

June 24, 2010



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An Interview With:

OKLAHOMA

COACH SUNNY GOLLOWAY JEREMY ERBEN ZACH NEAL TYLER OGLE

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Oklahoma players Tyler Ogle, Zach Neal, Jeremy Erben, and Coach Sunny Golloway.

Opening statement, Coach.

COACH GOLLOWAY: A great, great college baseball game. And that's how it should be. I'm proud of both teams. Congratulations to South Carolina, Coach Tanner. They played terrific.

And, you know, clearly, if you're going to play your last baseball game and you're going to lose, you want to do something that you're going to be proud of. And I couldn't be more proud the way our players played.

I couldn't be more proud to be the coach of these young men who represent the University of Oklahoma. A great institution. We have great leaders on campus. They give us an opportunity to excel. And these young men went out and excelled. So I'm extremely proud of them, and our coaching staff is proud of them.

And, you know what, we'll be determined and hopefully it won't be such a long stay. We'll be back.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Coach, obviously pretty emotional moment. What did you tell your team a moment ago?

COACH GOLLOWAY: You know what, when we went down the line there, the first thing I said to them is: Hey, remember Virginia. Remember that feeling at Virginia. Remember winning that game and knowing that you qualified. You know, after a 15-year drought for the University of Oklahoma, I said, remember that feeling. The sting of tonight will go away.

And having been here three years before, every player that's played here knows this: You're going to remember this. We're going to remember the lightning in the background. We're going to remember the warm welcome. We're going to remember the opening ceremony. We're going to remember the good things. This will fade, it does. It's hard for them to understand it now, but I wanted them to have a good memory immediately.

And that we're proud of them. It's all part of the process and building a program and restoring the tradition, and this is part of that.

Q. Coach, before the season, there were so many questions to be answered. And not many people saw you guys going this far. Could you talk about the journey getting here?

COACH GOLLOWAY: You know, that's what it's all about. And all those questions that you and I know that were asked, it's simple: The answers are in every one of these players, the players outside right now that are probably struggling to find the joy of being in Omaha and they're with their families, and that's a good thing.

But they're the answer to all those questions that we all had, even the coaching staff. It's been an amazing journey.

I'll tell you real quickly. I don't want to get long with this. In '94, the year that we did win it all, we went to an FCA breakfast. Todd Walker had won it with LSU the year before, and one of the things he talked about as a Christian, when it's all

over, and you know it's just a celebration and a dog pile and then it's over, you miss it, because you enjoy the journey.

And that's what I kept telling our guys, is enjoy the journey. We wanted the journey to continue, that's what stings. And the road to Omaha, that was complete. You can't pull the road out from under any of the teams that make it here. They made it here.

And so it's been a great journey, and I know our guys have enjoyed it. We've enjoyed it. We've enjoyed it with a relatively young club.

Q. Tyler, can you talk about your home run in the top of the 12th inning, and just how big of a moment that was?

TYLER OGLE: Well, we hadn't really put any runs together the whole game. So I was just trying to get up there and get something started. And putting a good swing on it. And as soon as I got back in the dugout, the number one thing on my mind was let's go win a ball game, because I knew it wasn't over, we still had another half inning.

It felt good, but unfortunately we didn't come out with a win.

Q. Zach, did you basically just get to the point where you kind of ran out of gas when you left? Because you did pitch so, so well tonight.

ZACH NEAL: I don't know if it was running out of gas. I left a 3-2 slider up and he hit it off the wall for a double. And usually if I go seven, Erben has eight and Duke has nine. I could have kept going, but that's not my role. That's his role. Just passing it off to the next guy.

Q. Jeremy, this year was kind of full circle for you. Started the year great out of the bullpen, getting quick wins, go in the starting rotation, you end the year pitching every game in the College World Series. Performing very well. Could you just talk about it?

JEREMY ERBEN: Heck of a ride. I can't imagine my senior year being any better than this one, getting here. Last year at Rosenblatt. Unreal experience, with this group of guys, is it's a long season but one I'll remember for the rest of my life. It was great.

Q. Sunny, this is a game -- I guess for all of you -- that was so close and runs came so difficult and you took the lead 2-1. I've got to

imagine you felt like you were going to get three outs and move on to play tomorrow?

COACH GOLLOWAY: Sure, we always think positive. And we always plan that way. And like Tyler said, when he came in, there were no outs on the board yet, so we're still working hard and our guys are trying to manufacture more runs.

And we realized, every game you see here at the College World Series it's a fight to the end. And I can even remember yesterday, after our game, you know, understanding the rules regarding who is home and who is away, both teams had been visitors and home, and it is what it is.

