

NL Wild Card Series:

Padres vs Cubs

Thursday, October 2, 2025

Chicago, Illinois, USA

Wrigley Field

Chicago Cubs

Craig Counsell

Postgame Press Conference

Cubs 3, Padres 1

Q. You guys have been so good all year with run prevention. Was this kind of a testament to the way you guys have played between the bullpen and the defense that you guys played?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Yeah, I mean, the defense certainly stands out tonight, especially our middle infielders, Pete this series, Matt Shaw this series, like absolutely some huge plays.

Sometimes in a game that's so statistically analyzed, just preventing -- less pitches for our guys, getting matchups for our guys, I think it makes our bullpen more successful.

That's why teams are so connected because you need that stuff to make everybody affect each other. We played a great defensive game tonight, absolutely.

Q. Last year J-Mo talked about wanting to build 90-win clubs here, too. For him to be on the mound today and give you guys those four innings, what has he meant to the club this year and tonight?

CRAIG COUNSELL: I think when you go into tonight's game, we kind of had a plan of he was probably going to get to the lefties spot pocket in their lineup again, and it was like how many outs can he get and to get 12 outs and 14 hitters, it puts the game with a possibility that it's going to work in terms of using all your bullpen guys and getting matchups that you want.

I thought the game was about what Taillon gave us at the start. I thought it was absolutely crucial. We knew we were going to have a couple guys that we were going to have to work really hard, but with him giving us four innings and getting 12 outs, really put it together.



Q. I feel like after every big win, we're talking about the bullpen, but between Palencia and everything he gave you and that Kittredge for a third straight game, how would you describe the reliability of that group and what that does for you in plotting out a game like this?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Well, I mean, they did what they've done a lot this year, and I think -- I always say they're connected because they get each other's outs and that makes the next guy's job easier.

I thought Danny did -- there was the 6-hitter pocket for Danny, and he got -- how many outs did he get, four or five -- got five outs, six hitters. That was really meaningful. That was really important. That put Pomeranz in a spot to be successful.

Danny went out for three separate innings. He had like three ups in that, which is hard to do for a reliever.

I'm really proud of that group. They worked hard today. A couple of those guys worked really hard, and they worked hard this series.

Q. This is the first time a win-or-go-home game has been won here at Wrigley by the Cubs. Been a while since a postseason series has been won. How would you describe the energy of the crowd today and how it can help in games like this?

CRAIG COUNSELL: I think that's what made this more meaningful, honestly, is just being here. Clinching a playoff series at home in front of your fans with the three games that were just played, you've created memories. You've created baseball fans.

It was a special environment today. We didn't give the fans a lot to cheer about yesterday, unfortunately, but from the third pitch of the game when J-Mo struck out Tatís, it was on. So to do it here is certainly meaningful, to do it on your home field in front of the fans, taking that picture on the mound with the fans all still in the stands, that means something.

Q. You've seen how much pressure Pete can put on



himself offensively. What was it like to see him come up big in the second there?

CRAIG COUNSELL: I think the playoffs often give you the great example of, like, what it means to be a Major League Baseball player in a three-game series and you have two offensive games that you're not really happy with, you've got to show up the next day with kind of the right mindset and not try to do everything and stay within what you're good at.

But Pete has the ability to deliver the spectacular and deliver greatness, and he had a heck of a game today. Heck of a game.

Q. You're just talking about the fans, and you're someone who recognizes this is as entertainment business. How do you anticipate the environment will be like in Milwaukee going up there with your club for a playoff series?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Well, they're going to be fired up. They've had the best team in baseball this year. They feel like they have a chance to play in the World Series with this team. So they're rested. It's going to be a great atmosphere. It's Cubs-Brewers. That's going to be as good as it gets. It's always a great atmosphere when the two teams play each other. We'll try to get as many Cubs fans in there as we can. They won't like that, but it's going to be a fun atmosphere, I know that.

Q. The name of the game this time of the year is obviously to win and advance on. Can you just talk about advancing on and moving up the totem pole and hopefully getting to that final step up the totem pole?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Yeah, I mean, this was just three games. We've got to win 13 to get through it. We've won 2. So we've got 11 more to win.

When you lose one of them, it feels like the world is going to end. That's just the nature of this. And you have to kind of like know that and ride with it, that it feels like that after a loss.

But it's just so much fun, and to be able to experience it is so much fun, and to be able to experience it here was a magical night for sure.

Q. The Padres bunched their three lefties at the bottom of the order, one in front of the other for those three games. Did that make the way you deployed lefties a little easier than had it been broken up? As a manager, do you understand why they did what they did there?

CRAIG COUNSELL: Yeah, lineup construction is -- it's very team specific, and it's very kind of who your team is. They have such talented players kind of hitting at the top. You can't always pick where your guys should hit.

When you have guys like Tatís and Machado, they're going to hit at the top of the lineup. They're so tough to get out. You've got to go through the whole lineup. We were fortunate to just piece things together just as they did, the same way they matched up.

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