



Baseball National Champions, Back-to-Back, October 24, 2015

Title

“The View from the Pitcher's Mound”

Date

October 24, 2015

Location

The Valley Library, Oregon State University.

Summary

In the interview, Gunderson discusses his early involvement in baseball, his first meetings with Pat Casey, and his earliest memories of being a Beaver. From there, Gunderson responds to a series of questions focusing on the 2005 season that resulted in the Beavers' first appearance in the College World Series since 1952. Of particular note are Gunderson's responses to questions concerning team chemistry and fan involvement as components of the team's success, as well as specific recollections of key games during the team's run through the playoffs. Gunderson then shares his memories of the squad's quick exit from Omaha in 2005, and the guarantee that he made to the media that the Beavers would return to the College World Series in 2006.

Gunderson then turns his attention to the 2006 season, commenting once again on team chemistry and fan involvement, and tracing OSU's path through the playoffs and on to Omaha. In recounting the team's run to the 2006 national championship, Gunderson specifically notes match-ups with Miami and Rice, as well as the national championship series versus North Carolina. He then details his recollections of the celebration that followed Oregon State's triumph in Omaha.

As it nears its conclusion, the session focuses on Gunderson's experiences in professional baseball, his impressions of the 2007 national champion OSU team, and his ambitions for the future. He likewise comments in greater detail on teammates Dallas Buck, Jonah Nickerson, and Mitch Canham; speaks of the mindset required to be a relief pitcher; shares insight into the life of the student athlete; and conveys his hopes for OSU baseball going forward.

Interviewee

Kevin Gunderson

Interviewers

Greg Garcia, Chris Petersen

Website

<http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/oh150/baseball/>

Transcript

Chris Petersen: Alright, so today is October 24th, 2015. We're with Kevin Gunderson, an alumnus of OSU, a student athlete on the 2006 national championship OSU baseball team, and we're going to talk to Kevin about his student experience for the OSU 150 Sesquicentennial Oral History Project. And leading the interview today will be Greg Garcia. Go ahead, Greg.

Greg Garcia: Good to meet you.

Kevin Gunderson: Nice to meet you.

GG: Thank you for doing this. It's been a long time I've been working on this, so it's a pleasure to finally meet you.

KG: Great.

GG: The first question I have for you, Mr. Gunderson – or would you prefer Kevin?

KG: Either/or. Kevin, please.

GG: Kevin.

KG: Yes.

GG: First question for you Kevin is, what drew you to baseball?

KG: I always had a knack for sports in general, but I had an uncle who pitched professionally for parts of ten seasons in the major leagues. And so it was kind of something that my older brother and I were around a lot as we were growing up. I played multiple sports; once I got into high school, I started to see some success and then, all of the sudden, it kind of took off from there and I ended up at Oregon State.

GG: And this relative with the majors, which teams did he play for?

KG: He got drafted by the Giants, played in the big leagues with the Giants, the Mariners, the Rangers, Boston. He had a handful of different teams. Major stints were with the Giants, Mariners and Rangers were the most years he spent.

GG: How did you end up at Oregon State?

KG: Kind of by chance. I was getting recruited by Stanford; Stanford was a school that I always wanted to go to. Stanford was playing Oregon State down here, I think it was in 2002 or 2003, and it was the first game under the lights, and Oregon State ended up beating Stanford. I was there to watch Stanford play, the coaches wanted me to come down. So it kind of turned my attention a little bit more towards Oregon State, and they started recruiting me pretty heavily, and I saw a great opportunity to be able to play in front of my friends and family, and here I am today.

GG: When did you first meet Coach Casey?

KG: I met him, I think, in a summer event after my sophomore season. And he was a phenomenal recruiter, he did a great job, he came to my games. After my sophomore year, I saw him throughout that summer, throughout that spring, throughout the summer after my junior year, and then I gave a verbal commitment late that summer, and ended up signing my letter of intent in November of my senior year.

GG: So Coach Casey came and saw you your sophomore year of your high school career?

KG: Correct.

GG: What were your first impressions of him?

KG: Hard working, hard-nosed, a guy that wanted the best for his student athletes, a guy that would do anything for us. A guy that every player dreams to play for.

GG: As a pitcher, do you remember the first time you took the mound for the Beavers?

KG: I do, it was the third game of the season. I can't remember if we were playing Gonzaga? I'm not sure who the opponent was, but we were down in Surprise, Arizona, and me and my friend Jonah – Jonah Nickerson – and Dallas Buck; Dallas threw in the first game of the season, Jonah threw in the second game and I threw in the third game, as freshmen. So we kind of got thrown into the fire. But I can remember vividly, I was warming up and I was a little bit nervous, some of the seniors in the bullpen kind of calmed me down and I went out and had a good inning, and had a great freshman year after that.

GG: What was it like starting out the 2005 season? Were there any expectations or personal goals that you had?

KG: I think from a team standpoint, when I came in 2004, there was a lot of talent. We had a really good team in 2004 and we just didn't quite get over that hump. So going into 2005, we had a lot of returning guys coming back, we had some guys come in, transfers or freshmen that were coming in, that were pretty talented. For team goals, I think we wanted to kind of get over that hump, we wanted to get into the post-season. Not necessarily thinking of Omaha – obviously that's a goal for everyone, to get to the College World Series – but we wanted to get into a regional. And as far as the personal goals, I just wanted to help my team. I wanted to help my team in any role possible that I could, and it was in the bullpen, and I was happy with it. My goals were just to go out and do the best I could for my team to help us get some wins.

GG: Did Coach Casey have anything to say at the beginning of the season?

KG: Yeah, he's a master of giving good speeches. I think he let us know that this team has lofty expectations, because we do have some talent. We had Jacoby Ellsbury, who was obviously a future first round draft pick, and most people knew that before the season started, that he was going to be going in the first round. And he just said we've got to work hard in the fall and the winter to get prepared for it, and all the sudden, we started out just crazy hot in 2005 and were able to sustain it all the way through the year.

GG: The first game of the 2005 season was against New Mexico State. The Beavers beat them by a score of 19-0. Do you have any particular memories of that game?

[0:05:03]

KG: We just absolutely crushed the baseball. Our guys were just swinging bats just left and right. They didn't really have an answer for us. I don't remember who pitched that game, but obviously we blanked them. But our bats were just on fire that day.

GG: In my research of the, what will be, 110-years of the team, I've noticed that there is a historic bias in Pac-12 baseball in favor of southern teams to northern teams. During the '05 season, did you feel like you were fighting that bias and favoritism?

KG: I think there was a little bit of it, but I think once we started to show those schools in the south that we can play, that just quickly was eliminated. I think they all realized really quickly that the Northwest has some really talented kids. And now, a lot of those southern schools recruit kids from the Northwest because they know that they're good baseball players. And so I think that team in 2005 really knocked down that barrier, where I think it was definitely up in 2004. I know it was because when I came here, the seniors were like, "we just don't compete with those schools," and we were like, "we didn't come here to not compete. We want to compete against those guys."

