

College World Series: Baton Rouge Regional

Friday, June 2, 2023

Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA

LSU Tigers

Coach Jay Johnson

Paul Skenes

Dylan Crews

Postgame Press Conference



LSU - 7, Tulane - 2

COACH JOHNSON: Good performance by our team. Obviously great from Paul from the mound. Speaks for itself. Very clean game defensively.

Great play by Jordan Thompson on the popup. Nice place by Tommy on the runner. Offensively we executed. We got lead-off guys on. Had a number of times we had three quality at-bats in a row. Excellent with runners on base. Move on to tomorrow.

Q. To go nine innings today, 120 pitches, you were throwing over 100 miles an hour in the ninth inning, just talk about the outing as a whole and just kind of when you felt like this would be something you could accomplish?

PAUL SKENES: Yeah, I think to be able to go that deep into a game really speaks to just executing pitches and did a lot better job this week than last week of executing my pitches. They came out swinging, which allowed me to have some short innings as well.

It was really cool to be able to go that deep into a game. And just looking to build off of that tomorrow.

Q. It felt like you have some energy when you skipped onto the mound in the ninth inning. What was that conversation like when you knew that you were going to finish this game?

PAUL SKENES: There wasn't a whole lot of haggling back and forth. It was pretty sweet. He asked me if I wanted it. I said yeah, and I had it.

Q. When did you find out you were going to start?

What were your thoughts, what were the conversations with Coach about you getting the start and why?

PAUL SKENES: Yes, obviously the ability to start the Regional off well, put our pitching staff and our bullpen in a good position to have a lot of rest and go into the second and third days of the Regional strong, that was the primary goal of today. Obviously win, but more happy that we're in a good position the next few days to have all our arms.

Q. When did you learn?

PAUL SKENES: I don't remember. A few days ago.

Q. Pressure playing at home being a national seed. And you're playing a team who they had no idea that be in the NCAA Tournament a little over a week ago. How do you feel you guys handled that today, knowing that they're coming in with nothing to lose and you guys, everyone expects you to win?

DYLAN CREWS: I think we handled it perfectly well today. Obviously we played them earlier in the season. That meant nothing to us going into today.

Obviously we have a great pitcher on the mound. We knew he was going to go out there and do his thing. And we were right behind him every pitch. So hats off to the guys. It was a great all-around performance.

Q. Dylan, your thoughts, 3-for-5 on the day. You really stepped in some big-time hitting. What are your thoughts on your performance and also the performance of your team with a lot of big-time hitting to help your team win today?

DYLAN CREWS: All around, like I said, it was a great performance. I was just going out there swinging strikes, taking balls at the end of the day. Trust in my ability. I worked hard all week.

So, like I said, it was sticking to my approach and plan and swinging at strikes, taking balls and worked out for everybody today.



Q. Dylan, I was sort of curious, was the emphasis today at all, at least offensively or at least heading into the week, small ball, getting the ball on the ground, getting the ball in place, especially with runners in scoring position?

DYLAN CREWS: Yes, I think it's very important especially with runners on first and second with less than two outs to get the guy over. And we've been working hard all week with our bunting and our short game.

So I think Jordan and Gavin laid one down. So we're able to get the guys over and we scored them. We definitely worked on that for sure.

Q. Dylan, pretty crazy defensive plays in the game. But Paul going through the legs to double up the dude, give me your thoughts on watching that and your thoughts on doing that, if you don't mind?

DYLAN CREWS: That was one of the coolest things I've ever seen in my life. I have, like, a straight lineup shot with it, so I was one of the ones that saw it before the replay where he caught it in between his legs. My initial reaction was hands over the head, I was, like, that was sick.

PAUL SKENES: Yeah, just got tired of them hitting the ball up the middle and I wanted to catch one. So did it.

Q. Paul, this is your tenth time pitching over 100 pitches. What do you do -- is it like conditioning or eating healthy -- what do you do to pitch over 100 pitches?

PAUL SKENES: It's a combination of all of that. Looking back to last year, and the year before I had a lot of volume on my body in the past and I've been able to manage it pretty well. So I don't know exactly why that is.

But then coming here and having, I think, gaining more access to knowledge about nutrition and really good strength and conditioning program and a lot of really good arm care, everything combines to allow me to do that, I would say.

Q. Paul, you talked about the game plan and why. How rewarding is it to execute that and kind of know that you set your team up?

PAUL SKENES: Super rewarding. Obviously it's really cool to go out there and compete for as long as I can. But I think we're going to benefit more from it the next couple of days than the win today.

Q. What went into your decision to start Paul? And I

guess is that what you wanted to get out of him today?

COACH JOHNSON: Yes.

Q. Can you expound on that?

COACH JOHNSON: Yeah, he's the best pitcher in college baseball. We're now in postseason play. And felt really good about what he could do today and impact us winning the game. And he definitely did that.

And as he spoke of, there's some other value of him being able to do what he did today that should help the rest of the pitchers the rest of the way.

