

Longhorns send Louisville packing

Written by Administrator

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OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — A workmanlike victory over Louisville has Texas coach Augie Garrido confident his Longhorns are in the right frame of mind to make a deep run at the College World Series.

Parker French and Travis Duke limited the Cardinals to four hits, and Texas manufactured runs in three straight innings to win 4-1 in an elimination game Monday.

The performance eased Garrido's concern about his team's state of mind after a 3-1 loss to UC Irvine in Saturday's CWS opener.

"The celebration has gone on from the time they got their invitation and punched their tickets to Omaha," Garrido said. "Once you get here, the celebration continues. It's easy to buy into that, and it's hard to refocus and get competitive. I didn't tell them until now, but it is hard to flip that switch."

The Longhorns (44-20) ended a four-game CWS losing streak dating to 2009 and will play UC Irvine in another elimination game Wednesday. Louisville (50-17) went 0-2 in the CWS for the second straight year and is 1-6 in three appearances in Omaha.

French (7-5) held the Cardinals to four singles in 7 1-3 innings, and Duke retired their last five batters for his first save.

It was French's second straight strong outing. The sinker-baller pitched six shutout innings in a win over Houston in super regionals and has allowed three runs in 20 innings in three NCAA tournament appearances. The Longhorns' pitching staff has a 1.35 ERA over its last eight games.

"We have a pitching staff that can stand up to the number of games we need to win to win the national championship," Garrido said.

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Louisville sophomore starter Anthony Kidston (9-1) lost for the first time in 15 decisions as a collegian and the Cardinals committed four errors, just as they did in their elimination-game loss to Oregon State last year.

"It's the eight best and eight hottest teams in Omaha, so when you don't play clean, it gets magnified out here," Louisville coach Dan McDonnell said.

The Longhorns played an error-free game and got big defensive plays from shortstop C.J. Hinojosa and left fielder Ben Johnson.

"When I step out there every game, I think this is the best defensive team in the country. I can say that with confidence, up the middle and everywhere," French said. "They make those plays, it makes me more of a strike-throwing machine, because they're going to be aggressive and let me keep my pitch count down."

Texas opened the scoring on Johnson's sacrifice fly after Zane Guritz doubled leading off the third inning. The Longhorns added a run in the fourth on Kacy Clemens' RBI groundout and another in the fifth when Mark Payton came home on second baseman Zach Lucas' throwing error.

Louisville had won 12 of 13 games this season, and 17 of 19 the last two seasons, in games started by Kidston.

"We wanted to get on him early, and we did a good job of that those three innings we scored runs," Johnson said. "We knew they have a pretty good bullpen, so we wanted a lead going to the last innings."

McDonnell gathered his players after Texas went up 3-0 and challenged them. His talk didn't work.

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"We probably chased some pitches we shouldn't have in big situations with runners on," Cole Spurgeon said. "We probably didn't do a great job of making them work for everything. We made it easy on them for a few innings."

Louisville pulled to 3-1 in the eighth on Sturgeon's groundout. But the Longhorns scored an unearned run in the top of the ninth to make it a three-run game again.

"We had a two-inning lapse where we made it a little too easy on them," McDonnell said. "They got the momentum, and we let them roll with it."