GG: Let's talk a little bit about your teammates. When did you think the team finally got its chemistry going?

KG: I think we honestly developed in the fall and the winter of 2005, before the season even started. We just had a very tight-knit group, a group that enjoyed being around each other. And again, deep down, we knew we had some talent. We didn't know how that would play out during the season, because there's tremendous teams in the conference that we play

in. And so, that fall and winter was a real big turning point, I think, in changing the culture and the history of Oregon State baseball.

GG: Do you have a particular memory with your teammates, either on the field or off of it?

KG: I can't pinpoint one. I think dogpiling at Goss when we beat USC to go to the World Series for the first time since 1952 was probably one of the best memories, aside from obviously winning the national championship in 2006. For a team that no one thought would ever make it to Omaha, Pat Casey had fought an uphill battle forever to try and make this program to what it is today, and so when we dogpiled, I think it was just a huge relief off his shoulders. Great excitement and joy for us as players and that hard work that we put in for the fall and winter, it eventually paid off for us.

GG: And I would I imagine too, that that would be very emotional.

KG: Yes.

GG: Do you have a particular memory of Ellsbury or Andy Jenkins?

KG: Well, Jacoby was just one of those ballplayers that was just on a little bit of a different level than everybody else. He made it look easy. He could swing it, he was fast, he'd catch every ball in the outfield. Jacoby was a great teammate. Andy, likewise, he was our leader. I can honestly say that without Andy on the 2005 team, I'm not sure what direction the team would have gone in. He was just a great leader in getting everybody to be tight-knit, and it's showing now as a coach here. All the players really love being around him and he just gets the most out of everybody.

GG: Was there a particular point in the season where you realized that your team had national potential?

KG: I think about halfway through the season or about halfway through the conference schedule. We were just taking care of business. We were a very loose group, but when it was time to start the game we became very serious, and I think that was a very good combination to have. We weren't uptight; at practice, we were really, really loose. But you could just see it, you could see it in practice during conference play, we just had that confidence that we could compete with anybody in the country. We had the pitching staff, we had position players, we had a good coaching staff, we had it all. But winning a conference series here or there, you've got to continue to do that. And we kind of kept going through and ended up 19-5 in conference, I believe.

GG: How did Beaver Nation rally behind you as the season progressed?

KG: They came out in full force. It was funny because my freshman year, in 2004, I don't think you even needed a ticket to get into our games. Oregon State always had some pretty good teams but, again, never really had that team that people were attracted to come watch. And after we started winning, it was amazing, that stadium was absolutely packed. Every single game, you could not get a seat. People were in the outfield putting scaffolding up to try and stand there. I mean, it was incredible.

[0:10:07]

GG: By the end of the season, the Beavers were ranked third in the country. The last team you needed to play, as you indicated, was USC. What was going through your mind at this time?

KG: Well, I don't think anyone ever wants to play a conference foe in super regional event, who we just played. I think we played USC three weeks before that. They had a phenomenal team; they had a ton of talent. We knew it was going to be a huge battle for us. We just had to execute our game plan. It's hard when you play someone three weeks before, because they find out some of your tendencies, what your pitchers like to throw, what our hitters like. So it makes it very, very challenging. I think it's more challenging than facing someone you haven't seen for the first time.

GG: I'd imagine. Historically, USC has been a major rival for Oregon State in baseball. During that first game, you managed to come from a 4-1 deficit to win 10-4; incredible accomplishment. Do you have any particular memories of that game?

KG: That game was electric. The environment was something that I had never seen before. The crowd was going crazy. We got down a little bit early; Ian Kennedy, I believe, was on the mound for them, who was a teammate of mine on Team USA, a phenomenal pitcher. Our bats just came alive. We started to get some hits and string some hits together and score a few runs. And our pitching staff was able to kind of keep them at bay. They had a great offensive lineup, so it was a challenge for us pitchers.

GG: The second game of the USC series went to ten innings with the Trojans edging the Beavers 9-8. What was the mental mindset of the team as they were going into the third game?

KG: Well, I'll tell you that I blew the second game. We had a lead going into the last inning and I gave up a solo home run to Jeff Clement, who was a first round draft pick that year; I think he was in the top five. That was particularly hard on me because I had an opportunity to close out the final game to put us into Omaha, and I didn't get the job done. I think the team was a little deflated; I was definitely deflated. But our coaching staff did a phenomenal job to let us know that we still had another game to play, and we're going to get after them tomorrow.

GG: Did Coach Casey say anything in particular before the third game started?

KG: You know, all your hard work that you've put in comes down to really one game. We win, we move on. We lose, we go home. It was a pretty simple message. I think at that point, everybody realizes what's going on. And if you don't realize what's going on, it's not the right fit for you. So everyone knew that it was a pivotal game. So our mindset was trying to stay loose and play our game the way that we know how to do it, and obviously we prevailed.

GG: You did indeed. The third game of the USC series was very dramatic with the Beavers leading and the Trojans rallying. Other than the dogpile at the end, do you have any particular memories of that game?

KG: Yeah. It was a back and forth game, it was very stressful at times. We had leads, they came back, tied the game, took a lead. It was just back and forth, back and forth, the whole game. And so I think everybody was on the edge of their seats. We were one pitch away from losing the game, we were one swing away from winning the game. That game just had a lot of excitement from the first pitch to the very last pitch.

GG: Earlier you had mentioned sophomore Dallas Buck. During that game, Coach Casey did a pitching change, bringing him up from the bullpen. He is credited with making the last four outs of the game. Being a pitcher as you are, do you know what he was thinking? Were you talking to him as the game progressed?

KG: With Dallas?

GG: Yes.

KG: Yes and no. I think I was trying to prepare to pitch as well. I came in a little bit earlier than normal to get a few outs. Dallas had been in that role our freshman year, pitching at the back end of the bullpen, before he became a starter. So Dallas knew what was going on; Dallas knew how to prepare for that. He wanted the ball, he was a good fit for us in that spot and that certain situation. Those four outs were the biggest four outs of our entire season, that he got for us.

GG: After beating USC, the Beavers were bound for the College World Series. How would you describe the mood of Beaver Nation at the end of the post-season?

KG: Prior to going to the World Series?

GG: Right.

KG: I think we were on cloud nine. I don't think we realized what we were walking into by going to the World Series; just the atmosphere that is Omaha. I think we were just so excited that we just accomplished an amazing feat that a lot of schools – every single school that laces up their spikes at the start of the year wishes they could be in our final eight position. And I think we were excited to get on that airplane and see what Omaha was all about.

[0:15:29]

GG: I can tell you that Beaver Nation was behind you all the way. I was watching it on t.v. and there are even reports of trains stopping in the middle of the tracks at Coleman [Field] so that they could see the end of that USC series, that's pretty incredible.

