



2023 NCAA Baseball Nashville Regional

Postgame Quotes

Game 1 • June 2, 2023

#3 Xavier vs. #2 Oregon



#3 Xavier Musketeers

Head Coach Billy O'Conner

Opening statement...

"I thought our guys competed for sure, but we were kind of uncharacteristic on defense. We played strong defense all year, we fielded over a .990 fielding percentage in conference. This game's pretty simple at the end of the day. Throwing strikes, catching and throwing on defense—we didn't do a good job on defense, taking care of the easy plays. That came back to bite us a little bit.

"Offensively, we kind of got lulled to sleep a little bit in the middle of the game and they were able to bring in their backend pieces—they're pretty talented. Our guys competed, but it wasn't our best performance today so I'm a little disappointed because it was out of character for us. But I'm proud of the way our guys showed up and competed."

On starting pitcher Brant Alazaus...

"Brant was awesome. He kind of got ambushed in the first inning with three straight base hits, but I don't think he was overwhelmed. I don't think the moment was too big for him. It just took a couple base hits to get things started, one of them obviously being an infield single with [Rikuu] Nishida. But he really settled in. He made big pitches, there were not a whole lot of hard-hit balls from the second to the seventh [inning] when we ended up taking him out.

"Brant's been consistent all year. He does what he does. He throws a ton of strikes, didn't walk anybody again today. I think he had 44 strikeouts and one walk in conference play, so he was really good. He gave us an opportunity against a really good offense to go out there and win it. He certainly pulled his weight. Just have to be a little bit better at the plate."

After bounce back moving forward...

"We've been here, been in this situation. We've been with our backs against the wall. We create a lot of adversity in our nonconference schedule—playing these guys like Oregon, UC Santa Barbara, Wofford, West Virginia. We've played against a bunch of really good teams. We've been back-against-the-wall all year, and we've certainly responded to adversity well.

"To win a four-team, double elimination tournament, you put yourself in a really good spot if you win that first game. It's tough when you lose the first one, but we're not dead yet. Our guys have responded positively to adversity all year long, and I know they'll respond positively in this situation."

#2 Oregon Ducks

Head Coach Mark Wasikowski

Opening statement...

"I'm just really happy with the way our team came together despite probably not playing their best game for sure. There were some mistakes, there was some what looked like rust, it might have been nerves with just the beginning of the regional, but I'm very excited about how they came together and found a way to win and that was really the bottom line—coming out of here with a win, and we did that."

On flipping the script in the middle innings...

"I thought that the pitching flipped the script. As soon as Dylan [McShane] came in, passed it to Austin [Anderson] and [Matt] Dallas, [Josh] Mollerus, those guys did a fantastic job. So I thought that that was the first thing. The second thing, the hit by Rikuu (Nishida). They were playing him in little league depth and Rikuu finally went up there with a wood bat instead of the aluminum and that's when he shows his best power. For him to get that swing, I thought that was big, and then for us to be able to get their starter out of the game, he's been really effective in their league.

"He probably would've won Pitcher of the Year if it wasn't for that kid from Georgetown, I believe, the powerarm from Georgetown that transferred in from Lafayette who's just a stud. This kid would've probably won Pitcher of the Year. I think he walked one kid in the league last year the entire conference time and he didn't walk any today. I thought he had a very good feel for the strike zone, he changed tempos with his delivery, he had a short leg, a high leg, changed speeds with his fastball quite a bit. He's just a savvy ol' guy that kind of knew how to pitch and knew who he is. I thought he did a fantastic job.

"And the other kid that I thought did a great job from Xavier is the [Garrett] Shultz kid who ended up with 3 RBIs on the day. He was tough. He was competitive. All the way down to the end, I thought they played us tough and we were fortunate to come out with a win."

On winning the first game...

"I mean, if you win three in a row, then you advance. The focus is to win one in a row three times. We talk about this being a single-elimination tournament, and so we're not eliminated after today, that's a good thing."

On performance from pitchers on the back end of the bullpen...

"It's tremendous when you do that. Like you described, that's exactly what it looks like and if you can get that every day out of your bullpen, you take it. Those guys have been really good, credit Coach [Jake] Angier for sticking with those guys and it was his plan all the way on how to get through that game and come out with a win so I credit the bullpen guys and their leader, Coach Angier."

Colby Shade, Junior, Outfield

On how the game progressed offensively...

"I mean, they came out and they punched us first so we knew we had to punch back and then towards that middle we kind of just battled adversity, things weren't going our way. We just had to stick with it. We had a meeting in the dugout, Gavin [Grant] led that, and just told us to keep sticking with it. We knew we were going to win that game no matter what and we just kept battling."

On the Xavier starting pitcher...

"Just had some ride to the fastball. He started to mix pitches well during the middle of the game and kept us off balance, and I think we had too big of swings at times and so we got back to playing short strokes and hitting the ball hard and things worked out."

On the hit in the seventh tying the game...

"I mean, just trying to hit something hard. I mean, Rikuu did a good job getting up there and responding after his poor last at-bat and getting on base. I knew I just had to hit something hard and he is going to score because he is faster than, I don't know, anything I've ever seen. I just had to barrel something up and someone wasn't there and I knew Rikuu was going to score."

On the top of the lineup performance...

"That's just the crazy thing about our lineup. I mean, us three did good today, but tomorrow I'm sure it'll be someone else, it could be the last three. I think that's what's special about our offense is that it doesn't matter who it is, someone's going to get it done. It could be our leadoff, it could be our nine-hole, it could be our four-hole, I mean they're all just the same."

Austin Anderson, Junior, Pitcher

On appearance and changing the tone...

"I think him coming in and doing what he did really set the tone for the bullpen. Kind of showing us what we need to do, throwing it in the zone and good results are going to happen."

On keeping momentum from last week...

"In the beginning, it was a little shaky but towards the middle of the game we started getting dialed in as a team and as a staff."