

NL Wild Card Series:

Padres vs Cubs

Wednesday, October 1, 2025

Chicago, Illinois, USA

Wrigley Field

Chicago Cubs

Brad Keller

Pregame Press Conference

Q. Brad, yesterday coming in getting the save, it's kind of been a long journey for yourself. You talked a little bit about it yesterday just not knowing if you were going to pitch again. Day after, how do you feel knowing the reinvention you've made and just seeing it pay off on a big stage?

BRAD KELLER: Yeah, I mean, honestly, like I said yesterday, it was truly a blessing to be able to get out there and do that. It's been a long road, a lot of ups and downs, a lot of uncertainty and things like that.

But just super thankful, and even going back to Spring Training this year, like I told Counsell, it is like I just want to be back in the Big Leagues and be able to showcase that I can still do it and do things that I've done before and do things that I love to do.

That was kind of my whole mindset in the spring, just do whatever I need to do to get on the team and go out there and try and make the most of the opportunity.

Q. Brad, you are the perfect person to talk to today for a lot of reasons, but number one is you've started a lot during your career. You've relieved right now.

What does Kittredge have to do to prepare for a first-inning opener, and more importantly as a starter, with Imanaga, does he need that 30 pitches that pitchers normally get before they come into a game to start a game?

BRAD KELLER: Yeah, for Kitt, I think it's business as usual. I think just go out there and treat it as if he was relieving as well. We've kind of already talked about it. We've gone through the opener a couple times this year, so we've kind of talked about it in the bullpen and kind of what -- Pal has been kind of the main guy doing it, but I've done it once and now Kitt is doing it.



Just go out there, treat it like it's your one inning stint, and get those guys out and pass it on to Shota.

But yeah, as far as Shota, I think it's kind of tough work because he's been a starter his whole career and he's got a good routine. I think they're going to give him plenty of time to make sure he gets his whole warmup routine in and feel comfortable going out there.

I think it is very different as a starter going out, but it's worked well for -- C-Rea has done it a bunch, other guys have done it a bunch this year as well, and it's worked out, so hopefully it's the same story today.

Q. Kittredge was talking yesterday about just no ego in the bullpen, and we continue to see that throughout the season. He's a perfect example of that where he goes from end of the game to starting today.

How much more can you just describe how that has benefitted you guys this season and maybe even Counsell's message playing into that about the 27 outs?

BRAD KELLER: Yeah, I think that's kind of been our MO all season long. Really tight-knit group down there. We do a lot of things off the field together. We're constantly talking, hanging out, doing things.

It just makes us really close. I think that helps us out a ton, especially when games like this yesterday and today where it's like kind of just -- we don't know when our name is going to get called. We want to go out there and do our job and pass it on to the next guy.

I think it's very important, and I think we've got a good group of guys. We got a lot of veterans down there, guys who have been there, done that type of thing. It's still very nerve-racking, and it's very exciting and all the anxious buildup and everything. That's part of it. That is why we play the game.

It's awesome. And we really rely heavily on each other and we're constantly asking questions to each other and constantly communicating and especially talking about the lineup, talking about the potential pockets that we'll face



and things like that.

It kind of helps no one really get caught off guard whenever their name does get called, so it's been really fun.

Q. What have you noticed from Counsell just in how he's able to manage a bullpen throughout an entire season that kind of stands out to you?

BRAD KELLER: I think communication has been incredible. I think between him and Tommy all year, it's like if guys need a day, they're very adamant on giving you a day.

Obviously our starters have done a tremendous job this year as well that's allowed us to be able to do that. But I think one thing for Counsell, he's very confident in his calls, and one thing that helps us down there is the phone doesn't ring off the hook 24/7. It's literally one phone call, and he's pretty committed to that one phone call and whoever he calls. That helps us out a lot.

We know for the most part unless obviously something drastic changes in the game that that guy is going to go in, and we don't have the whole bullpen up moving around. Guys kind of know their roles and their time that they've been going in there and things like that.

That really helps us out a lot and really keeps us focused on the game.

Q. You guys have so many good individual stories in the bullpen. You have your own story, you have Pomeranz who hadn't pitched in several years. You can go through each guy.

How much do you think those paths, those unique paths, just inform this sense of urgency and willingness to do whatever it takes just because you're not taking things for granted?

BRAD KELLER: Yeah, I think it's huge. I think we've all had different ways to get here, and I think we're all fighting for one common theme here, and that's to win a World Series.

It's been a really fun year for all of us. I think it's shaped us all. We all have different characters down there. I think our careers kind of shaped us to who we are now. It's fun listening to other guys' stories. It's fun to see where they're at. And it's cool that we are all like gelling together. It happened really fast right away when Pom got here, fit right into the bullpen and threw him right in the fire and it was great.

It's really cool. It's really fun. We're just trying to keep it going.

Q. Great bullpens in the past sometimes have had nicknames. According to Dansby, you guys are "The Unit," right?

BRAD KELLER: "The Units."

Q. Is it cool to have a nickname, and what is that bond like between you and the rest of the guys?

BRAD KELLER: It's cool. It's kind of been a running joke, but it's kind of stuck. It's either Units or Dogs has kind of been our nicknames throughout the whole clubhouse, but it's fun.

We said it the other day, even during our celebrations, it's like we always just seem to be next to each other. We're there celebrating, turn around, it's the whole bullpen. We're a really close group, and even when we're walking around the clubhouse, it's always like two bullpen guys rolling together.

It's fun. Obviously we're close with the whole team, but we're really especially close with each other. And like I said, it helps us out when we're down there be such a cohesive group. And we really want to do it for the next guy and pass it on. And like I said, just go do our job, put up a zero and pass it on to the next guy.

Q. Ryan Pressly, how much did he help set the tone for that willingness to do whatever when you saw how he handled his own situation? And early on as a veteran, how much did he help some of you guys?

BRAD KELLER: Yeah, I speak volumes about what Pressly did for me and to Palencia and some other guys that are fairly new to the bullpen.

Even yesterday he sent me a long text right before the game just kind of -- I texted him kind of how do you go about this, how do you handle the anxiousness of the game, the nerves and all that. And he sent me a long text that was really freeing in my mind, kind of -- like I say, he's been there, done that, closed out World Series, closed out biggest moments of the games.

He was super helpful throughout the whole year when we had him. I was constantly leaning on him. He sat right next to me in the bullpen. I was always asking him questions. He was always bringing up postseason memories, and I would always just be like, dude, how did you even focus during that, how did you even get through that and just his mentality through it all was incredible and



then even his early-on season struggles and how he overcame that, things like that.

I relied heavily on him, and he helped me out tremendously this year.

Q. Who came up with "The Units," or how has it evolved throughout the season?

BRAD KELLER: I think honestly Justin Steele started it. J-Mo added on. We're a bunch of big bodies down there, so that's just kind of how it stuck.

I don't know who exactly coined the phrase, but it's stuck all year long.

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