

NL Division Series: Cubs vs Brewers

Sunday, October 5, 2025

Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA

American Family Field

Chicago Cubs

Manager Craig Counsell

Workout Day Press Conference

Q. Ben was just in here talking about how kind of the vibe postgame did not seem like anyone was too down or anything. What did you see from the reaction and the conversations from that group after yesterday?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Yeah, I mean, I think it's -- look, the game got away from us early, so it's not like -- it did, right; it got away from us. It's a loss, and you kind of move on from it quickly.

There's no penalty -- it's one loss. It doesn't count for more how you lose. We didn't lose well, but sometimes -- a close game could have cost us some pitching type stuff, too. We lost and you move on, and that's how the clubhouse felt.

Q. Michael Busch is a good hitter no matter where you put him, but when he's been in the lead-off spot since he moved there, his numbers have been exceptional, kind of took off later in the year. What would you say about the fact that he did not change as a hitter in the lead-off spot and what he provides at the top of the lineup?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Yeah, number one, he's just a really good hitter and that's the biggest reason that he's there. I think you're right, I think Michael has been exceptional at kind of picking his spots -- you're the lead-off hitter once, and that first at-bat of the game is a different at-bat, and I think Michael has been exceptional at that at-bat.

You pick your spots to attack on the first pitch and you make that pitcher have some doubt kind of starting the game with the ability to hit a home run.

A lot of times guys don't amp it up on the first pitch, they don't amp it up for the first hitter, and makes that pitcher understand he has to do that or should I do that.



So he's done it great. He's done a great job of it. He's overall just had an exceptional year.

Q. You touched on it in the first answer, but how big is it that those five guys in the bullpen have three days' rest? I'm assuming that probably hasn't happened since the All-Star break. And do you expect to lean on them on Monday?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Yeah, I think specifically the right-handers got the break. The three right-handers I think needed the break. I'm glad they got it. Expect them to pitch, of course, yeah.

Yeah, I think they've probably -- all five of them have a break for three days in a row, probably no, but they've had breaks since the All-Star break, yeah.

Q. Who's your starter tomorrow?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Imanaga.

Q. With Shota getting that first postseason start under his belt, what can that do for a guy? Obviously the position players are out there every day, but getting that second postseason one, especially on the road in this situation?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Yeah, I don't have a good answer on that one. I don't know what it does. There's no easy -- it's not easier. The postseason starts are hard. You've got a good team on the other side. You've got to make a lot of pitches. I think you understand -- if anything, maybe you understand how in every pitch, kind of the intensity, you feel it. You kind of just go hard for as long as you can, and when it's over, it's over.

In that sense it's maybe a little different.

Shota pitched well against San Diego. Looking forward to tomorrow.

Q. The high strikeout totals, do you chalk that up mostly in the four games to the pitchers you faced in those four games and not try to overanalyze it more



than that? What's your take?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Yes. (Laughter).

Q. Obviously Chourio had a great game for them yesterday. It's unclear what his status might be moving forward. If he's out of the equation, what could be the effect and what have you seen from Isaac Collins who filled in for them?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Yeah, that feels like a Brewer question to me, but yeah, Chourio is a great young player. I think he got hurt against us the first time actually. Yeah, I guess we'll see tomorrow if he's in there or not.

Collins has had a nice year, as well, and had to play out there a bunch because of some injuries they had. He's also had a very nice year. Both good players. We're going to have to figure out how to get one of them out.

Q. With all the games you've been playing, you could feel like you just want a break. But what's the goal, what you want to get out of the workout today? The players were even saying sometimes you just want to get right back out there after a loss like that. Just Shota with the late game tomorrow, how you get someone ready for a later-than-normal game?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Yeah, the schedule is the schedule, and I think every different schedule has its own challenges. For some guys, the off-day is awesome. For other guys, the off-day is, I'd rather be back out there. It's just the schedule.

We can watch some football today. We can have an easy day. That's it. We can watch football without having a game plan. Not watch football while we're playing.

Yeah, the start time, it's not a big deal. I don't think the start time is a big deal. An hour later, not a big deal. It makes for a long day. Doing this in the past, it does make for a long, let's go, let's go to the field, let's get the game going, when is BP. But all good.