And I kept thinking how important it might be to be the home team, and it was huge today. Our guys stay focused. They did a great job this year playing the game one pitch at a time and one inning at a time. And that's what we did tonight. We wanted to score more runs. We worked hard to try to score more, and then really worked hard to try to end it with the lead and couldn't do it.

Q. Coach, your thoughts on what Zach and Jeremy did today, how they were able to be so effective? And I imagine you're really proud of those guys.

COACH GOLLOWAY: The game that Zach pitched, I mean, in this setting, you know, he was our Friday night starter all year. And he was accepting of the role that we put him in.

And the thought was, when we won the first game and how we wanted to map it out, that we knew we were going to get two more starts. He's getting one of them. It was my decision. He never questioned it. He knew he was going to get the ball.

When he got the ball, he was terrific. I mean, he pitched the game of his career at Oklahoma right here at Rosenblatt. I can't say enough about just how poised he was and how terrific he pitched for us today. And that goes for all of our guys.

To ask Erben to pitch in all three games, and we know Jeremy, we know how strong he is and we knew he could do it, and he had good stuff there at the end. It was just time to give it to Duke.

I'm proud of our pitching staff. I'm proud with what Coach Bell does with our pitching staff, Coach Tadlock does with our hitters and our whole coaching staff. We're blessed at Oklahoma to have outstanding men working with outstanding

student-athletes.

Q. I think you said coming into this thing on Friday that Jackie Bradley was the guy a team wouldn't want to see up with a game on the line, and sure enough he came through and beat you. Coming to that at-bat he was 0-for-5. Were you thinking this is the guy we can't let beat us?

COACH GOLLOWAY: Right. When pitching to him, we had a plan and we went out and tried to execute the plan. For the most part we tried to stay away, and then we get two strikes, we try to come in. And at that point we were going to try to go back away. I looked on the video board, looked like maybe the ball ran back in a little bit and he put a swing on it.

You can't fault the pitcher. You gotta give the hitter credit. He did his job. He did it in a pressure situation, and he did it representing Coach Tanner and their program, which is an outstanding program.

So sometimes -- and I've said this before -- I said this at the first game of the regional at Virginia, we lost the Game 3-2. I said everybody around the country watching the game saw. No student-athlete lost today; it's just a group of student-athletes won. Now I've got to feel like that twice from the Super Regional to the College World Series as a coach. I'm extremely proud of our guys to be able to say that.

And I really believe that. Nobody lost here today, just a group of student-athletes happened to win. And it's a celebration of college baseball, when amateur athletes can go out there and perform like that in this setting, I think that's a celebration of college baseball in the College World Series.

Q. Tyler, you were the hot-hitting team coming into Omaha and it just never seemed to materialize for you guys at the plate in any of these three games. Any explanation for it?

TYLER OGLE: I just think a lot of guys were pressing to do too much. One guy doesn't do something, the next guy puts it on his shoulders to try to do too much. And I think that was where our weaknesses were today.

And I think we're the better ball club when we're staying in the zone and hitting strikes. And not swinging at ball four, and that just wasn't the case today. And that's all I've got.

Q. Zach, you said the other day you couldn't explain it but you knew what you needed to do to get back on track. Safe to say you figured things out today?

ZACH NEAL: Yeah. Virginia was just one of those days where you don't have what you usually have. But I knew what I had to do during the week and doing the same routine I usually do.

I just came out and tried to attack the hitters today. And that was the difference. Maybe Virginia maybe I was a little passive, I don't know what I was trying to do, but today I just came out and left it out there.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thank you.

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An Interview With:

SOUTH CAROLINA
COACH RAY TANNER
JACKIE BRADLEY JR.
BLAKE COOPER
BRADY THOMAS

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by South Carolina players Jackie Bradley Jr., Blake Cooper, Brady Thomas, and Coach Ray Tanner. Opening statement, Coach.

COACH TANNER: It was another great baseball game between the Gamecocks and the Sooners. The first time we met it was a heck of a game, and it was really the same thing tonight.

It was a battle. We got a great start out of Blake Cooper. We just fought, and they fought, and we got out of a jam there early with a double play ball.

We just kept scrapping and trying to stay in position to win. And it was late, but Jackie came up with a big hit and Brady hits one through the middle. It was an incredible win for us. Just never give up day. Charlie Peters, our buddy here in Omaha, we met back in 2003, the Children's Hospital, he came out early tonight. He had a little sign: Never give up. Battle hard.

And I told Charlie, I said, if we win this game, it's because of you. If we lose it, it's because of me. And I thought I was going to have to shoulder it there for a while. But just a great game by both teams fighting hard. You hate to have anybody lose tonight, really.