KG: Yeah.

GG: Did you meet any of the players from the 1952 Omaha team?

KG: Yeah, very briefly. I can't recall exactly who I met. There were a couple of them that came by and thanked us for bringing Beaver baseball back. That's pretty remarkable, that huge gap from 1952 to 2005, and so those guys were just super excited for us.

GG: Did they give you any advice?

KG: Just go out and have fun. It was very simple; a very simple message. They said, "you guys are all talented ballplayers, you know what's going on. Go out and have fun and things will happen."

GG: What had to be done between the end of the USC series and the College World Series? Was it a rush to get to Omaha planning-wise? Was there any time for celebration by Beaver Nation?

KG: Yeah, we had really a night of celebrating. And the transition period is rather quick; the NCAA likes to move. They have all the plans in place, they had our flights all ready, hotel arrangements set up, and so it was a pretty quick turnaround. We might have been here for a day and then we were on the plane the next day. I can't remember exactly the timeframe as far as when the last game for USC and then when we left, but it was within a couple day period that we were on the road.

GG: What was going through your mind when you attended the opening ceremonies at Rosenblatt Stadium in Omaha?

KG: That's probably, to be honest with you, one of the most amazing times to be a baseball player, during those opening ceremonies. I tell people all the time, if you have a chance to just even go to Omaha as a fan – not even of any particular team, but just go to opening ceremonies and go attend games – it is incredible. I told my wife, "I'll take my kids someday. Whether you want to come or not, we're going to go." And she said, "even if Oregon State's not there?" And I said, "yeah." Because it's unbelievable. The opening ceremonies in 2005 and 2006 were, you get goosebumps from the time they start to the time they finish. I mean, they do a phenomenal job of creating an incredible atmosphere for all eight teams that are there and all the fans that are there.

GG: When I interviewed players from the 1952 team, they commented on the heat being so overpowering and the climate being so different from over here, what was your impression of the heat and general climate of Omaha?

KG: It was humid, it was muggy. It was definitely different from going even to Arizona or California. Thunderstorms always rolled in and when it rained a little bit, it got even more humid. Thankfully we had some practices, we had a workout on the field. In Omaha, we practiced over at Creighton University, so we tried to get used to the heat as quick as possible. But definitely, it was a different climate than what we were used to, and playing against some schools that just live in it every single day, we had to make sure we stayed hydrated and kept up on eating some good food so we didn't cramp up. I think it was just a different environment, weather-wise.

GG: I can imagine. In the 2005 College World Series, the Beavers were put up against Tulane for the first round. How would you describe the mood of that first game?

KG: I think we were a little bit in awe of the atmosphere that is Omaha. I mean, there's twenty-some thousand people in the stands, there's thousands and thousands of people outside the stands. When our bus pulled up – you don't really realize how big of an event that it is until you pull up in your bus as a participating team. Tulane was really good; they had some great baseball players. And so we knew we had an uphill battle, but we also had an uphill battle in just getting over the awe factor of Omaha. Not necessarily just Tulane, but just being there. I think after the first couple innings we kind of settled in and realized that it was just another baseball game that we were playing, it was just in a different environment.

[0:20:10]

GG: Did Coach Casey have any major speeches or anything like that before the game?

KG: No, he kind of, before we got off the bus, just told us that we expected to be here, we deserved to be here, so just go out and play like we have the whole year and whatever happens, happens. But he wanted to make sure that we didn't go out and play scared; that we have good energy like we've had all year, and we did that. We just came up a little bit short.

GG: The Beavers were eliminated from the College World Series after losing to Baylor in 2005 by a score of 3-4, do you have any memories of that game?

KG: Yeah, I was on the mound when they got the game-winning hit, which was tough. They had a guy on third base and they hit a blooper that didn't even make it out of the infield, it landed over Andy Jenkins' head at first base, and that's how they scored their game-winning run. We had a chance to score in the bottom half of that inning, but we came up short. So to be on the mound and give up the winning run that eliminates you from the College World Series and ends your season was tough. It was definitely – I wouldn't take it back for anything, I'd still want the baseball at that opportunity, I just didn't get the job done. Sometimes I wish that they had just hit the ball out of the stadium as opposed to hitting a blooper that didn't even make it out of the infield. That kind of stings a little bit more. And it definitely stings more for the upper-classmen: for the seniors that was their last game, for the juniors, Jacoby was obviously going to sign for the Red Sox in the first round. And so to be on the mound and then their college careers ended because of you being on the mound – I know it wasn't just all my fault – but it was really hard.

GG: After the elimination loss against Baylor, you almost prophetically promised that the Beavers would be back in Omaha the following season. Under what circumstances did you say that?

KG: I shouldn't have said that. [laughs] I was just a twenty-year old kid speaking emotions. I was extremely frustrated that we lost; again, that I had a part in that loss by being on the mound. Looking back, that was probably maybe a little bit risky to say. But it actually lit a fire under us. I knew what talent we had coming back. We had our entire pitching staff coming back; we virtually had our entire team coming back minus Andy and Jacoby. And so I put a bullseye on our chest, that's for sure; Coach Casey I don't think was too happy with me later on. But sometimes when you say it in front of a camera, you can't take it back. We just went out and we knew that we had the team to be able to make it back, it was just a matter of putting it together.

GG: What was the reaction of Beaver Nation after the 2005 experience at the College World Series?

KG: It was very supportive. Even though we did come up short in the College World Series, we accomplished an amazing feat. We represented our university, we represented the state of Oregon. The response in Omaha was awesome; there were a lot of fans that came out. Not just our family and friends, but fans of Oregon State. We got a great welcome home type thing, and when you get that support, that drives you to want to work even harder to get back to that, so you can put yourself in an opportunity to win a College World Series and have a bigger celebration.

GG: The Beavers began the 2006 season in the top ten in the nation in pre-season polls. In fact, they were as high as number three by *Collegiate Baseball*. What was the feeling going through your mind at the beginning of the next season in 2006?

KG: Again, we knew we had a good team. I think that 2005 team was incredibly talented; very, very talented. The 2006 was talented, but we were a year older on our pitching staff – most of all our pitchers on that '05 team were underclassmen. We knew that we could be really, really good. Everybody knew that in that locker room, it was just a matter of could we be that cohesive unit that we had in 2005? And we did. It was very apparent in fall and the wintertime that we had a very, very tight-knit group again, with a little bit more seasoning under our belt. We knew that we could have a special season.

[0:25:20]

GG: Darwin Barney once said that the road to Omaha seemed a lot shorter in 2006 than it did in 2005. In your experience, do you think that this was the case?

KG: Absolutely. Once you get there for the first time, even though we didn't do so hot, we knew what to expect. We knew what regionals were like, we knew what super regionals were like, and so we had a little bit of seasoning under our belt. And Darwin's right, when you've never been to the College World Series, when you make it to regionals, you think it's just incredibly difficult to get to, which it is. It's a crazy hard road that you have to follow. But once you get there and you experience it, the regionals and super regionals don't seem so daunting.

