

College World Series: Baton Rouge Regional

Sunday, June 4, 2023

Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA

LSU Tigers

Coach Jay Johnson

Brayden Jobert

Thatcher Hurd

Postgame Press Conference



LSU - 6, Oregon State - 5

COACH JOHNSON: Great college baseball game. Two great teams. Highly competitive. Great start by Ty. Did a great job for the three innings he was out there. I thought the team did a good job being poised and focused during the rain delay.

Thatcher came out and gave us a brilliant performance, 12 strikeouts. He's the best pitcher in the country tonight. Great poise by Gavin at the end.

Proud of the hitters. The first couple of innings we really did exactly what we wanted to do, other than finish the inning off with one more quality at-bat. Stayed with it.

It's a lot of unique guys we saw out of the bullpen. But we did what we needed to do against each guy and got the swings we needed. Good game and get ready for tomorrow.

Q. Brayden, Coach said it felt like a matter of time before you guys would push some runs in. I guess the three-hour layover there, what did you guys talk about in terms of generating offense and getting going there with the long ball?

BRAYDEN JOBERT: Before anything, I just want to say shout-out to our pitching staff. They were unbelievable tonight. During the rain delay, we were just focused on staying into the game, not getting too far away from it. And we came out and we did our job.

Q. Brayden, I felt like everything got started when Dylan Crews hit two-run homer in the fourth inning. I saw a lot more emotion out of him. Do you feel that was something that ignited the team and have you

ever seen him get that excited?

BRAYDEN JOBERT: Yeah, absolutely. That set us on fire. It's playoff baseball. Emotions are running high and we're just having a blast out there.

Q. Thatcher, seems like particularly in two-strike counts you were relying on your curveball. Was there something you saw early on in film or you just felt was really working with that pitch?

THATCHER HURD: Yes, really good feel for that pitch tonight. And the depth and the differential off the fastball and the slider was good in put-away counts. Executed it down.

Q. Thatcher, the first home run, hit kind of high, it kind of drifted. Can you talk about how you bounced back from that and moved forward from that?

THATCHER HURD: It was so what, we're going to come back, keep making pitches. I'm going to live and die in the strike zone.

Q. Brayden, what were you looking for in that home run?

BRAYDEN JOBERT: I was the lead-off for the inning. I was just trying to put up a good at-bat and get on base. It was a 2-0 count. He grooved me a fastball and I put a good swing on it.

Q. Thatcher, when did you know that you were going to come in after the rain delay? Any kind of mental preparation that goes into that, if you could talk about that?

THATCHER HURD: I know with the delay, there was a chance, as soon as I heard that before any coaches told me I was getting mentally prepared to go in. When they told me, I was pretty excited. I was very excited to get the ball.

I was just going to be ready to start it back up until they told me I wasn't or I was, you know.



Q. Thatcher, obviously three innings had already passed, so technically you're a relief outing. But there had been so time, it seemed like you were warming up normally like you were a starter. What goes into your routine, in particular, and is that how you wanted to approach it?

THATCHER HURD: When Ty took the mound, I was ready -- I was going to keep my body ready to come in out of relief. But with the delay, I had plenty of time. It was just about staying on top of the routine. I do the same routine basically every day. So regardless of my role, I'll be ready to go.

Q. Brayden, before the rain delay, you all had one hit. The next five or six hits were extra-base hit and four or five straight home runs. How do you explain that? Did Jobu have anything to do with that?

BRAYDEN JOBERT: Of course he did. We were just -- like Coach said, we were having good at-bats. It wasn't coming together. And we put it all together after the rain delay. We were putting good swings on balls. We have a very strong team. We have a very strong team. And once we hit the ball hard, they're going to go.

Q. Brayden, was there any sort of adjustment period for the offense just because you haven't seen these guys and they might have a slightly different style just being in the Pac-12, like how much of an adjustment was that for you guys offensively?

BRAYDEN JOBERT: We didn't really think about that at all. Our opponent is nameless and faceless, as Coach tells us all the time. No matter who is on the mound, we have a plan. As long as we stick to that plan, we believe they're going to go our way.

Q. Brayden, as someone from Louisiana, what did it mean to you to hit that game-winning home run in this magnitude of a game at the Box?

BRAYDEN JOBERT: Awesome. I'm just so proud of my team. I'm happy I could come through for my team. I'm just very blessed and very happy that we came out with a win.

