

2026 Men's College World Series

Saturday, June 13, 2026

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

Georgia Bulldogs

Coach Wes Johnson

Joey Volchko

Rylan Lujo

Postgame Press Conference

Georgia - 7, Texas - 1

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Georgia coach Wes Johnson and student-athletes Rylan Lujo and Joey Volchko.

WES JOHNSON: I thought Joey came out and really set the tone of the game. Struck out the side in the first, attacking the strike zone, doing what he's done a lot this year, and being able to spin his breaking ball and his curveball was really working.

I thought it was good. Tre had a good at-bat to start the game. I thought Daniel got off a really good swing there in the first two, kind of lines out to right. Heck, maybe earlier in the day that one might have gone.

Then obviously Lu comes up, turns on one, runs it down the line, kind of gets us off to that start, gets a couple on the board. They had a couple of miscues obviously there in the first. So when you get out like that and your guy's throwing the ball the way Joey did, it kind of gives your offense a little time to figure out -- their guy was really good. I think he threw 41 or 42 pitches in the first.

Then for him to be able to go as long as he did, he made some adjustments and was able to keep us down. And then obviously there Lu gets another big hit. Kenny gets a big hit and really kind of stretches us out.

But obviously the story tonight was Joey. Commanding pitches, just hitting spots. If we called it low and away, he hit it. If we called the slider strike to ball, he did it. One of the most impressive complete-game performances I've been a part of.



Q. Joey, that first batter got in a 3-1 count. You painted one on 3-1 and then from there it felt like you really settled in. Did getting that 3-1 count kind of help you out a little bit?

JOEY VOLCHKO: Absolutely. In that moment, we always talk about it as a team. Don't panic and we don't get sped up. So I just went back in there with the mentality of, I gotta attack the zone. From then on that first hitter is really important.

Q. Joey, you've had some games earlier this year where you just mentioned it, you kind of let your emotion kind of get the best of you. Today it was the exact opposite. You fall behind 3-1 to the first batter. Come back, strike him out, strike out the next two. Just about how were you able to lasso, kind of garner that emotion and kind of keep it in check early on and how that carried you through the rest of the game?

JOEY VOLCHKO: I felt a lot of confidence and comfort with the game plan that we came in with. There was a very clear plan. We had a great pen talking through it. It was one of the longer ones I've ever thrown as far as, like, dialogue in between pitches. So to come out there and execute that, that was huge. And there was a lot of comfort in that.

Q. Joey, how do you think you've grown as a pitcher this year? What changes and approaches and pitches, working with Coach Wes and Coach Finley?

JOEY VOLCHKO: Yeah, them two together is a truly special partnership. I think anybody should come pitch at Georgia just because the ballpark might deceive you a little bit. It's tough to pitch in sometimes, but to work under Wes Johnson, it's been the biggest privilege of my playing career so far.

As far as, yes, a lot of tech-driven stuff, so I'm able to quantify results and make sure that I know what direction I'm heading in. Like, I know what I need to fix to improve results, hopefully.

But honestly, the mentality is huge for me. Approaching

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hard things every day. Like, that's probably the easiest day of my work. I spent more time preparing than I did worrying about executing pitches tonight. It was more about how can I get the most out of each and every day leading up to the start. And that gives me all the confidence in the world to attack.

Q. Rylan, you seemed to be really dialed in today. Was there an approach or a game plan that you guys had to put in place, because it seems like you were ready to jump all over that one in the first inning?

RYLAN LUJO: No, I don't really ever -- we talk a lot about approaches during the -- before the game about how to change for the pitcher. I try not to think like that. I try to always keep my same approach. The pitcher has to change to me.

So that's always like been my upbringing. That's always been my approach. I'm not really too worried about who's on the mound. I'm just focused on me.

Q. Joey, you chose a hell of a time for your first career complete game in college baseball. Coach talked about it a little bit, your accuracy, and specifically your breaking balls. I felt like you could put the sweeper or the curveball wherever you wanted tonight. Buried it low on lefties and the sweeper was just tremendous. Your field tonight, just a thought on that?

JOEY VOLCHKO: Again, it all comes from the confidence and the belief that we have in our game plan. So like I said, my bullpen this week, we're strictly executing what we wanted to do to each -- like the first three hitters, they stacked the three hitters. And those guys are amazing hitters.

So we gotta attack them and pick and choose where we go. And we kind of executed that to a tee. There's some pitches like I guess to Robbins in the first, maybe don't want to fall behind 3-1 there. But for the most part, we got back in there and we attacked where we needed to go.