GG: I can imagine. The best way of describing the end of the 2006 season was to say that the Beavers were on a hot streak; author Cliff Kirkpatrick states that, to that effect. After losing a series to Arizona State at the tail end of the season, the Beavers ignited, suffice it to say, winning nine out of ten games on the road to the College World Series, coming up against teams like Hawaii, Kansas and even Pac-10 rival Stanford. What was going through your mind as you were going through the post-season?

KG: Well, we were thankful that Stanford made it out of the Texas regional, because we were matched up to go to Texas that year in the super regionals and face them. Everyone was picking Texas to be one of the teams to win the College World Series. And I think we felt a little cheated towards what seeding we got in the playoffs; we definitely thought we deserved a top eight national seed, based off of the season that we had. That road series loss against Arizona State was very pivotal and probably resulted in us losing a national seed. So we had a big chip on our shoulder because we just felt that we got matched up in a very, very tough regional. We were the Pac-10 champion and we got matched up with Texas, who was nationally ranked very, very high, and they ended up being a national seed. So when Stanford ended up beating them in the regional, and we had already won our regional, we knew that we're playing at home, and that's just not good for other teams, coming into Goss. So there was more excitement, there was more buzz, we knew we were going to be playing in front of our home crowd.

We kind of breezed through that regional on our way to the super regional, and then we just absolutely crushed Stanford. First game was close; second game was kind of a no-doubter game. And we went undefeated through the regionals and it was back to Omaha.

GG: This time around, how did Beaver Nation react to you heading to Omaha again? Were there any parades, parties or send-offs?

KG: We celebrated another Pac-10 championship and, again, it was another quick turn-around to get to Omaha. I think everybody was wanting to celebrate with the team, but they were also wanting to plan out their trips to Omaha. I'm sure that many people had pre-planned their trip, thinking that we would make it. But wanting to get hotels and get airfare and get everything dialed in was, I think, important for everybody. Again, it was a quick turn-around. I think we had a workout here and we were packed, ready to go; we had a ton of stuff that we had to take and load into that plane and go.

GG: How did it feel to come back to Rosenblatt Stadium this time around? Especially being the only one of the eight teams that attended the year earlier?

KG: We just knew we belonged there. And again, that one year of being there, we knew what to expect. We knew what the environment was like, we knew what Media Day was going to look like with the NCAA, we knew what our workout was going to be like on the field. We knew everything that was going to take place, which makes you relax a lot more. And I think that was probably the biggest difference: we were more relaxed in 2006 than we were in 2005.

[0:30:00]

GG: How would you describe the mindset of the team as they went up against their first World Series opponent, Miami?

KG: Well, I think we definitely expected to win that game. We got down early and it almost like, "gosh, this is happening again." We thought being here a year before would definitely help relax everything; it just shows you how difficult it is to win games in Rosenblatt. I remember vividly during a brief rain delay, we were sitting down in the clubhouse, there were a few of us that were looking at the bracket and we were like, "if we lose this game, we have a monster road ahead of us to get to the championship series." I don't know, there was just something after that game, we were kind of crushed but we were like, "we have another game to play, if we win we advance, and we're just going to try to do our best to continue to win."

GG: The Beavers had a rematch against Miami after beating Georgia 5-3. How would you describe the mood of the team as they entered that game?

KG: We were looking for payback. We were hungry. We got a taste of victory in the College World Series; I think that relaxed guys even more. But we wanted to get them back. They beat us 11-1, they absolutely embarrassed us on national t.v. It was the primetime game of the College World Series other than the championship series – Saturday night on ESPN, packed house – we wanted payback. And we pitched really great that game and our bats came alive and scored some runs for us, and it felt good to beat them, especially after how they beat us the first game.

GG: I can imagine. And in addition to good bats, we had some good pitching too. You were pitching in the second game against Miami according to my research, and your efforts, along with those of Eddie Kunz and Mike Stutes, held Miami to five hits for the entire game. What was your strategy for beating Miami after they won for the first time?

KG: I don't think our strategy changed so much from the first game. We have a very, I'd say, simple approach offensively: we're just going to put as much pressure on you as possible. From a pitching standpoint, we just made too many mistakes in the first game. We knew that we could get them out – certain guys out with certain pitches in certain locations, and we just executed our game plan a little bit better. Our pitching staff, our starting staff, was phenomenal all year. Dallas just had a bad game, and it happens. Mikey [Stutes] came out that game and just set a tone right from the get-go that he's going to go right after guys. We were pitching them hard in, brushing them off the plate. We kind of sent a message early in the game that we were not here to mess around, this game. And we got them back on their heels from an offensive standpoint, and I don't think they ever really got comfortable in the box.

GG: After beating Miami, you had to go up against number one seeded Rice University. What was the mood of the team as it was going up against the top-seeded team in the Series?

KG: I think, at that point, after playing two consecutive games, we knew we had to beat them twice. At that point, we were just trying to take one game at a time. We knew it was going to be very challenging because our pitching was getting rather thin. We had some guys throwing on short days' rest, consecutive days, but at that point in time, you just don't give up, you've got to keep plugging along. We told ourselves to just take one inning at a time, one pitch at a time, and then we can worry about the second game if we get there against them.

GG: Did Coach Casey say anything before that series against Rice?

KG: No, no. He just – Coach does a really good job of letting us play. He knows when he needs to give a motivating speech. He knew that we didn't need to be motivated, we were motivated enough; he could just tell. And then the atmosphere at our hotel, how we were in team meetings, how we were at breakfast and lunch, he just knew. Coach does a great job of understanding when the right time is, when he needs to step up and talk to the group. He just said, "let's go play our game," very simple approach. And that was probably the best thing that he could have done, because no speech would have motivated us anymore. I mean, we were ready to go.

GG: You ended up sweeping Rice University and made it to the championship round against North Carolina. What was it like to play against the Tar Heels for a national championship?

[0:35:02]

KG: It was – our road to get to that championship series was definitely the long road. A lot longer than they had; they kind of swept through their couple games that they had to play to get to the championship series. Everyone was picking us to lose, simply because we had played five games already, they had only played a few. They had two first round draft picks on their starting staff. They had talent up and down their line-up. And we were kind of running on fumes a little bit as far as health-wise. We had just played so many games.

We knew we could beat them, there was no doubt about that. And it just kind of fueled the fire under us when we found out that everyone was picking them to sweep us. You know, it was going to be a short series and they would beat us two out of three, and we were going to be done.

GG: I remember watching that on ESPN, that series unfold. The Tar Heels edged the Beavers 4-3 in the first game. What was it like going into the second game? What was your mindset where the Beavers won 11-7?