Q. Thatcher, he's come through in some late-game situations for you all year, but Gavin Guidry getting those final three outs and the poise and confidence it shows in a freshman to go out there and do that.

THATCHER HURD: Poise and confidence, just like you said, that's so nails -- believes in himself, believes in his

stuff. He's cut out for that. He picked us all up. That was pretty electric. I'm super happy for him. And he's going to do that for a long time for us. Really cool.

Q. Thatcher, I think you matched a career high and 12 strikeouts form your time at UCLA. What's the difference between you at the beginning of the year playing for LSU and now? What's the difference?

THATCHER HURD: I've said it -- I've touched on it, but it all starts over the plate. It all starts with strike one and getting the lead-off guy out. If we don't, we move on and to the next pitch. It's one pitch at a time. And I think I've grown from my outings, good or bad, and flush them the next day and just get back to work.

Q. Brayden, just the confidence that a game like this can kind of instill in you guys, have to figure some things out as you go along. I know it was a long day, but what can this do for the team as you kind of push forward?

BRAYDEN JOBERT: Baseball is a long game. It has its ups and downs. As long as we stick to our plan and focus on what we need to do, we feel like we're going to come out on top.

Q. Brayden, yourself and the other leaders on the team, I guess the mentality going to bed tonight to finish the job tomorrow, how do you think you guys will handle that collectively?

BRAYDEN JOBERT: Tomorrow's the most important game of the year. So we're going to come in entirely focused and planning to do our job.

Q. Just the job Josh did and Dylan to kind of get the thing going. You had one hit up to that point, could you speak about those kind of guys coming through?

BRAYDEN JOBERT: They started it for us. They're both amazing players. And hitting is contagious. Once they've started it, it set it off for us.

Q. I notice there's a point late in the game where you got Riley Cooper up to warm up but you kind of left Thatcher out there to kind of work through it. Just talk about that.

COACH JOHNSON: Yeah, you know, the rain delay threw a little bit of a wrench in it. It really condenses the schedule of this thing. So you have to be -- we're always deliberate. But you have to be really deliberate in how you're going to use guys.

And once we pushed in with Thatcher, not only did we need outs, we needed length. I just didn't think they were picking him up. It was a great swing by Turley, obviously. The rest of them, he kind of scattered the hits, even the first homer. So I liked how he was executing, and for me it just made more sense to stay with him.

Q. That offense, kind of picking it up there with Josh, starting it off, could you talk about what his late emergence has meant to this team and him coming through in those moments there.

COACH JOHNSON: I really trust Josh to take the type of at-bats that we need. And this time of year it's just about maturity. And he shows a lot of that. I think he's way over-performed his season from a numbers standpoint.

But if you dig into the contribution and some of our better performances and wins, kind of find a common thread with him in there, whether it was Texas A&M, Arkansas, Tennessee, tonight, Georgia, and I really trust him a lot.

Q. The way it was looking today, five home runs. Kind of reminded me in the '90s of LSU, the way they hit the home runs out, especially in key moments. Did the home runs reminiscent to LSU in the '90s, the way they hit the ball?

COACH JOHNSON: I hope so because that was the best college baseball run of all time of at least recent memory. So anything that emulates Coach Bertman and that time here and those great players, that's a really good thing. And I appreciate you saying that. Even if it's just for one game today.

Q. Do you think this game became more important after the rain delay, just condensing the schedule even more, that potentially if you lose this, you have to win three in a row in just a day and a half; do you think it became more important after that weather delay?

COACH JOHNSON: My message was the exact opposite, that we can win this game winning tonight -- excuse me, we can win the tournament winning tonight. And if we don't win tonight, we can still win the tournament.

And I believe that. And so that was my message in the rain delay. And so go play, because the success of tonight's not final. If there was failure in terms of the result it wasn't going to be fatal either. So I actually looked at it the opposite way.

Q. Just Thatcher's ability to maintain his composure, show some maturity with the things he had to work around and still find it.

COACH JOHNSON: I think it was great. The home run right off the bat and then Forrester doubled, and then he really got himself in gear and minimized the damage right there. I thought that was huge. And then twice, they had first and second-one out, and when I went out to the mound and he went strike out, strike out both times. When you think about a one-run game, leaving the traffic there and getting himself reset, with that type of pitchability gives him the chance to be successful. He was successful tonight. That's one of the best performances I've seen in a long time.

Q. Hard to pick apart a win like this, but 0-for-3 with the bases loaded tonight feels like that's been a trend in the past month. What would you say has been kind of difficult for this team to drive runners in? Did you feel like there was something left on the table?

