

# NL Wild Card Series:

## Padres vs Cubs

Tuesday, September 30, 2025

Chicago, Illinois, USA

Wrigley Field

## Chicago Cubs

## Craig Counsell

### Pregame Press Conference

**Q. Talk a little bit about your roster; some guys are always left off, Amaya and Assad this time.**

CRAIG COUNSELL: Yeah, I don't think there's probably a lot of surprises for you guys here. We had to make a decision about kind of pitching on Sunday last day of the regular season, and Javy ended up being the guy that pitched the bulk of the game.

In the next round, obviously we'll have more decisions to make, and then certainly he'll be under consideration. But I think we thought the regular season should best transpire, this is the roster that made the most sense. Amaya really at this point just hasn't played that much, unfortunately, with the injuries and not a lot of just game action the last four months.

**Q. Kyle, just talk about what you were thinking about and how he's been doing since he's still DHing?**

CRAIG COUNSELL: Yeah, I think kind of similar space. He hasn't been in the outfield for the last month of the season. I think it's still there. The calf is still there a little bit. I think we're more making progress. He had a very good day yesterday and was in the outfield shagging for quite a bit of batting practice. But at this point still feel like this is our best alignment.

**Q. Colin Rea has been so valuable to you guys this year. What is it like knowing you have him as a multi-inning guy as needed in the bullpen?**

CRAIG COUNSELL: Yeah, I mean, I think you see both teams have starters that are active on the roster and may not start games. But we'll use Colin to get outs. At some point he will factor in, quite possibly in an important situation.

**Q. With Soroka, at one point it looked like maybe his**



**season was over and now he's on the roster. Just how important was it to get him back, and what can you say about just the work he did to put himself in this position?**

CRAIG COUNSELL: Well, yeah, when we acquired Michael and then got two innings into his tenure as a Cubbie, he had to walk off the mound, unfortunately, with a shoulder injury. You don't know at that point what you're going to be dealing with.

That process went really well, and I think we may look back on that and say we're kind of thankful that happened. When he walked off the mound, he was throwing 90 miles an hour and he's touching 97 miles an hour in his last outing on Sunday. He found seven miles an hour in a couple months there; we'll take it.

But he's ready to go. Would you like to have had more innings on highway back? Yeah, maybe. But we tried to get him out there kind of in a safe way to make sure he was healthy for this, and he's ready to go and looks forward to doing anything we ask him to.

**Q. What's the night before the postseason like for you? Are you up all night grinding in your mind or are you relaxed? How did you feel last night, this morning?**

CRAIG COUNSELL: Well, with the local media I've shared my sleep for the last week because they are interested. I slept very well last night, thank you. Very well. My worst night of sleep was the night we clinched home field. I'm not sure why. Still seeking a team of doctors' opinions on that. (Laughter).

**Q. You're no stranger to the postseason, but now being here for this, how much different does it feel being here in Chicago for it, or have you had a chance to even process some of that?**

CRAIG COUNSELL: That doesn't feel different. I mean, it's the postseason. It's like, don't discount it for anybody. It's great for everybody.



I think, look, we're excited to be at Wrigley. I think everybody is excited for that experience. You feel fortunate to get the experience really.

I think any team also -- look, when you can get playoff games at home for your fans, like that's a big deal. That's a huge deal. And I think we're all proud as a team and I know the players would tell you this exact same thing, that it's because you just get to do it for your fans. That's really important. The support and the energy you put into it, that they're able to take part in this with us, I think is super meaningful.

**Q. I've asked you a few forms of this over the last few days, but how does your playbook change, fourth inning, up two runs, fourth inning, down two runs, for these three games compared to the regular season? How quick does your mind work? How does it change for you?**

CRAIG COUNSELL: Look, the best way to say it is I think these games and playoff series always force more action because you're essentially -- we're two games from elimination, right, so you have to look at it that way.

Look, when you play the Mets this week, you see they're acting in that way. You can see how their reliever usage changes and how fast you pull a starter. That's just part of it. You're going to look at it like that for sure, and you can't let stuff happen for as long.

We're still going to need -- we need outs from Matthew Boyd. That's still part of this winning formula. We've got to get outs from Matthew Boyd. I think the Padres would tell you the same thing. If they're going to win the game, they're going to need outs from Pivetta.

It's still part of it, but I think every decision is pushed forward a little bit, absolutely.

**Q. With the Padres' bullpen, do you have to be a little more aggressive with trying to score early, trying to get a lead early?**

CRAIG COUNSELL: Like a better pregame speech?

**Q. Maybe, whatever you --**

CRAIG COUNSELL: I'm going to go for it. I'll go for it.

**Q. More trying to score against a starter, trying to establish --**

CRAIG COUNSELL: I'd love to score against the starter. But yes. They have a good bullpen, absolutely. They have

some really good arms in the bullpen. They're tough to score against, absolutely. Nick Pivetta is pretty good, too. He's tough to score against.

We've got to create -- I tell you, we've got to create pressure in as many innings as we can and we'll break through in one of those innings, but creating pressure absolutely is important. This is not a game where you try to get the starter up to a lot of pitches. That's irrelevant. We've got to create base runners and pressure and make pitchers make pressure pitches.

They have a good bullpen. They have some guys that are pretty special.

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