KG: We were just going to fight and scratch and claw and do everything we could to force a Game 3. Again, they had never really been tested; they kind of breezed through the regional and their super regional, they breezed through the World Series, they were just rolling. We knew that, if we put pressure on them, there's a chance that they might crack and they might crack hard. And that's exactly what happened. They jumped out in a lead on us and I'm sure some people thought that, "it's over. They are just the better team right now, clearly." Then all the sudden, we just got this spark and just, again, started to scratch and fight and claw. We started putting some runs on the board, we started putting pressure on them. Then all the sudden, you could just see them almost, I wouldn't say give up, but it looked like that. It looked like they just kind of rolled over and were like, "oh, we'll just see them in Game 3." But you could tell from the look on their faces that they were shocked, that no one had really come and punched them in the mouth very hard, like we did, because they hadn't been tested. They had these guys that were phenomenal pitchers that would be future big leaguers, and we put the pressure on them, and obviously that Game 2 was serious excitement in the stadium. Looking back, watching the games, listening to how loud the crowd was when we would score, hit a home run, you just, again, get goose bumps.

GG: I can imagine. With the best of three series tied at one a piece, the Beavers went against the Tar Heels for the national title. What was the mood of the team going in?

KG: One game for a championship. Every college baseball team wished that they could be in our spot, and we were one of two teams to be there. So we just were excited. When we woke up that next morning, I don't think guys even realized how much they were sleeping or if they were getting sleep or what. We just were on a really, really good routine, day in and day out. We'd been there forever. [laughs] We'd played seven games already in the World Series, out of fifteen games; we ended up playing eight of the sixteen games in the World Series, which is crazy. We were excited when we got on the bus; we couldn't wait to get on the bus to go to that game, because we knew the looks on their faces after the second game, we knew that if we could put some pressure on them that we would have a good chance at winning this game.

GG: How would you describe the mood of Beaver Nation during this time?

KG: We had phenomenal support. Our hotel was rocking. We stayed at the Hilton down there and ESPN was actually in our hotel as well, all their people. The hotel really embraced our group and our fans, it was really cool to see, when we would come out of the hotel, they would line up with pom-poms and balloons and they would kind of give us a little walkway and be cheering us on. That's cool to see. Definitely better than walking out of your hotel and having no one there. There were people all over the place; everyone was wearing black and orange in that hotel. You'd see people walking around at lunch or breakfast – I think we took over the entire hotel. [laughs]

GG: You pitched the last game of that series, is that right?

KG: Yes.

GG: What was going through your mind when you took the mound in the final innings of the game?

[0:40:02]

KG: It was every pitcher's dream to be in that situation. I pitched the night before, five and two-thirds innings, which was the longest outing of my career, or close to it. And I spent hours and hours after that game with our trainer, trying to get my body ready, because I knew I was going to be sore. I hadn't pitched that much. But I told my coaches, I said, "if we're in a situation and we have a chance to win this game, I want the baseball. I don't care that I pitched the night before, I can do it." And I actually felt really good waking up the next day.

I was warming up so fast, I remember our catcher in the bullpen, Casey Priseman, who ended up actually catching me before every game that I went into, he was kind of my designated bullpen guy, when he wasn't catching in the real game. He stood up and I can remember this vividly, he just said, "slow down." And I'm warming up to go into the biggest game of our lives, and he told me to slow down and that was like the best thing ever. He came up to me, he was like, "close your eyes, take a deep breath. You've done this all year long, you're the guy that we want on the mound. Just give yourself a

breather." And I can remember that I just closed my eyes, I looked up in the sky, took a deep breath, and after that I was just so much more relaxed. I knew that I was going into a situation that depended on me getting the job done to bring home a championship, and it's a lot of pressure, but I can't thank Casey enough for doing that because I remember I was going a mile a minute. I was just trying to throw as fast as I could, balls were going everywhere, and him doing that really calmed me down and put me into a good mindset to go into the game.

GG: What was your first reaction after the last out was made and you were crowned national champions?

KG: I remember when he hit the ball, I knew he didn't hit it very good; he kind of hit it off the end of the bat. Tyler Graham had been catching everything in the World Series. He was on, I think, ESPN Top Ten Plays every single night, making diving catches. As soon as he hit it, I just whipped around as fast as I could to see if either him or Cole or Darwin was going to go out; or Darwin go out and Cole and Tyler come in to catch it. And Tyler was just racing so fast, Cole was way behind him. And I knew once his feet stopped and his glove went up, I was watching the ball and I was watching Tyler, and as soon as he caught it, it was almost like it was silence, like you don't hear anything. The crowd went absolutely crazy.

As soon as I whipped around, threw off my hat, threw off my glove; as soon as I did that, Mitch grabbed me, picked me up, and the next thing I know, I was just eating dirt and grass in Omaha. After a little while I had to tell people to get off me. [laughs] But it was almost like a moment that you dream of, but it just doesn't happen for hardly anybody. It was weird – he caught it and it was just me and nobody else, and then all the sudden, when I whipped around, it was a lot of people. And I've watched the highlights before, live, and to hear how loud the stadium got, I didn't hear any of that. Looking back, you're like, "gosh the stadium was going crazy," and my family was like, "oh my gosh, you couldn't even hear." And I was like, I couldn't hear anything, I thought there was nobody in the stands. So it was just an opportunity that obviously every kid dreams of, and to have that opportunity to be able to save a game and bring home a championship to your university and to your state, it's pretty incredible.

GG: I can imagine; only imagine. How did Coach Casey react to being national champions?

KG: He was emotional. He had come to Oregon State and there was really nothing here, for the most part. He built this program and worked tireless hours recruiting, tireless hours getting donors for lights, for facility upgrades. For a coach, obviously winning a championship is an incredible accomplishment. And for him, I think it was super special because he did it against all odds. He did it with primarily Northwest kids who people didn't think could play baseball. It was nice to see his face. You could tell it was just – he was emotional in a good way. An emotion just of joy and of accomplishment that – a lot of people don't realize how hard it is to win a championship. And to be Pac-10 champions two years in a row, participants in the World Series two years in a row, and then winning it, for him I think it was a lifetime goal achieved.

[0:45:34]

GG: How did Beaver Nation celebrate this unprecedented accomplishment in the team's, at the time, ninety-nine-year history?

KG: An amazing celebration. [laughs] We had fun, we really did. When we got back to our hotel, we literally were shaking our bus side to side. We had music going; our bus was literally rocking side to side. And there were thousands of people, it seemed like, outside of our hotel, waiting to celebrate. We celebrated that night at the hotel, we had an early flight home; I think we had to be at the airport at 7:00AM, because we had a parade planned in downtown Portland and then we had an event planned here in Corvallis. We didn't get much sleep that night, but we could care less. We lived it up. And all that hard work – I don't think people really realize the rigors of being a student athlete. There are obviously some tremendous perks to being a student athlete but there are long hours, day in and day out. We don't get any free time, whether that was lifting weights, meetings, school, study hall, practice, games, traveling. most people don't realize that, on a road trip, we don't get back until two or three in the morning, and then we have class at eight, nine in the morning on Monday, that we're expected to attend.

