

NL Wild Card Series:

Padres vs Cubs

Thursday, October 2, 2025

Chicago, Illinois, USA

Wrigley Field

Chicago Cubs

Craig Counsell

Pregame Press Conference

Q. Craig, how would you describe the feeling right now a few hours before a win-or-go-home game?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Yeah, I think from a player's perspective, I think you just always want to get the game started. Once the game starts, it's business as usual.

I think that's how you'd describe it. It's win or go home. That makes everything pretty clear. You do everything you possibly can. But it's also a fun day, and I think you work really -- everybody works really hard to get themselves in games like this and moments like this and atmospheres like this, and -- nerves, yeah, of course, but that's how you enjoy it is you know you worked hard to put yourself in an environment like this which is pretty special.

Q. It's been pretty obvious the impact Seiya has had with his bat, but Pete was just in here raving about his defense. How do you describe the growth you've seen from Seiya this year on that front and the poise and confidence he's brought the last few days?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Yeah, look, Seiya has had a great week. That's the bottom line. That's the curious thing about baseball, right? Like about three weeks ago, Seiya was really struggling.

He's put it together, and he's got himself in a really good spot, and it's something we need. We're going to need more guys to hopefully get in that spot, but he's swinging the bat really well.

Q. And defensively?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Defensively, yeah, I think Seiya has been a little bit always underrated as an outfielder. Really our situation is we've just had a situation where we've just had good defenders -- really good defenders in the outfield, last year with Cody and this year with Tuck.



It feels like it's saying something about Seiya's defense, but you're just going to try to play the best guy, and we've had some really good defenders out there.

Q. What have you seen out of Jameson Taillon the last few weeks with how he has been going and what do you like about him going today for you guys?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Well, I think you're confident, like, J-Mo is going to do him. He's really good at that. He's really good at sticking to the things that make him have success, which is really good strike throwing ability, the ability to throw any pitch at any time, controlling situations, with kind of mentally controlling situations to be able to make the next pitch, any pitch, any count.

You combine all those things, and it leads to a lot of success. I'm happy J-Mo is taking the ball, and we know he's going to be prepared for the moment.

Q. Pete was saying in games and situations like this, you're the perfect guy to have in charge. I'm curious from your experience playing in games like this, managing, what you kind of draw on just to be a steady presence? I know it's part of your personality, but probably not easy, either.

CRAIG COUNSELL: No, I think for all the players, you acknowledge your feelings. You acknowledge how you're feeling; it's okay.

But I also know from playing that you just -- when you get in the game, it all normalizes once the game starts. All the feelings you're having before the game, just enjoy them and enjoy the nerves, enjoy the excitement. Like lean into it.

When the game starts, you're in compete mode. You'll get in this kind of -- you get tunnel vision about what's going on, and you're focusing on your job. Then afterwards you look up and you win and you're probably like, I wish I would have remembered more of what happened today.

But you're so locked into what you're supposed to do that



you're just trying to do your job.

Q. What's your favorite part about managing in a postseason game like this?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Yeah, I mean, I think the game is different. I think that's the biggest part. We think about the game differently, and then I just -- to get to play in this atmosphere I think is the best part about it, too. These are the atmospheres you dream about being a part of.

And so, like I said before, you work so hard to get into atmospheres and environments and moments like this, and look, the experiences that we're getting to live out are the best experiences you can have, and they're the ones that you know require a lot of work and a lot of commitment and a lot of focus and a lot of success to get to this point.

Q. This group has really established themselves in the regular season as a very quick bounce-back type of group. Does that carry over to the postseason or are there elements that carry over or are they two completely separate things?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Look, this team, we've responded -- if you win 93 games -- no, we won 92 games. 92 games, you've responded a lot during the season, and you've responded after losses pretty darned well during the season.

I think that if you've reached this level, that you're part of this game and in this game, you know how to respond to failure or you know how to respond to disappointment probably is a better word.

No concerns of that. This is one game. Kind of what happened yesterday and the day before are kind of out the window, and we've got to beat them today. It's nine innings and trying to figure out who's the better team today.

Q. You kind of touched on this briefly and just through your own playing experience, you have quite a few guys who obviously have postseason experience, have elimination game experience. How much, if at all, can that be helpful in a situation like this, or is every situation just so independent, so unique, that the carryover might not be there?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Well, I don't know if this game is any different. From a player's perspective, I'm not sure that this game is different from -- for the new guys. I'm not sure it's different than Game 1.

You're walking into absolutely the same environment. What would a player do differently in Game 1 than Game

3? You can tell me, but I don't know what it would be.

You're going to have the same emotions. You're going to have the same feelings. Like I said, you're blessed by the environment you get to play in, and that creates all the good stuff and the fun stuff.

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