. You've got your whole career ahead of you. You might get three outs on nine pitches.

I can't send him back out there. Coach Hobbs and I felt the same way. That's enough. That's enough.

He would have gone back out if we said, hey, you got another one in you? What else is he going to say? Yeah, I'm good. We had to make that decision. I'd make it again. It's not fair. It's not fair to him. He gives us everything he has. He's got a bright future. It's just what you do.

Q. You've been here before, Dave, where your season ends with some heartbreakers with two outs in the ninth. What are the first steps from actually moving on from that and looking ahead to try to get back here?

DAVE VAN HORN: I mean, in the back of your head, you're always thinking about next year throughout the season, with recruiting, who you have in your program, what are you going to do when the season's over. You're going to have the conversation with players.

You just learn how to do it. It's just what you do. You start to fight to get back here. Every time we have recruits in the fall, and then you're thinking about when they get here, down the road and how that's going to fill in there. Then we lose one in the draft. We lose that one in the draft. We get one out of the portal, and here we go.

Then when school starts, that's what you've got. And you hope you've got enough. You hope they like each other. You hope they like to play. There's so many kids nowadays, you don't bring a lot of freshmen in, you have until their third year, you develop them. It's just different now. You either have to embrace it or do something else. I'm embracing it.

I'll have a lot of good memories from this team. And that's what I'm going to try to think about most of the time. Obviously there's a little bit of what-ifs and heartbreak.

But I'm excited for these kids in about a month to get drafted because there's going to be a lot of them leave our program. I'd say eight to 10 of them will be drafted pretty high. So that's exciting. Makes you proud.

But you're always looking to the future. You're always looking a year down the road, two years down the road.



And we've been on the phone a lot up here with kids that we're trying to get to come visit us when our season's over.

So we'll be on the phone probably tomorrow getting them lined up.

Q. It's always tough to reflect in a moment like this, but was there a point in the season where you felt like this team had enough to get it to Omaha?

DAVE VAN HORN: Oh, yeah. I felt like in the fall, towards the end, I thought this team, if we stay healthy, we'll be in the top of the league. We'll be in the top four or five. And if we have a couple guys come on, we would definitely have an opportunity to play in Omaha.

You never know how the regionals are going to go, super regionals, who you're matched up against and how the team's playing.

There's a lot that goes on behind the scenes that maybe the fans don't know -- injury, sickness, ready to go do something else, thinking about pro ball or whatever. You've got to try to keep it all together so you can fight your way through.

Then during the season, I told them, you know -- we don't talk about getting to Omaha. We just kind of expect it. We're going to fight to get there. I don't try to bring it up, dwell on it. I don't want to put that pressure on them.

But I told them couple times down the stretch that your last game needs to be in Omaha.

I told them after tonight, I said, you guys did what you deserved, you got to finish up here. It just wasn't exactly the way we wanted it to go down.

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