

NL Division Series:

Cubs vs Brewers

Saturday, October 11, 2025

Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA

American Family Field

Chicago Cubs

Manager Craig Counsell

Pregame 5 Press Conference

Q. You mentioned yesterday that everyone but Boyd is available today. Ultimately, what made you guys opt for Pomeranz? And how much, obviously, did you weigh with Shota there?

CRAIG COUNSELL: I mean, we just pitched Drew. Essentially he's throwing the ball really well. I think both sides are kind of acknowledging that the first inning has been a pretty big inning in this series. We went with a guy that's throwing the ball really well.

Q. You have experience in these must-win elimination games as a player and now as a manager. Do you take anything from those experiences as a player, as a manager? Do you remember what that was like? How different is it in your role now?

CRAIG COUNSELL: I'm at the point where my playing days are not a very great memory, truthfully. They're faded.

Look, four of our last six games have been this. So we've done this now. In terms of recent experience, we're pretty darned experienced, right?

So it's no different. It really isn't. It's no different than the last three games that we've taken part in this.

And look, these are the games you try to get yourself into. You work so hard to get into. You dream of playing in them in the backyard. That's the best part of it.

When all the other stuff -- that's there, the finality of it, the stress of it, that's all there -- but I think if you flip it to know that, man, this is what I worked so hard for, that's when you get to a place that your best self comes out. And that's all you can ask. Your best self comes out. And we play the game, and let's go.



Q. After seeing the Brewers as much as you have this season, I'm wondering, how do you explain their uncanny ability to make their opponents play more sloppily than they typically do, especially when it comes to your defensive errors, which they've had more errors committed against them than any team in baseball this year?

CRAIG COUNSELL: I would say it's kind of a result of some other things. I think they hit the ball on the ground a lot. I think that is going to lead to defensive errors. They make contact a lot. They hit the ball on the ground a lot.

That's going to produce errors, just that kind of baseball produces errors. So mostly it's a result of, from that statistic. They have a better chance to do it because of how their offensive players, what their offensive players are skilled at.

Q. Back on Pomeranz, what has made him so successful this postseason? When you kind of look at his career trajectory and the comeback that he's had this year after so long out of the majors, have you seen that fuel him at all? What does that say about him and the year he's had?

CRAIG COUNSELL: I mean, I think Drew has -- Drew's best trait, he has a really unique fastball. It doesn't light up the radar gun, but everybody can see it. It's a unique -- he throws it so much, but hitters have a hard time squaring it up. It's unique.

Hitters hate stuff they don't see a lot. That's what Drew's fastball kind of is, from the left side.

Look, we did a nice job, our front office did a really nice job in acquiring Drew. My history with him maybe helped just a little bit in terms of, like, yes, let's go do this.

And then Drew deserves so much credit for, look, he hasn't -- he's not a young man in terms of baseball world. He spent a long time in the minor leagues continuing to try to, as he says, just get one more chance. And it turns out that that one more chance, he's earned this, right, and earned a big role on this team.



That's just a credit to somebody like -- he could have gone home, and he would have had a great career and nobody would have thought twice of it. Nobody would have thought he gave up at all, right? But he kept doing it because he's doing what he loves to do.

We can all get on board with that. That's where we all want to put ourselves. But there was a lot of bad stuff, not bad stuff, but he's in Triple-A as a 34-year-old, like, multiple years and that gets -- Triple-A gets old at that age. It just does.

He kept going, and he's created some great memories for himself because of it.

Q. I'm curious, once you both named your starters, considering you've played four games, familiarity with the teams and the managers, do you think you'll be surprised by anything they do pitching-wise? Or could you map it out right now after Megill? And vice versa, I guess, with Murph.

CRAIG COUNSELL: You can't map it out because you don't know how the innings are going to go in terms of -- I think at some point in the game after a couple of pitchers have pitched it will be pretty evident what's going to happen. But I think early in the game it's really dependent on maybe where some innings end and things like that.

I mean, when everybody is available and you have -- I think you have some idea of the pecking order. But it's also, it's 27 outs. We've got to get a bunch of outs. I'm sure there will be some, not surprises, but you're going to have to count on a bunch of guys to get this done. I think both sides know that.

Q. It seems like right from the get-go, going back to the Spring Training with Justin Turner, his impact on the team was going to be evident. Now as we are here today at this point, how would you describe maybe some of the behind-the-scenes things that you've from him in the way he's helping some guys, even if he's not necessarily in the lineup?

CRAIG COUNSELL: I think for players like Justin, I think you have to have an ego to get to this point. You don't have the success he's had -- ego is not a bad word -- it's just you have to have that to have the success that he's had.