Q. The term Wrigley North has been in use for years. What did you think of that when you were here, and what do you think of it now, the idea that people call this Wrigley North, Cubs fans and all that?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Yeah, honestly, I think it's changed a little bit. I think maybe when I was -- many moons ago when I was a player, frankly, the Brewers weren't very good for a while, and so I think it was maybe more so true.

Look, just logistically, for a lot of Cubs fans this is easier to

get to than Wrigley Field. I hate to be logical about it, but that's just the facts.

I think that plays a part into Cub fans wanting to come here. It really does. And that's probably most of it really, is that it's just an easier place to get to.

From a Cubs perspective, look -- we feel this all over the country, that there's Cubs fans all over the country, and they travel well, and we feel them at every park we go to. It's a great thing, and we're lucky to have that.

That's, I think, part of who the Cubs are and the brand that they are and the size of the city we play in. Every park we go to, you feel Cubs fans in the park, and we're lucky about that.

Q. We just heard about Ben talking to Justin Turner, with all his postseason experience in the locker room. Wanted to get your perspective on that. In what ways is he able to help having been through this so many times?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Well, I think Justin has -- in terms of just experience in general, Justin has been a huge piece of this team. There's really no -- you're not going to encounter a situation, regular season, offensive player, post-season, that he hasn't been through or been through a version of.

On top of that, he has this humility with the ability to say the right thing as well as any player that I've been around. That is, we're lucky to have him a part of this. He's been a big -- had a huge contribution.

The other thing, this man has had a great baseball career. He's done a lot. He's not playing that much this year. There's never been one bit of, like -- it's just been, what can I do to help, what can I do to help.

When you keep doing that every single day, everybody in the clubhouse sees that. So there's lessons every day that a player like that is teaching somebody like Ben or the rest of the guys in the room.

Q. Matt Shaw the last week of the season offensively was starting to look pretty locked in and he was talking yesterday about wanting to step up and other guys need to contribute. Obviously the two walks yesterday. What have you been seeing from Shaw, and in the postseason do you ever have to worry about younger guys, less experienced guys trying to do too much? What have you been seeing from Matt?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Yeah, I mean, look, we're dealing

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

with 12 plate appearances, so you've got to be careful to make quick judgments.

I think he had some at-bats against the Padres that were not very good at-bats. He had some poor at-bats against the Padres.

Was it the stuff, sun, whatever, shadows? He had some poor at-bats. You've got to kind of own up to that. I think he had a really good at-bat drawing a walk yesterday that I thought was a positive sign. He's made a play in the ninth inning on Thursday that was a tough play and a huge play.

You know, in four games so far, hasn't done much offensively, yes, and we need every bit of every person's contribution for sure. But optimistic that he can get it going.

Q. What were the initial conversations when having Busch going into lead-off? And he's been primarily middle of the order; just can you see him still sticking at a lead-off spot long-term, or gravitating toward --

CRAIG COUNSELL: Yeah, I mean, it was long enough ago I don't remember the exact -- essentially Ian was struggling a little bit, and maybe we were struggling offensively. We probably were. I don't know. It was just sometimes you were just doing it to switch it up.

From that point forward, really we've used Michael and Nico as the two lead-off hitters. Lineup construction is a little overrated in my opinion. Just try to hit your best hitters as much as you can. So we'll continue to do that.

And who's on your team with you, so next year might be different for Michael. But the job he's done there this year and kind of how he impacts that first at-bat of the game is pretty great and kind of the start you want your team to get off to.

Q. Going back to Shota, we've seen from his first spring his ability to dive in and figure out how he needs to adjust and adapt, and right now the home runs are the big issue. I know they're not all created equal, but what have you thought of how he's been going in and attacking this issue and the confidence that he can make the proper adjustments?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Yeah, the thing that I love most about Shota is that he is a -- there's a couple things. He's a competitor, and I think he's a thinking-man's competitor, and he also pitches with a lot of joy on the mound. While competing at a really high level.

He doesn't sometimes come across as, like, this fierce

competitor, because he's really joyful on the mound, so that doesn't come across as fierce necessarily. But I think he's a fierce competitor.

He does it by -- he's trying to figure out a way to get you out, and he's trying to figure out a way to be better, and that's going on pitch to pitch. That's going on between starts.

He's really good at that part of it.

We've seen him pitch for two years, and we've seen him succeed for two years, and that's how he does it to me. He's a fun player to watch compete; there's no question about it.

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