Q. What led you to have the best game of your career tonight?

JOEY VOLCHKO: Again, I seriously think it's a scouting report, the plan that we came in with. We knew who we were going to attack with what, how we were going to flip in between times through the order. There was a lot of preparation. There was a lot of comfort in that.

I felt like when I got out there, things slowed down a little bit, as opposed to speed up. So honestly, just a testament to our preparation. They do an unbelievable job of making

sure that we're prepared to go out and compete.

Q. You sat for a long time in that first inning, but did those four runs, how much did that relax you going back out there the second inning?

JOEY VOLCHKO: I'm going to be completely honest. We do a lot of the early run support stuff. So I try not to get too caught up in that. I try to treat every inning like it's 0-0, because I know, especially from the super regional we just played against a really great Mississippi State team, like, anybody can jump out on top at any moment. So you gotta stay locked in and committed to attacking the strike zone early because that's the key to everything for me.

So I treat it like 0-0, but when you get to a 4-spot in the first, there's nothing better. And it allows me to go compete with no inhibitors.

Q. Rylan, your first inning home run that banged off the foul pole, you were legging out the triple. Did you think it was a home run? And then what went through your head when they were able to let you jog home?

RYLAN LUJO: I did think it was a home run because of how far it bounced. But I'm not a guy with a ton of power so I always hustle out of the box. I don't spend too much time looking at it.

So I was trying to get to third because of how far it bounced. But, yeah, I did think it was a homer just because of how far it bounced.

Q. Rylan, like you said, you're more of a see-ball, hit-ball type guy. But I know you guys did spend some time preparing for Volantis, with a high release and everything. What were some of those things you all tried to do? And the approaches that Coach Ammirati and Coach Coggin wanted you guys to try to take with him?

RYLAN LUJO: Just focusing on his curveball. He has a really high release height. And he's very above-average curveball. But, like I said, I'm not super worried about it. Just kind of -- because I feel the more you think about his curveball, the more you're going to stress out, the more you're just going to overdo it yourself. You don't have to overthink. That's the worst thing you can do for a hitter.

So keeping it simple, like I said, just getting off my swing and catching it out in front. It really helped me out tonight.

Q. We've all kind of known that Joey has this potential, but as a guy who has seen countless bullpens and countless starts, what looked a little

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different for him tonight from your perspective?

WES JOHNSON: This is going to sound crazy. I think we saw it last week. He had the one hiccup where State scored seven, but then he was able to continue to grind. He bookended a couple of zeros on both sides of that.

And obviously Mississippi State state is extremely talented. And not that Texas is extremely talented as well but we've kind of seen it coming. I thought it was regional, you know, we ran into a rain delay. He actually had a no-hitter through the five or six innings that we had there.

So we've been seeing it. It's like sometimes you want things to happen really fast in this game, and unfortunately there's just so many different emotions you've got to learn to -- I wouldn't say deal with, but learn how to control. And I think that's what you're seeing now.

Joey -- and I've said it all year to a lot of different people -- his better days are ahead. He's got better days ahead of him than what he did tonight. And you're just seeing the work really come to fruition right now.

Q. What was the conversation like amongst the staff about keeping Joey in for the whole game?

WES JOHNSON: I mean, you never know. Obviously you're trying to keep your hand on the pulse of everything going on. His pitch count was low. He was throwing strikes. Obviously his first walk wasn't until the ninth. All those factors come in.

I think he -- at that point they had four hits. You just felt like the count was right. I mean, we had a number on him. We had a couple of guys down there moving. I wasn't going to let him just go, go. He knew where he was. He knew the count. He knew how big it was for him to finish that game.

Q. What did it mean for Joey to have this kind of outing on this kind of stage? What did it mean for Georgia?

WES JOHNSON: I just think it just shows -- a young man who bet on Georgia and came and worked really hard and has been through a couple things. It's hard to come into the Southeastern Conference at times. Not so much from a stuff standpoint, but you look at our road schedule this year. All the environments we played in. We played at all the tough environments, minus maybe one or two.

Getting out there, seeing how to handle that. So you look tonight, I don't know, the crowd was pretty big. I don't know, 25-ish-thousand people. And he looked really calm

out there. So I think it's just what you see when a guy goes through that process.

Q. Tonight, Daniel and Tre were 0-for-9, but Rylan picked them up and then Kenny and then sometimes it's Michael. The mentality of picking each up like that, as the zeros move around so do the 2s and 3s. Does that come from you and the coaches, or do the players work that out among themselves?

WES JOHNSON: Yeah, guys, this game is hard. And it's slow. And it's long. And so we don't panic. We really pride ourselves on that.

We want the game to be slow. We know it's hard to get a team out 27 times. So we understand that. And we understand that it's baseball. You can go 0-for-4 and have a really good night, or 0-for-3 and hit the ball hard. I thought Daniel had three really good at-bats prior to his last one there.