But then when the true teachers and the true teammates, they do that part without making themselves the center of attention. And I think Justin, it's hard to do that, and Justin has a really great way of doing that, where he's -- not only

is he a player but then he kind of separates and he's literally a teacher with this great experience and this great wisdom.

And that comes across as so authentic to his teammates. And that's why it's so impactful.

Q. Normally they say you don't manage against the other manager, but when these games change like they do now, is the tendencies of Murph or your tendencies towards him, is it more in your head to try to figure that out in these types of games, rather than normal, regular-season games?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Look, you know Misiorowski is going to pitch, Uribe is going to pitch, Koenig is going to pitch, Mears is going to pitch. You know who is going to pitch. What order they pitch in, I'm not sure what order they're going to pitch in, but you know that, right?

So there's not too much to figure out on the other side. It doesn't do me any good to try to think about who is going to pitch next. It really doesn't.

We've got to have good at-bats. We've got to win pitches. I think in bullpen games, blowing up the plan, as much as you can and try to introduce some chaos to that plan is offensively how you can derail it. But in the end, it's just win pitches, have great at-bats, put pressure on them. Whether it's a bullpen game or a starter from the other side, that's what you have to do offensively.

So I know a lot is going to be made of who is pitching and whatever, we've got to create disruption on offense and you do that by getting runners on base, make pressure innings, making them make lots of pitches with runners in scoring position, fouling off pitches, battling and getting long at-bats, those are the things that offensively that's a big part of today. I think a lot is going to be made of the pitching plan, but I think offensively that's what needs to be done.

Q. Back to Pomeranz, just with the journey he's had, when you told him he was starting, was he emotional or tell you how much this meant to him?

CRAIG COUNSELL: No. He was like, I can't believe it took you this long. He was waiting for me to tell him.

Look, he's done this before for us also. He's got this great sense of knowing kind of when it's going to happen as well. So he was expecting it. He was expecting it. He said, you walked by me once, I knew you were going to come get me at some point. So he was expecting it.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

Q. In the same vein, did you talk to Shota about other than just be ready about not starting, or does he understand that --

CRAIG COUNSELL: I think the conversation with Shota is that, look, you're not starting; you've got to be ready to pitch in the bullpen. I don't know when you're going to pitch. Let's make sure that you have a routine that feels good for you to prepare to pitch. And he was very understanding of that and creating a routine for himself today that gets himself ready if his number's called.

Q. Your bullpen, the way that you manage, you've always been vocal about, 27 outs, don't care about roles, we just need you guys to help each other. I'm curious the conversations you have throughout the season to instill that mindset in the way this bullpen has bought in, because I would imagine at times maybe guys want to know roles, but the way they have been executing and it seems like you set them up almost for the postseason the way you managed throughout the year.

CRAIG COUNSELL: I think this group has been -- in the regular season, there's always going to be more roles just because of the nature of the schedule. I think there has to be because of the nature of the schedule.

But once the playoffs come, I think you see it just around, when you watch games, guys want to do anything to help. That's the mindset that everybody has.

So, I mean, what Daniel Palencia is doing essentially as a fireman or closer in the middle of the game, it's the same thing.

In the playoffs, like, getting out, whatever, he got out 15 the other night, that was an enormous out. I think we can all agree that was a really, really big out, and may have been like the out of the game, right? So that moment in the playoffs can happen at any time.

And that's what you're just trying to acknowledge. And I think the guys really buy into that.

Q. You've probably seen everything from your time in baseball, but when you watch a 15-inning elimination game the night before your elimination game, does that make you more or less anxious?

CRAIG COUNSELL: That's a great question. Yeah, I think -- I guess I'm glad it happened. I'm glad I saw it because it does make you think a little bit. But then your analytical head says, what are the odds of a 15-inning game, right? So honestly that's what it says.

So you've got to keep guys available. But you've still got to get the out in front of you. And you don't expect games to go that long. That was a crazy game. I can't imagine being part of that game. It was a great baseball game, just an incredible baseball game, the best baseball has to offer, like, hanging on to that drama for -- eight, even going into the seventh inning, hanging on that drama for essentially eight innings, one play is going to change the game? That's the best baseball has to offer. That was incredible.

Q. Playing off that a little bit, going back to Pomeranz starting, was the other side of that coin taking one of your, basically, two lefties out of the mix for late in the game or extra innings against Yelich or Turang, was that part of it?

CRAIG COUNSELL: I mean, we've got to make a decision, right? And it's just Drew's going to get his outs and if Drew gets his outs, then it's when it happens in the game, yeah, whether it happens in the first or the sixth, you've got to get the outs, right?

And that's kind of what you think. You're right, after Drew, we still have two lefties left. We have Shota and Caleb. So it just changes that dynamic a little bit. But, yeah, that's part of it.

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