COACH JOHNSON: Nothing, I'm not even going to say about that.

Q. Was Thatcher, going to him today, always in your mind or was it necessitated by the rain delay needing to get some of that length?

COACH JOHNSON: No, he was up and ready for this game today, for sure. This thing's played out, I wouldn't say a unique way, but I've played two Regionals in the state of Louisiana and it's literally been the exact same thing with rain and weather. You have to account for everything.

So in accounting for everything, he was available Friday in our first game and he was available today. And he did a great job tonight. I think it was great maturity to get himself ready to go that early in the game.

Now, granted we had time, and the good thing about the rain delay he could treat it like a start where we were able to get through his whole routine. There was a point in time where could we potentially get Ty back out there versus the point where you couldn't do that, and the delay just became too long to put him back out there.

But we still had enough time to get Thatcher ready as if he was starting the game. And a one-run game for this team is not a big deal.

Q. When you're playing your most important games of the year, you have all this downtime because of rain delays and everything, how important is it for the guys and how challenging is it for them to keep their focus and stay engaged when they're sitting around for so long?

COACH JOHNSON: Well, they're the most committed people to winning anywhere, and so it's really not hard. We did have two meetings during the time to stay engaged, and then had a good plan once we got an idea of where the start time was going to be and what we wanted to do. And I'm really proud of them for that. It's not easy to do. It's a little easier right now, obviously.

This tournament commands their attention. And they did a great job of it. They showed a lot of maturity in that. And it didn't go good right at the start. We gave up the home run, another run right there. But then to bounce back.

I think there was a lot of key at-bats tonight. Josh Pearson's triple with two strikes was a big deal. That was a big-time deal right there.

Q. Did you get an education on rain delays coming to Louisiana, because obviously you never had any in Arizona?

COACH JOHNSON: There's not a whole lot of experience that comes from coaching eight years in San Diego and six years in Tucson. This doesn't happen.

Q. I know he was around 70, 75 pitches. Do you envision any scenario where Ty might be able to help you in a spot tomorrow?

COACH JOHNSON: Probably not.

Q. Seemed like Oregon State was struggling with Thatcher Hurd's breaking ball, is that kind of why you went to Gavin Guidry in that last inning?

COACH JOHNSON: Well, I liked where we were at in the order to go to him. But more important than any of that is I like the person a lot. And you've probably heard our players talk about it. One thing is the situation can never become bigger than your plan. And that's a guy I really trust a lot. I trust a lot of guys but I really trust Gavin.

And Turley is a dangerous hitter. Obviously. A lot of power. He turned down a lot of money to go to college and really had to execute, and he executed really well to strike him out.

And actually thought the next hit by Kane was a good job of hitting by Kane. But then poise, and we got Kasper on the ground. And that's a great play by Ben Nippolt. And with the pinch-hitter, Peterson, he just got back to executing after the video review. So he's just made for this deal.

Q. Gavin loves being in those late-game situations, and it has shown tonight. What do you have to say about his composure and maturity, especially as a true freshman?

COACH JOHNSON: It's elite. There's a lot I could say about him. I picked up on it really quick. I think I flew into town on a Saturday, when I first got here. And I said, hey, you need to get over here. He was in my office literally Sunday morning.

And you could tell just by sitting with him and his family for a few minutes that this guy has some serious confidence and makeup. And I think you have to have that.

If you're going to pitch at the front of the weekend as a starter, you obviously have to have great stuff. You have to have that X factor piece. To be a closer, to finish games of that magnitude, you have to have it, and he's got it.

Q. Sorry to ask another rain delay question, but as far as nutrition goes, what do you guys eat depending on time? Because there's jokes like what did these guys eat crushing five home runs.

COACH JOHNSON: Seven-course meals, I spend our entire budget on finding players and feeding players. So they eat good. There's not an LSU baseball player that's hungry. We load them up.

Q. How do you feel going into tomorrow? You just only used one pitching relief. Seems like you still have a lot of bullets in the chamber going into tomorrow's game.

COACH JOHNSON: I feel good about it. And I feel good about the way they executed last weekend in Hoover. For the most part, we pitched really well in Georgia, too, the Tuesday game before that. So it's not an aberration at all.

We're talking seven, eight, nine games and talking about against the best opponents in the country. It's all we play. So I'm excited about the possibilities of where we can go with things tomorrow with the guys that are available.

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