But I just kept thinking, you know, we lost a close one. Maybe now it's our turn to win a close

one. Very difficult to come by. But these guys battled but it worked out for us.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Brady, just take us through that at-bat and just the moment and just what it was like for you to come up in that situation?

BRADY THOMAS: Well, I knew the pressure was all going to be on them. I was just looking for a strike to hit somewhere hard. I knew a base hit would probably get the run in. I got a fastball and I was fortunate to put a good swing on it.

Q. Ray, these two guys who basically got it done in extras both were 0-5, and you talked about resilience and character all year. Talk about the fact that they're still battling and they got it done even though up to that point they had taken the call on five at-bats.

COACH TANNER: I talked to these guys. This game's hard. It's a humbling game. You have to face adversity. I thought they did a great job, especially pitching Jackie tonight. I thought they kept making great pitches against him. And he kept getting behind in the count.

Brady hit a couple of guys pretty good. Didn't get anything to show for it. You keep battling, and you hope it falls your way. A game of percentages. It's not going to happen for you all the time, but you gotta believe it's going to work out sometimes.

Like I said, we lost a close one to them, and thinking maybe we could get one tonight. When Ogle hit that home run, I went up and down the dugout to these guys and said: Let's hold right here. We've got a shot in the bottom half. We're the home team. We've got to score to win anyway. And it just worked out for us.

Q. Both to Jackie and Brady, comment on the fact that you guys had struggled at the plate and when it mattered you came through?



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JACKIE BRADLEY JR.: Like he said, they made some great pitches. I put some good swings on certain balls. Happened to go right to them. But they pitched great. And I was fortunate enough to get the big hit at the end of the game, just fighting and battling. I knew I was going to get my chance. And I made it count.

BRADY THOMAS: Yeah, I mean, we struggled earlier on, we were just able to flush it. And just battled like we've done all year. And we were able to come through. It felt really good.

Q. Ray and Blake, talk about the performance of the USC pitching staff not only here tonight but in the three games here. I think you've only given up ten runs in 30 innings. One hit in the last six innings tonight?

COACH TANNER: Impressive. No question about it. You go up and down. Cooper gave us a heck of a start. He gave us a quality start. And he's in great shape. And he's pitched for us all year.

He's never missed a turn. This is the first time he'd been back out there on three days. And the reason he was out there is because he said he could go. And I felt good about sending him out there for 100 pitches. He ended up with 97. Overall, Taylor -- Price was spectacular. Really, really good. And I know Carter felt bad about the home run, but that's why you have teammates. But Webb went in and got his outs too.

So our pitching staff, I don't want to take anything away from the players. These guys came out with a couple of big hits. But our pitching staff has kept us in position the entire season. You know that. We haven't given up a lot. We have had opportunities to win. Our defense has been pretty solid and they did it again.

What did we go, 4, 4 and 2 in the three games? Got a chance to win. And that's even though we trailed, we had to battle back and certainly had to come from behind in the bottom half of the night. Can't say enough good things about Coach Calvi and the pitching staff. They've been outstanding.

Q. Coach Tanner, could you talk about the decision to start Blake Cooper, what went into that? And for Blake, could you talk about how you felt physically out there?

COACH TANNER: Well, Coach Calvi and I sort of went back and forth yesterday. My sense on the whole situation with Blake was Blake's going to pitch if he feels like he can pitch. He says

he's good to go if he's 100 percent. If he said "I'm 75 percent," I wouldn't have started him.

We felt like Tyler Webb would be a good match-up, but Tyler Webb is a true freshman and it's a do-or-die game. And I was going to put my best guy out there if he said he felt good enough.

And we met late last night, and then finally Coach Calvi goes to Blake's room and I said: You guys make a decision, send me a text, I'm going to sleep. Which I didn't do. But I did -- but I did get the text, and he said Blake's going.

And I said just make sure he feels great. So, Blake, was that true?

BLAKE COOPER: Yep. Coach Calvi came to my room about 11:30, 12:00 at night. He asked me if I was 100 percent. And I'm going to tell him I am. I was ready to go. I wanted the game in the balance. I wanted to go out there today and throw strikes. And I was able to do that for five and two-thirds innings and I felt strong all day. Able to locate breaking balls when I needed to and got big strikeouts when I needed to.

Q. Ray, with the pitching staff, a couple of things, first of all, who gets the ball tomorrow against Clemson, and, second, Price has thrown 89 pitches in two games. Would he be available if needed tomorrow?