Q. What are your thoughts on Tulane's performance today against you guys?

COACH JOHNSON: A team that's playing really well right now. I watched every pitch of the American tournament. We watched a lot of their last series against Memphis and Houston. Determined that the team we played April 11th was not the team we were playing today.

And I like their pitching staff a little bit too with what some of those guys can do. Carmouche has 100 strikeouts in 86 innings coming into today.

And they have good guys coming out of the bullpen with different looks, which is how they survived that tournament. If you look out on the surface of the record and don't dig deeper, you could make a mistake and make a judgment about Tulane that's not true.

They're incredibly well-coached -- incredibly well-coached. They have good players, both on the mound and at the top of the batting order. And they're playing really good baseball right now.

Q. Your thoughts on the defense, how you all played today? A lot of big-time plays. Looks like it's really helpful for the win today and also going forward.

COACH JOHNSON: We've been playing good defense for a little while now. We had a bad game, the last regular season game at Georgia. We only made one error in the SEC Tournament, which was actually a catcher's interference. And that's another zero in their error column today.

And it's a much improved part of our team this year. And all the credit goes to the work those guys put in. But Dylan has played every game in center field. Jordan's played every game at shortstop. Tommy's really improved at third. It's been good to have Tre' healthy so he can go back to

first base because he couldn't for like a month.

And then Brayden Jobert, how about that play today? We actually had a discussion about whether Jobert was going to be in right and Pearson was going to be in left. And I'm really glad Jobert was because Pearson wouldn't have been tall enough to catch that ball when he jumped up.

Q. Was there any consideration of not starting Paul today?

COACH JOHNSON: I've considered everything all the time, yeah. Yeah, there was, but it was actually not a hard decision when you dig into it the way we dug into it.

Q. Just the way you guys moved the offense today, I know that was something you talked about a little bit. Leading up to the Regional, just how do you feel like you guys did that? It was a little bit more bunts and sac flies, that kind of stuff. Just talk about that, I guess.

COACH JOHNSON: We do a lot of things really well when we're at the plate -- manage zone, hit mistakes, very good two-strike-hitting team. And playoff baseball is a little different. And playing with the lead helps.

And when you have a pitcher like that on the mound today, sometimes a four-run lead can feel like an eight-run deficit to them. So it was important today and really helped us out.

Q. Do you feel like it was as much about setting the tone for the way you want your team to play this postseason?

COACH JOHNSON: I mean, it's good baseball is what it was. I mean, couple sacrifice bunts, couple sacrifice flies, two ground balls to the middle of the field with a man on third with less than two outs.

These are things that we've done well, honestly, but it gets overshadowed because you've got seven guys with 10 or more homers. And we walk a ton and those types of things.

And different games require you to do different things. My deal with them, from day one, is always you've got to be able to win any type of game in a big field, in a small field, one-run game, a slugfest, pitchers' duel, wind blowing in, wind blowing out.

Doesn't matter. We have to be functional. We were definitely functional today. I think they're very confident in how we were going to play offense today and played really

well.

Q. Just your decision to go with Skenes, does that speak to the trust and your understanding of who he is and what he can do for you?

COACH JOHNSON: Absolutely, as well as the rest of the guys on the staff for what's ahead of us.

Q. I just wanted to know what went into the decision to have Skenes finish the game. Obviously he was on a roll, but still a season-high pitch count.

COACH JOHNSON: Because we've been very good at managing that count and making a decision to pull him out of a game that I never would have ever pulled him out of last week because of what was to come this week.

It was almost -- I wouldn't call it a week off in Hoover, but he had an extra day's rest this week. So it was eight days' rest. A lighter pitch count week last week. We've been very deliberate about what games he's gone into that hundred range and what games he came out before that. And the only decision was Travinski going to hit a grand slam and put us up nine.

And with a long inning, we probably wouldn't have sent him back out there. But no way were we messing around. And Wes came to me in the eighth, started talking -- I was like, no, he's going back out. He's got the first three hitters.

If we have traffic, then we'll set something else up. But I didn't really feel like there was going to be traffic based on how he finished the eighth inning after I went out to the mound.

Q. Did he get hit in the back of the leg, Paul, there early in the game?

COACH JOHNSON: Yeah, I think it scraped him. Good thing he has bigger quads than me.

Q. There on the road, would you ever consider bringing him for very short relief at the end -- Paul -- at the end of a huge game, particularly if he doesn't throw as much as he did today and it's two days earlier?

COACH JOHNSON: This year? You're talking about bringing Paul out of the bullpen? No. He's very clearly on, looked at this thing like he was going to be a weekend starter for us and pitch once a week and set him up, set up a good schedule to do that. And he's delivered. He's delivered as well as any pitcher I've ever seen in college baseball. And what he does to prepare and then how he executes and he did it again today.

Q. Have you ever seen a pitcher catch a line drive between the legs before? And what was your general reaction to not only that catch but the double play?

COACH JOHNSON: Call me shallow-minded thinking at the time, but I was glad we got two outs with one pitch. And I actually missed that. I didn't see that he caught it between his legs. I was just happy we got a double play and started thinking for the offensive inning that was coming up.

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