And so we got back and they showered our airplane, they had the fire crew there, and the surrounded our airplane and they shot water up and over it. And it was a tribute to a captain's last flight, so it happens, they said, once in a lifetime in the airport – that the Portland International Airport would just happen to have a pilot that's his last flight that he'll ever

fly before he retires. And that's a tribute that they do, so they did that to us. And then we got off the airplane – we had a chartered flight, so we were on the airplane by ourselves – and the entire airport, they had to have announced that we were coming in over the airport speaker, because obviously there are people there to greet us, but the people that were boarding flights and everything, everyone stopped and was clapping for us as we were walking through the airport.

We walked out and there was Hummers and Hummer limousines for transportation. We had a police motorcade that they basically shut down all the major freeways as we were coming down. The people that were going westbound on I-84 to go downtown, people eastbound were stopped on I-84. They were out of their cars clapping for us, cheering. I mean, I don't think you've ever seen that before. Literally, the entire freeway system in Portland was shut down. People were stopping.

We had tens of thousands of people at Pioneer Square, we had an awesome celebration. A police motorcade all the way down I-5 to Corvallis. Had a little parade celebration here. And I think it kind of all hit us at once, where we were like, "we're exhausted." It was later in the afternoon, probably early evening, I think guys just went back to their places and just crashed. We'd been in Omaha for about thirteen days, we'd had a crazy celebration the night before, awesome celebration in Portland and Corvallis. I think guys went to bed at probably 7:00 at night, that's how tired we were. So it was something that you relive and it kind of gives you chills, because the celebration, they did a phenomenal job preparing it.

GG: You were drafted by the majors after that season. How did your experience with the major/minor league system differ from your experience with the Beavers?

KG: The professional game is a lot different in the fact that it's really individualized in the minor leagues. Yes, you're trying to win games. But unlike college, where you're playing for your teammates and you're playing for your university, in the pros, you're playing for yourself. You are trying to do everything you can to get to the next level and continue to climb that ladder until you make it to the major leagues. I think it's a hard adjustment for everybody, going from a very team-oriented environment in college, and then going into very individualized – although you are a team and you want to win, and guys are going out trying to win – your whole team generally cares in college, if you have a bad game.

[0:50:24]

In the pros, it's kind of like, if you go 0-4 or you give up three runs in an inning or have a bad start, guys might pat you on the butt and say, "get 'em next time," but it's all you. It's all you, where in college it's all team. There's no individuals on a team in college, because teams win championships, individuals don't. In the professional ranks, once you get up to the major leagues, then it's more of a team environment, because you're trying to win a World Series for your organization.

GG: Did you keep in contact with any members of the '07 team?

KG: Yeah. I would come down in the wintertime and do some training and come to practice and see guys. And there were guys from our '06 team that came back in '07 and yeah, I stayed in contact with a lot of guys.

GG: What was your reaction to hearing that they won again in '07?

KG: I actually went to the World Series in '07. It was our All Star break. Our minor league All Star break just happened to be when they were in Omaha, so I flew out there for a couple days, and Dallas Buck flew out there for a couple days. That was neat for them because they were the last team into the post-season; a lot of people said they didn't even deserve to be in the post-season that year. But some coaches from other teams lobbied to get them in – you can't leave the defending national champions out of the post-season. You have to give them a shot to defend their title. And they just got hot. [laughs] They got hot.

It's crazy, because the roads were so much different. In 2006, we had a long road through the College World Series; we kind of got through the regionals and super regionals pretty easy. Where that '07 team got to the World Series and they just won every game. They went 5-0, I believe, and won every single game. And it was very little stress, where we were on the edge of our seat biting our nails every single game that we were playing in. So obviously, to be able to be back-to-back national champions is a very, very rare feat; there's only a handful of schools that can say that. That's just a testament to Coach Casey and the coaching staff and the players that came back. They had some inner drive to want to win another championship and they got the job done.

GG: What are your plans for the future?

KG: I coach high school baseball at West Linn, I'm the pitching coach up there. I also own my own pitching academy, Elite Pitching Northwest. I would like to get into college coaching as a pitching coach. There's days where it's like, "gosh, maybe it's time to get a real job." But then I kind of realize that baseball is a passion of mine. I love to coach and my wife sees that. She's just like, "you just love coaching, you can tell," and it's fun for me. So when I go to "work," it's fun. I get to teach baseball every day.

So obviously the ultimate goal would be to potentially get down here someday. I'm obviously hoping for that. I'm working extremely hard to build my resume up as best as I possibly can to be able to, if an opportunity presents itself, to put my name in that hat and say, "I want this job and I want to help Oregon State win another championship."

GG: I wish you all the best with that. Chris?

CP: Yeah, I've got a few more questions about the team and then, more broadly, about being a student athlete. I'm wondering if you can give us a little bit more perspective on some of the personalities from that team, starting with Dallas Buck?

KG: Just on the team in '05 and '06?

CP: Yeah.

KG: Dallas was a fiery competitor. He was one that people would say showed a lot of emotion; it's just who he was and who he is today, he still does it. And there's not a teammate that would do more for his friends and his teammates than Dallas Buck would. Dallas was a hard-working kid. He was an incredible athlete. I don't think people quite realize – he was a four sport all-state kid in high school: track and field, basketball, baseball and football.

[0:55:02]

I can remember when Dallas was playing football down here, and there was a night in the fall or wintertime, something like that, and I needed a ride. I couldn't find anyone to get me home. And all the sudden, this car pulls up and it's one of Dallas's friends from Newberg. And Dallas isn't – they were in L.A., they were getting ready to board their flight home. Dallas called his friend and said, "hey, Gundy needs a ride home, this is where he's at." His buddy pulled up and rolled down his window and was like, "Gundy, get in. I'm going to give you a ride. Dallas just called." I mean, how many people would do that?

Dallas is a good friend of mine to this day and we have a lot of fun together. I'm glad that our paths crossed, because we could have easily – he was drafted by the Pirates out of high school and they offered him a ton of money. And he turned it down to be a two sport guy here, and thankfully he turned it down because I probably wouldn't be friends with him to this day.

CP: How about Jonah Nickerson?

KG: Jonah's one of my best friends. We roommates all three years. Our families are really, really close. My wife and his wife have become good friends, although we're living in Portland and they live in Eugene – we're actually going to see them today.

Jonah's just a quiet, humble guy. Jonah doesn't show any emotion; Jonah's just straight-faced, doesn't show much excitement, doesn't get down when he's struggling. So two totally different personalities, but Jonah has a big heart. Even though Jonah's quiet, Jonah has a big heart and was a great teammate to all of us. He was one that just led strictly by example. He didn't have to be the big rah-rah guy, he just did his work and had a lot of success. And people followed it whether – there's different types of leaders, there's leaders that will be very vocal and then there's the quiet leaders, the guys that lead by example. And Jonah's one of those guys.