COACH TANNER: I don't think so. I'm pretty sure Price is out. I don't know who is going to start. I'm not being evasive, but I don't really have an idea. Webb is a -- not Webb -- Neff is probably a candidate. Maybe Michael Roth. I don't know. We'll go back and regroup and try to see who our freshest guys are. And Carter faced batters. We've got some options. Jay Brown. We'll go back and make a decision.

Q. Coach, as this game progressed and you guys had struggles with runners in scoring position and struggling to get the bunts down, imagine it must have been frustrating for you. Did you start to wonder if the big hit was going to come for you guys at some point?

COACH TANNER: I think that's fair that when you're not executing, you feel like that it's hard to come by. And certainly from my vantage point, when you're not getting the bunts down, you're thinking, well, maybe we need to hit and run here. Maybe we need to turn some guys loose.

But they did a pretty good job of getting to the plate, their pitchers, with the exception of Duke.

He was a little bit slow there at the end. But Erben, he was pitching well too. And I thought Price was as good as I've seen in a long time. And Erben matched him. Those guys, it could have gone on for a while with those two guys out there.

So it was a little frustrating, but you just keep plugging. As long as you keep getting your tying run to the on-deck circle, you feel like you've got a chance. You don't give up too many runs and you're within striking distance. And we've played like this a lot this year.

We haven't been sitting out front with a big cushion in a lot of games. We sort of play this way. We like to be up two or three, but we're never up six or seven in most cases, and a lot of times we have to win late. And we just -- we're certainly not comfortable being a come-from-behind team and having to win games from the 5th through the 9th, but that's who we are, we try find a way to win those games from the middle on. And certainly tonight was as good as it's been for us.

Q. Jackie, wonder if you could talk about the mindset down to your final strike there, on the verge of elimination you're at-bat. And they stayed away from you so much. Were you happy to see that ball kind of tail inside a little bit?

JACKIE BRADLEY JR.: Yeah. At first I was thinking, man, nobody on first base. Trying to pitch around me a little bit. As soon as he started coming at me, I got ready again. And I happened to get behind in the count, battled. And that pitch I actually took for 3-2 count, it was close. It was too close to take, but it was off the plate. And I was able to get a pitch right down the middle on a 3-2 count. He made his pitch not to walk me.

I put a good swing on it and pushed it through to the right side.

COACH TANNER: Which is hard to do with Seitzer over there. I've never seen such a wingspan. He almost got that ball, too.

Q. For all of you guys, can you just talk about playing Clemson again, especially on this stage? It's been a long time since you guys faced off in the regular season.

JACKIE BRADLEY JR.: It's going to be fun. It's going to be fun. We have to take it one game at a time. Of course we know who we're playing, big rivalry and all, but, like you said, it's just playing another baseball game. Just gotta win or go home. So gotta keep it going.

Q. Coach, follow-up to that question. You talked all year about the great college baseball that's played in the state of South Carolina. The fact that two of the final four teams in the College World Series are from the Palmetto State, does that validate what you've been saying all year about how great the baseball is?

COACH TANNER: Not to say too much about where we're from, but there are a lot of good teams. We have a lot of teams in the post-season in years past, not just Clemson and South Carolina, so many good teams and so much competition within the state, and the fact that we're both here playing with four teams remaining, it's hard to get in this position and it's happened before.

So we take a lot of pride in that, that we have so much good baseball in our state, and we're happy to be playing. I know that right now Clemson is in the catbird seat. They've done their job to get where they are, and we're still alive. We'll get a chance to play.

Now it's a national stage versus the in-state rivalry. So I know that they're excited to be where they are, and we're excited to still be playing.

Q. Ray, how important is this play getting lost in everything else that was going on, you had the popup and my note showed the top of the 9th should have been an out, it wasn't, the ball was dropped and you came back and had a hell of a double play with Morales to Haney to Walker that got you out of that inning.

COACH TANNER: That was not good. We practiced communication plays all the time. And Wingo goes in there most of the time. He would have run the whole infield off to catch that ball. But Morales had moved over and I think Morales was thinking Merrifield was going to take it. And he probably should have taken charge himself. But that could have really come back to bite us.

But then you've got maturity. Ball goes straight to Morales. He's able to get rid of it quick and get the double play. That's the advantage of having older guys and guys that can get past a mistake and handle some adversity.

Q. Coach, do you talk to your team at all about what happened back in 2002? Do they know about it? Do they care about it? Is it something you discussed?

COACH TANNER: You know, these guys -- how old were you guys back in 2002? You know, we'll probably discuss it. Only from the standpoint that it's possible. You know, it's not easy. But it is possible to put together some good baseball from here on out. And so other than that, that's probably the only thing that I'll talk about with them.

THE MODERATOR: Gentlemen, thank you very much.

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