So it's like he's moving the baseball the way he should, and sometimes it just doesn't translate into hits. He'll get jammed and run one over the shortstop's head and dump in a single, and we'll be talking about him 2-for-4 one night. We're more worried about the swings.

And then I think the biggest thing in our game is you gotta be able to let at-bats go. You gotta understand that, the way you get into a slump is you start pressing after maybe an at-bat you didn't like the result of. And I think that's where our guys have grown a lot.

Q. With all the power you have up and down your lineup, Kenny Ishikawa seems to be an almost change-of-pace type of player. He had two hits tonight. What do you kind of see from him as a his two-strike approach has been just phenomenal all tournament?

WES JOHNSON: I mean, I've talked a lot about Kenny this year. He got hit by a pitch early in the year and broke his foot and had to miss four, six weeks, whatever it was.

Prior to that, I think you would have seen Kenny in double-digit home runs. Came back. It took him a little time to really get back to being comfortable.

And I think all you're seeing right now is the Kenny Ishikawa we knew and we saw all fall and early spring before and he got injured.

But no, he does, he brings a different -- he can bunt, he can move the baseball. But he's hit a couple -- his homers have been two of the furthest ones I've seen from a

left-hander this year.

Q. Question about Joey. Just speak to all the first-pitch strikes he was throwing today. As his pitching coach, you've said many of your pitchers, I know it's a big deal, but just for him tonight, what did Joey reveal that you were able to make that happen tonight?

WES JOHNSON: Yeah, I mean, I don't think you gotta be able to throw -- you're in this ballpark. We're used to playing in some different-sized parks in our league. And this ballpark was playing big tonight. And it kind of does free you up a little bit to attack the strike zone a little more.

And Joey, that was our game plan from earlier this week and his bullpens, to his touches yesterday. He throws a touch the day before. And I was like, Joey, strike one, we're going to act like you are seeing the first nine hitters. You got nine pitches a day.

And he went -- his touch yesterday -- he went 7-for-9. So it was like, let's go. We shut it down. And so we've really put an emphasis on it all week, and it was nice to see today.

Q. On Thursday, you were asked a question about the size of your home field, and you made it a point to point out that it's 350 down the left field line. Rylan Lujo today rips two balls down the third baseline, one off the foul pole, and it's 335 down the left field line. Was there a match-up that you liked against the left-handed starter to put Lujo a guy who describes himself as not much power as your 3-hitter today?

WES JOHNSON: No, I mean Lu's been playing in 3. Yeah, it's kind of ironic, right? I mean, Kenny hits a ball to right. Daniel hits the ball to right. Both of those probably are homers at our park. And then the one that goes out would not have been a homer at our park, for the record. Kind of crazy.

But no, Lu's been there. We really like him behind Jackson and Phelps because he can move the ball. Then with both of those guys' speed, it just kind allows you to do some different things on the base path.

You can steal, if you need to steal. You can hit and run and even move the ball. I mean, you feel comfortable moving some guys with Lu back there because he's really, really tough to strike out.

Q. Texas has only been shutout one game all year, against Vanderbilt. And he came close to doing it. You handle the top three of the order. Did you think he handled him perfectly. I don't think Pack saw a

straight ball all night?

WES JOHNSON: Yeah, obviously you think so. All three of those guys are really, really -- the year Robbins has had, that young man's going to play this game a long time if he wants to. Obviously Carson.

That's my first time to really see Pack. Obviously, we didn't play them this year in the regular season. You would see -- the kids always got the reels on going in the clubhouse. So I've seen some highlights.

But before obviously this series, this is the first time I've broke him down. We looked at obviously Tinney and Robbins last year and just different things. So yeah, I mean, for the most part, I feel he did a really good job handling them and executing his pitches.

Q. Bringing Joey in from Stanford, what did you see in him in the transfer portal?

WES JOHNSON: Oh, gosh. He said a quick one. So I'll try to make it quick. We saw a lot. A young man we thought we could -- everybody always gets caught up on velocity sometimes. And sometimes guys just need to change and create a different deception and movement from a slot to create more ride or swing-and-miss.

We just saw a guy we thought we could really help get back in the strike zone. You look at his strikeout-per-nine versus his time with us, versus careers, has jumped up pretty good.

We just thought we could get him a few more swings-and-misses. Everybody knew he had a fastball. And we added the cutter and added the sweeper and brought back the curveball. And those pitches, really -- now you can't just sit in there and hunt the heater away, which is kind of what he was doing.

So we just thought we could really get him a good sweeper and get him a curveball and give him a chance to really, really make a run at the big leagues with it.

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