CP: And his performance in the World Series was nothing short of heroic.

KG: No. Jonah, I think that people who are true Beaver baseball fans have, and if they haven't they should probably thank him for putting, really, his career on the line. He had gotten drafted that year. The coaches knew who was going to sign, because the draft is before the post-season even starts. So we knew that this was our last go and Jonah was really honest with the coaches. The coaches would have never put him in a situation to get hurt but Jonah, again, just quietly put everybody on his shoulders. And he knew we didn't have any pitching, we were decimated as far as the number of innings and pitches that we had thrown, and he just said, "I can do it. Just give me the ball." Very simple. Jonah's a very simple guy, he's just like, "I'll do it. Give it to me."

Jonah doesn't want the recognition – and none of us do, this is a team effort – but what Jonah did in the World Series [laughs], I mean, takes some serious guts. I know that he was just, deep down, that he really did want the ball. But he pitched on Monday, he pitches on Thursday, and then he pitched again on Monday. I mean, it was pretty crazy, as a starter. As a reliever, stints is one thing, but he was going full game; he was going deep into the games for us. So I think people should continue to thank him for his performance because I don't think the championship would be here in Corvallis if it wasn't for him.

CP: How about Mitch Canham?

KG: Leader. [laughs] He was a vocal leader. He was one that was not afraid to get on someone if they were screwing around lifting weights, conditioning, whatever it was. Mitch was a guy that would give some very inspiring speeches. What Mitch has gone through in life with his family, you just would never wish on anybody. It made him extremely tough. He lost his mother the first day of classes our freshman year, and then he lost his brother over in Afghanistan a couple of years later. Mitch never did the pity party, "poor me, I don't have my mom and my brother here." Mitch, it motivated him, it motivated us. His mom passed away, he went up for the service, and then he came right back down to fall practice. Coach said, "you take as much time as you need," and he was like, "I need to be here." Mitch was that guy that you knew had your back; if anything went down, he'd be the first person there. He'd be in front of you, not behind you.

[1:00:16]

That kid went through a lot here. He came in as an infielder/kind of combo outfielder guy, he said he'd play wherever, and then they approached him our sophomore year in the fall and said, "hey, can you catch?" And he was like, "I'll try it." He'd never caught before in his life and he's got one of the best pitching staffs in the country to catch. He had some ups and downs, but he worked so hard. He was up at 5:00AM with our coaches, catching. He'd stay after practice to catch. He just turned himself into, obviously, a first round draft pick as a catcher, which is pretty incredible; he did it in three years and never had caught before his entire life. Mitch is obviously one of the key pieces to all those teams that we had.

CP: Tell us a little bit about the culture of the bullpen – a bunch of pitchers sitting around waiting to play.

KG: Yeah, I came in as a starter and it's easy to prepare for your start, but it's hard to prepare for when you're going to come in out of the bullpen, because you never know. We were very loose; [laughs] sometimes too loose for Coach Casey. He'd get mad at us, but that was just our way of keeping calm. We just were a bunch of misfits out there, playing games out in the bullpen. We'd watch the game; we were fully into what was going on, but when you sit that long and you have no say in what's happening in the game, you just find time to screw around and do things.

So that was our way of keeping us relaxed prior to going into the game because, as a reliever, you go into high pressure situations; the most pressure situations you could. You can give up a run in the starter in the first inning and be fine. If you give up a run in the ninth inning, you lose the game. So we kind of found a really good balance of being serious and having playtime. And our playtime was normally in the beginning of the game, we'd kind of screw around, we'd keep the position players light. And then, after the fifth inning, it was time to get a little bit more serious. Put our spikes on, put our hats on right, tuck in our jerseys, and get ready to go.

CP: As a closer, how did you deal with the pressure?

KG: I think I was just attracted to it; I liked it. I didn't really feel pressure. I just saw it as an opportunity to help my team win. They put me into that situation halfway through my freshman year. It can be nerve-wracking because the weight

of the game is all on you and your teammates are expecting you to perform. I just liked it. I liked to go on in situations where we were up by one run. Three runs, yeah, ok. But one run, where you face 2-3-4, 3-4-5 in their lineup, was fun for me. I liked that more than facing 7-8-9 in a three-run game. It's just who I am, it's just what I have in my body. It's hard to explain. I've always faced an uphill battle because I've always been on the smaller side. I've always had to work harder than everybody else to put myself in situations to be highly successful. So that work ethic, when they said, "hey, we want you to start closing," I was like, "sweet. Give me the ball." I just loved it. I loved every minute of it. I didn't get the job done every time, but I knew that that happens and my teammates knew that would happen. Just because they'd even say, "I wouldn't want to be put in that situation." Being required to throw some strikes and get some guys out is not easy, especially at the level that we were playing at.

CP: You mentioned you don't have the prototypical closer's build. What were some of your strengths as a pitcher that made you so effective, besides your mental approach?

KG: Well, I was just fearless. I guess people say, you know, you actually did have a pretty good arsenal of pitchers to go with a good mental makeup. I was just fearless. I respected my opponents, but I didn't fear them. I knew that I had good enough stuff to get them out. Yeah, I wasn't going to be throwing ninety-five miles an hour like you see most closers nowadays, but I had good enough stuff to get the job done. And as a student athlete in college, that's what you work for. You work so hard in the fall and the wintertime to get yourself into the best physical shape and mental shape as possible, to when you're in the Pac-10 facing a top-five team in your conference, that your preparation leads you to that success.

[1:05:00]

I would go right after guys. Opponents knew that I was going to mess around. They knew that, even though I was small, like, "he's not just going to give in to us." And so I would go just in attack mode. And if that meant that I had to throw a ball up and in to send a message to a team, I did that. I would never try and hurt anyone, but I had to show them early on that they were going to have a battle against me. I wasn't just going to roll over against them.

CP: You have a great nickname, The Vulture. How did that come about?

KG: My first four collegiate outings, I was 4-0, out of the bullpen. I came in, Billy Rowe was one of our starters, and he just struggled. It was his senior year and he just really struggled. And I would come in, in like the second, third or fourth inning, around that time, my first four starts, and I was in long relief those first four weeks. And we'd be losing and I would pitch into like the sixth, seventh inning, and we'd take the lead, and I would get wins. [laughs] It started like week two, they were like, "gosh, you vultured another win." And I was like 2-0 in my first two collegiate outings, it was pretty cool. And then I got another one and then I got another one in four consecutive weeks, and they were just like, "dude, you are a vulture."

So that kind of stuck with me until they put me in the closer's role. And I'm sure I had some games where I pitched in the ninth inning and they would tie the game, and then I'd pitch the tenth and we'd score and I'd snake another win. And it's just like, I would rather have the save than the win. So, the vulture nickname really developed my freshman year and it kind of, it stayed little bit here and there, but mainly my freshman year – everybody called me The Vulture. [laughs] I went 6-2 my freshman year out of the bullpen. [laughs] I had eight decisions, which you just don't see very often.

