

# NL Wild Card Series:

## Padres vs Cubs

Monday, September 29, 2025

Chicago, Illinois, USA

Wrigley Field

### Chicago Cubs

### Craig Counsell

Workout Day Press Conference

**Q. Just with Matthew Boyd being named the Game 1 starter, what was his reaction as you had that conversation?**

CRAIG COUNSELL: Not much of a reaction. I think he was expecting it. He's ready to go. Obviously with how the weeks went out, it was the person we had lined up and that's kind of how we did last week was to have a couple choices for who it could be.

So, yeah, excited to give Matthew the ball and let him go to work.

**Q. Obviously a lot of really strong points of his season but I remember back in spring we were talking about questions about durability and workload just not knowing with him coming off the surgery, what have you thought of his body of work this year from that perspective?**

CRAIG COUNSELL: Yeah, look, being a major league starter is a hard job. And I think that the mark that those guys all use to judge themselves is: Did I make every start? And that's what Matthew did this year. He took the ball every time. Made every start. And that's a great accomplishment.

I know that's something that every major league starter takes a ton of pride in. It's hard to do. It takes a lot of discipline and work to get that done. And he's done it really well. The season is never a straight line. There's going to be ups and downs through it.

And you've got to make adjustments. There's people on the other side that are trying to beat you. So you know, we're lucky to have Matt. He's a big reason why we're here. He's been our consistent, take-the-ball-every-time starter and you're happy to hand the ball to a guy like that.



**Q. The fact that you guys gave yourself a couple options at the beginning of the week, and given the fact that Imanaga has pitched so well against the Padres, how did you guys end up landing on Boyd?**

CRAIG COUNSELL: A little bit of it is he's got the most rest, and I still think that matters, if you can get guys rest at this time of year, I think that matters.

Frankly, Matthew is throwing the ball well. We like how he's throwing the ball. He's pitched well against the Padres, I feel like. That probably played, like, 1 percent into this because it feels like another lifetime ago.

You know, we've got to cover 27 innings, you know what I mean. And so it's going to take a bunch of them to cover 27 innings.

**Q. How did your internal managing --**

CRAIG COUNSELL: This used to be the COVID training room for the visitors. Did you know that? (Laughter).

**Q. Do you have a mask I can borrow?**

CRAIG COUNSELL: Yeah, this was the training room in the COVID era.

**Q. Good to know.**

CRAIG COUNSELL: I love interrupting you, by the way (laughter).

**Q. How was lunch today? Did you have a good lunch?**

CRAIG COUNSELL: Excellent.

**Q. How was your internal managing clock and mechanism work differently in a two-out-of-three, win-or-good-bye series?**

CRAIG COUNSELL: Well, I think both teams, every team that's in this series, you have to understand that every inning is a leverage inning, if you want to say it like that.



You treat every inning like that.

I think at some point in a game, you think about a Game 3. But you know, it's going to take a bigger separation in a game to do that and at some point you have to do it.

But that's how you think of it. You've got two games and you're going home. So that's going to make every decision logically just move faster, but at the same time you could have had three games. There's a possibility of a 13-inning game. You've got to keep those things in the back of your mind, but I think knowing that you've got to win one of the next two games or you're going home, everybody is going to be pretty aggressive.

**Q. (How much of a difference does the rest make at this time of year?)**

CRAIG COUNSELL: We tried to give guys as much rest as we could and we thought we had the ability to do it. So there was certainly a point to giving these guys more rest. I think this is a difficult time of year for every starter. End of the season is a difficult time of the year.

So that was our thought, certainly, is to give all of our starters, just trying to give them rest when we can give them rest.

You know, does it make a difference? You know, I don't know. I'm not sure. But I think at this time of year when they have pitched a lot of innings, I think rightfully, you think there's some fatigue for every guy out there. Like more rest is better.

**Q. Did you think he had some crispness in that last start that maybe he didn't have before?**

CRAIG COUNSELL: I thought he pitched well. I mean, Christmas, I thought he pitched really well. Nothing's -- in terms of like -- I think Matt's been throwing the ball all right.

I think if you go back a couple starts, I think he's got himself into too many bad counts. That was just what happened to him, and we've talked about he's been great at times of just being -- putting a hitter down in the count immediately, and then he creates such an advantage with his off-speed stuff.

**Q. I was going to ask you how your lunch was.**

CRAIG COUNSELL: Yeah.

**Q. But that got taken. A couple parts. Do you feel any anxiety or nerves, whatever the right word is, relative to how long it's been since you've been part of a playoff series win? And does how you would define**

**success, this endeavor, this season, hang on that to any extent in do you guys have to do some winning to have success?**

CRAIG COUNSELL: It's like deep philosophy. That's an SNL exit a little bit. The philosophy of what is success? I don't know. We're trying to win the game. That's as far as I'm getting, man. We're trying to win tomorrow night. I'm not thinking past that.

You guys can decide that, honestly. You guys write whatever you want. You guys decide that. It's not going to bother me. Just trying to win the game. Be disappointed if we lose for sure.

**Q. So we shouldn't ask you if Shota is Game 2?**

CRAIG COUNSELL: You can ask.

**Q. Is Shota Game 2?**

CRAIG COUNSELL: We'll let you know after Game 1.

**Q. As we talked yesterday before the game, everything's on the board for you guys when you're thinking about getting ready for these games. How close did you come to considering using an opener for this game, and are all those things again on the table for Game 2?**

CRAIG COUNSELL: Well, look, we didn't really -- I mean, Matt was the starter. Like he's going to start. I think the thing that differs most about like a three-game series and a seven-game series is the result of Game 1, you know, really impacts how you look at Game 2.

So that, I mean, I think that means -- that's why I would always leave it open. I just think the result really impacts how you think about Game 2.

**Q. We talked to Miguel Amaya and he says he feels a hundred percent. Can you take us through your thought process of whether or not he'll be colluded on this roster? What do you need to look for?**

CRAIG COUNSELL: We're still having those conversations.

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