

# 2026 Men's College World Series

Monday, June 15, 2026

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

**Georgia Bulldogs**

**Coach Wes Johnson**

**Kenny Ishikawa**

**Caden Aoki**

Postgame Press Conference



Oklahoma - 4, Georgia - 3

THE MODERATOR: Joining us are members of the Georgia Bulldogs, head coach Wes Johnson and student-athletes Caden Aoki and Kenny Ishikawa.

WES JOHNSON: I thought a really good ball game tonight. We had some opportunities to get back into the game. We didn't cash in on those.

I thought Caden was awesome tonight. We had a hiccup there in the first, and for him to finish the game for us was massive, as you look forward and saving your bullpen.

And so from that standpoint, I mean, we've got to clean up a few things, but we'll be back and ready to go tomorrow night.

**Q. This is the first time that this Georgia team is playing in an elimination game tomorrow and playing with their backs against the wall. What's the mindset going into tomorrow?**

CADEN AOKI: It's the same thing. It's the same process. It's the same mindset that we've had all season. I mean, if we change something now, then that's when it's all going to go bad.

So we're going to stick to our approach. We're going to stick to what we do. We're going to stick to the courage that we have. I think this team has the most courage in the country. So we're going to come back strong.

KENNY ISHIKAWA: Yeah, following up with Caden, the good thing about this series is we still get to compete tomorrow. So just stay loose, play how we've been

playing, and just get after it.

CADEN AOKI: I also think that it's just another opportunity to play with our brothers. We have more games to play now with each other. So we're excited about it.

**Q. Kenny, you guys obviously got a hold of some. But what made Xander, Oklahoma's starter so effective today? What makes him so hard to hit against?**

KENNY ISHIKAWA: I thought he was placing the balls really well today. I think, yeah, we did have 11 strikeouts as a team. So I think we've got to make that a little bit less. But we're swinging the bat good. So just get after it tomorrow and just play loose.

**Q. Caden, you got a little roughed up there in the first inning -- not really all your fault there -- but how did you settle back in and go throughout the rest of the game?**

CADEN AOKI: Not to sugarcoat it -- my stuff was really bad early on. Like, it was, simply put. And I kind of knew that. I kind of realized that pretty early. And they didn't miss the pitches that I left in the heart of the plate.

I just had to take a step back and really just change my mindset, to be honest. It was a trying day on the mound. But sometimes those are -- it's just what you have to do sometimes.

So I felt better as the game went on. I just had to stick to my approach and stick to my mindset and kind of realize where my stuff was. And I just had to elevate my game towards the end of it.

**Q. Kenny, you were 1-for-2 against Mercurius. What did you see from him -- 2-for-3?**

KENNY ISHIKAWA: I was seeing the ball pretty well overall. So I thought he was still doing a really good job placing his pitches -- his fastball, change-up, and his slider. He struck me out once, too. I thought that slider was placed really well. But, yeah, that's about it.

**Q. You guys are an offense that thrives on getting guys on and hitting with power. Even going back to Saturday, it's been a challenge for you. How are you guys handling that and how do you maybe change things going into tomorrow?**

KENNY ISHIKAWA: I mean, can you repeat that again.

**Q. You excelled so much by scoring by getting runners on and pressuring the pitcher. How do you kind of get that back going into tomorrow?**

KENNY ISHIKAWA: Just getting our lead-off guy on every inning. I think we got on base when it was two outs a lot today. Just that part.

**Q. In the first inning, Caden did labor a little bit and he got out of it. Even he on the stand admitted that his stuff maybe wasn't the best tonight. What did you see out of your starter to allow him to continue working throughout the game? He finished with eight innings completed here?**

WES JOHNSON: I disagree. I thought his stuff was just okay in the first two innings. Then I thought he settled in. We got the stuff we've seen from Caden Aoki all year. And I just allowed him to get some quick outs and rollover ground balls.

And kept his pitch count low enough that when you're in those kind of games, you've got to have that mindset of, when you're behind you've got to be careful, and you feel like you've got to have him keep it there, to keep it within striking distance.

I felt like obviously he did that. We had some opportunities, and just didn't cash in.

**Q. Mercurius was able to miss quite a few bats with his fastball, which, I don't know if you found that surprising. But what were you expecting to see from him? For a freshman to come in and do that against your offense feels pretty rare. What did you see there?**

WES JOHNSON: Yeah, you've got to tip your hat. I told Skip after the game, Xander was impressive tonight and really dominated us with the fastball. We've got to be ready to hit the fastball, and we didn't. We didn't do a good job of that tonight, obviously.

And then I thought the command of the fastball for him tonight was really good. He was able to run it in on us. He was able to elevate it at times. Then he stuck a couple down and away. When you've got a guy who is commanding his fastball to those three quadrants, it does

make it tough.

**Q. I think you've had six extra-base hits, two games. Not probably what you're used to. Is that just a factor of just being in this place where everybody pitches well, or is it, as you're saying, it's the fastball where you're getting guys on, that there are more things you can control that --**

WES JOHNSON: We faced a First-team All-SEC guy, game one. And then we faced a guy tonight who was executing his fastball. So our game's hard. There is that saying that good pitching can stop good hitting. We can talk about the history of the game and history of time.

Tip your hat to Xander tonight. Like I said, threw the ball exceptionally well. Executed it. When he needed off-speeds, he got it.

**Q. The other lineup that you guys faced tonight has been extremely hot in the postseason. I know you didn't face them throughout the regular season. But just on film, what are you seeing out of that lineup that has made them so complete, top to bottom? And they ran a couple of balls out of here today.**

WES JOHNSON: I mean, I think it's any team in this tournament. You get down to the final eight, and you make mistakes in the middle of the plate and up, guys are going to hit them. It doesn't matter what team you're on -- Texas, Georgia, Oklahoma, whoever. It doesn't matter.

And so they're doing a really good job of when they're getting the mistake up of getting off a good swing. And, quite frankly, that was the difference in the game tonight.

**Q. I know you guys haven't played in an elimination game this year, but you were down 7-0 in a super regional. You've seen a lot of adversity and come from behind. How can those experiences help you guys coming into the rest of the week here?**

WES JOHNSON: No, I mean, we're going to get up tomorrow. We get another chance to play this game. It's nine innings. It's when guys start to press that things go bad. And we're going to come out and play our game. We're going to try to do it at a slow pace, be ready to hit a little more than we were tonight.

But we're not -- there's no need to hype up elimination games or winner brackets game. Like I said, I think that's when players get tight. We're going to go out and play Georgia Bulldog baseball the way we've been doing it all year. And hopefully we'll play it a little cleaner tomorrow.