CP: Tell us a bit about the training regimen that a collegiate baseball has to go through, both off-season and during the season.

KG: Yeah, it's lifting weights – two weight classes, split us in half, 6:00AM, 7:30. The freshmen and younger guys always got the 6:00AM lifting. We'd walk into an environment with very intense weight coaches that, it was their job that they get paid to do, to put us in the best physical shape as possible. They were wide awake. I don't think they ever slept. Trent, who was the head football trainer my freshman year, I can remember, I don't think he literally every slept. We walked in one morning, it was 5:30 in the morning, and he had a lettuce wrap with some chicken in it and he was sprinkling protein powder on top. Like stuff you'd mix in a drink. He would just sprinkle it on top and eat it. "Dude, this guy's crazy." He wasn't our trainer, but he was in there walking around and making sure people were doing things right.

But lift three, four days a week. Heavy, hard in the off-season. Conditioning was brutal, whether that was in Truax, whether it was in the pouring down rain, whether that was running stadiums. We'd have to run stadiums sometimes at 5:00 in the morning, where we'd go out to the football field and we had to touch every single step of the football stadium, and we were not allowed to touch any seats or hand rails. So in December, when it's pouring rain, forty degrees, and the steps are slippery, and they are saying, "you're not allowed to touch it," and you had to go, it was crazy. But that prepared us for the games where the situations in games are like, "shoot, we've been busting our butt in the weight room, conditioning, doing all that." And this was, a lot of it was in the morning. We conditioned after practice some days in the wintertime, which was really grueling as well. And then you sprinkle in school on top of that, in between, that just made for some long days, but your body gets used to it.

I don't think some people realize you have to work, especially at the Division I level. The competition is just so high and so you have to put yourself in the best physical shape that you can possibly be in. Thankfully we had some tremendous weight coaches and conditioning guys and trainers that did a great job in keeping us strong and keeping us healthy.

CP: What was school like for you?

KG: I enjoyed school, I really did. I actually switched my major three times – two times when I was here and then, after I got drafted, I took six years off of school while I was in pro baseball. My wife basically said, "you're going to finish school. You have a year left." I knew I was always going to finish, but I was just kind of like, "oh, I'll just wait a little bit longer, a little bit longer." And then I ended up switching my degree again to finish, because I had to finish up online; we had just had our first child.

[1:10:11]

But while here on campus, the fall and the winter was obviously a lot easier, because we were here. As soon as the season started, it was really, really hard. We were gone – the first four or five weeks of the season, we were gone every weekend. We'd leave Thursday morning, we'd come back Sunday night and get back into Corvallis Monday morning at three in the morning, and we'd do that every week for four weeks. So we were on campus Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and then we were gone Thursday and Friday. And so we tried to have as many Monday/Wednesday classes as possible. That way we were on campus. There is a nice little perk of being a student athlete is you get – the only people that have choices over classes are graduate students, so you basically get first dibs on every single class that you want. And obviously with the academic advisors over there, they put you in the classes with professors that are understanding of student athletes, and there's such a high level of respect for students that have to work when they're in school – some of my friends had to work when they were in college. And I told them, "you know what, I respect what you're doing, but what we have too is really hard. We basically have a full-time job. We're getting up at 4:30 in the morning, working out, and then going to school, going to practice, and going to study hall."

So I enjoyed school, it was fun. It was kind of a release away from the baseball environment, because baseball was so much. I mean, we had so much to do. So when I'd go to class for those few hours a day, it was just kind of a nice little getaway.

CP: What did you ultimately wind up majoring in?

KG: I ended up getting my degree in Sociology and I have a minor in Communications. I started out as a Business major, my freshman year, and I stayed there my whole freshman year. And then I realized Econ and all that in spring, when we were gone for all that time, was absolutely horrendous. I found myself with our academic advisors that would travel with us on the road, I was up until 12:00, 1:00 in the morning, trying to get my work done. And it was just really, really hard to stay up on sleep when we're on the road. Trying to do work on the plane was super hard. Trying to do work when we're on the road – when you're in Arizona and it's eighty-five degrees and you want to just be outside, my Business major just wasn't a good fit for me. It was just really hard. And I ended up switching to Communications, which was a lot healthier balance for me. I found that I could manage my time and my workload a lot better than I was when I was a Business major. So I was a Communications major my sophomore and junior year, prior to leaving.

CP: The last question I have, you're in town having been inducted into the OSU Sports Hall of Fame for being on the 2005 World Series team, the program has come such a long way, the facilities have come a very long way, what's it like for you to see where the program is at right now and where it's heading?

KG: Yeah. Obviously a special place. I can remember how our stadium was when I came in 2004 and looking at it now, it is a complete transformation. It's special, I think, for the teams in the past that kind of paved this way for the success that the team is having now. Not only the success that they're having but the perks of being a student athlete here at Oregon State has become one of the most desired locations to attend college in the entire country. You have kids from all over the country that want to play baseball at Oregon State. Especially to see that, because I can say that my group of friends that were here started that. Without our group, who knows where Oregon State baseball would be?

But those kids that are playing here today, they deserve everything that they have. They just launched a \$75,000 campaign, they opened it up to the public, which is something that they've never done before; a lot of the funds are always privately found. And they opened it up to see what the support would be like to give these kids a players' lounge. Some people were like, "why do they need a players' lounge?" I'm like, "this is a day in the life," I give them a day in the life of a student athlete. And I said, "they deserve to just go in and kick their feet up on a couch, or go and play ping pong for ten minutes, or go and play shuffleboard for ten minutes, and just get away from the rigors of being a student athlete." A lot of people don't realize, they don't think about it, but if you don't perform well in the classroom, you don't play. So trying to manage school and sports at the Division I level is extremely difficult. So they raised, I think it's got to be close to \$90,000 – fifteen over their target goal – I think there's like three or four days left. So the support from Beaver Nation was obviously at an all-time high.

[1:15:31]

But those kids deserve every ounce of it, they really do. It's a gift and blessing to be a college athlete. So to just show them a little bit of support by giving them a players' lounge to go and hang out in is special for them. And obviously with the new locker room, that is more than deserving. We were in just a tiny little box. The facilities are just, they're some of the best in the entire country. They really are. There's some fields out there – North Carolina has a complex that's probably nicer than Oregon's – but if you ask everyone, "environment – what's one of the top ones?" they'll say, "Oregon State." People that are outside of Oregon, guys that aren't Oregon State fans, they'll say, "that's one of the best environments to play in." It's pretty cool.

CP: Indeed. Well Kevin, thank you very much. This has been a lot of fun for us and we wish you the best going forward.

GG: Definitely.

KG: I appreciate it. Thank you.

[1:16:33]