

NL Division Series:

Cubs vs Brewers

Wednesday, October 8, 2025

Chicago, Illinois, USA

Wrigley Field

Chicago Cubs

Manager Craig Counsell

Postgame 3 Press Conference

Cubs 4, Brewers 3.

Q. Craig, in that fourth inning, J-Mo getting out of that jam, how big was that for you guys for escaping minimal damage?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Yeah, I thought J-Mo really escaped two innings essentially, the first and the fourth, and he had to make big pitches in both innings. That's why you want J-Mo out there. I said before it's the calm in the storm, and nothing fazed him, and he made a couple really -- both times made some good pitches, in the first to just limit -- first and the fourth to limit the damage.

That's what being a good pitcher is about. A run scores, and you don't get flustered. You don't change anything. You just keep making pitches.

For J-Mo to just put up single runs in those innings I think was really important, especially with how the game unfolded.

Q. How would you describe Michael Busch again in the lead-off spot and the way not only getting the crowd right into it but just leveling the game?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Yeah, I'm going to tell our guys it's the first inning every inning tomorrow. I think that's our best formula right now (chuckling) offensively.

Look, Michael, you can just tell by the way they manage the game, he's become the guy in the lineup that everybody is thinking about and they're doing their pitching around him, and that's a credit to the player. It really is.

It's not easy to do, and he's put us off to a great start a whole bunch of these games.

Q. We talked about momentum last game. It felt like



the momentum shift when Pete got that big hit. How important was that?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Yeah, I mean, I think we haven't really played with a lead really the entire offseason. I guess Game 3 against San Diego we did. But we had Priester on the ropes and we had great at-bats kind of getting to that point.

Finishing an inning is important. Adding on runs is important. Those kind of crooked numbers, super important in the postseason. Sometimes that's the chance you get.

We put up a big number in an inning, and it held up.

Q. Keller has done so many different things for you guys in different spots. Just the eighth inning there in that moment, especially falling behind 1-0, what did you see out of that three-pitch sequence that followed to get out of the biggest moment of the game?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Yeah, I mean, I think two things. I thought Caleb did a really nice job as well. I thought he did a really nice job on Contreras. It's not an out, and he still did a really nice job. He got strike 1 and then he was going to make him hit his pitch the rest the at-bat. I thought that's how you go through that sequence of hitters.

It took Brad a couple pitches to get into it, but he made a really good pitch with two strikes, just a fastball up, good velocity up, the right pitch, and got himself out of it.

Q. Are you ready to name a starter for tomorrow?

CRAIG COUNSELL: I've got one more conversation to have, and then we'll do that.

Q. You kind of alluded to it, but the performance that Jameson gave you, how did it affect being able to line up your bullpen with the lead?

CRAIG COUNSELL: I think in the postseason it's just like number of outs you can get, right. Kind of looked at it before the game and was like, we really need to get J-Mo



two times through the order.

When he had a 1-2-3 third you're thinking maybe we can get four plus from him or an out in the fifth. They put together a nice rally in the fourth.

But that was kind of the minimum we needed, I guess, is how I'd say it. He got us 12 outs, and what it does more than anything is we didn't have to really overuse anybody tonight.

So we should be in pretty good shape for tomorrow, and that's important.

Q. You used five relief pitchers tonight. Are they all available tomorrow?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Yeah, I'm going to always wait to see how they feel when they come in, but I don't think any of them threw more than 20 pitches. A couple guys went one plus, but nobody with more than 20 pitches. I anticipate being in pretty good shape.

Q. You were able to force them to use six pitchers. How do you anticipate that's going to help you guys tomorrow where you put them into some uncomfortable positions?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Well, their guys did a nice job. Having to take your starter out in the first inning, that's potentially something really uncomfortable, but their guys did a good job and they obviously put up eight scoreless innings after that. I think they're in fine shape tomorrow.

Maybe in Game 5 that has some impact. I don't think it has an impact tomorrow.

Q. Between last Thursday in Game 3 and then tonight, how have you seen your team handle the mental and emotional component of the brink of elimination?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Well, I mean, it's fun and stressful in the same sentence, in the same light, and I think you feel both emotions a lot.

But you're playing to play tomorrow, and that can't help but give you something else. It has to.

I thought we played with that urgency, especially in the first -- we just did a great job in the first inning. We had really good at-bats. I thought the Michael homer, yes, great. Nico getting on base right away again, it's not going to be a one-run-inning. You're going to have a tough inning again.

I thought we did that really, really well, and it makes a

difference. Every run is so hard to come by, and so we put together that really beautiful inning, and you have to play like that. You kind of pull out all the stops, and if that gives you an advantage, you try to use it as much as you can.

Q. I was just curious, the pop-up in the first inning that fell, it looked like you were chatting with the ump. Were you looking for clarification?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Yeah, Michael just clearly just lost it. He had no idea where the ball was. The wind put the ball in a place that was just no-man's land for everybody.

Nico and Dansby went after it, but the umps got it right. You have to have a player that's going to catch it to call infield fly, and we never had a player really close to catching it. Right call. I was hoping they made the wrong call; they did not.

Q. What did you see from the at-bats after that first inning? You talked about it in your first answer, but what did you see from the at-bats as the game progressed?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Yeah, we didn't produce a lot of opportunities. I thought the third against Quintana was maybe the -- the first and second, nobody out. We had a couple pitches -- we had some pitches to hit that inning. I know Carson was mad at himself. He thought he had a pitch to hit; Dansby got to 3-1; Quintana threw a pretty good pitch away but knew a fastball was coming count.

So that was really the inning where I thought we had a shot to add on. That was our biggest opportunity. I think Carson would tell you, he missed a pitch. He had a good pitch to hit, 2-1, I think, and popped it up to right.

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