

# Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Tuesday, May 25, 2021

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

## Georgia Bulldogs

## Scott Stricklin

### Postgame Press Conference



Georgia 4, LSU 1

THE MODERATOR: We've got Georgia head coach Scott Stricklin. Coach, if you could open it up with a statement, then we'll have questions for you.

SCOTT STRICKLIN: I thought it was a gutsy win by our kids so that the pitchers were unbelievable. Luke Wagner gave us exactly what we needed. We needed a quality start. Getting through the top of the order is really difficult. 1 through 4 hitters as good as anyone you'll see in the country.

That was our top concern was navigating through the top of the order. That's why we brought Ben Harris through the 8th. We felt like the close was really in the 8th because that part of the order was up. He made it interesting, but he gutted it out, and then Jack Gowen saved it for us.

Jaden Woods, can't say enough about that. It was all about the pitching today. We made the plays when we needed to. Chaney Rogers got the big hit, but just a huge win for our program.

**Q. Coach, I guess just, first of all, does it get you guys in the tournament?**

SCOTT STRICKLIN: Absolutely. I think we're absolutely in. I had said before this was virtually a play-in game. Us and LSU have the same records. That being said, LSU deserves to be in. Their strength of schedule is No. 2 in the country. Their RPI is in the top 25, and they are definitely one of the top 64 teams in the country.

The SEC is one of the best conferences in the country, and you can't argue that, and we should be most represented in the NCAA Tournament. I hope the top 64 teams get in, and LSU certainly deserves to get in.

**Q. Just a quick follow-up on that. The first inning the**

**job that Luke did. Ball game right there, the job he did to escape.**

SCOTT STRICKLIN: Yes, bases loaded, nobody out, 2-0 count, with Doughty up, and you're thinking oh, no. We have guys stretching the bullpen already. We don't have an out in the first inning, and we get out of it. Gets a ground ball double play, and we get out of it after that.

If you would have told me the final score was going to be 4-1 after the first inning, I wouldn't believe you, that's for sure.

**Q. I just want to ask about how impressed you were with your team's execution today. It looked like Riley King might have ground into a double play down in the first. He's obviously save, run comes in. Blaylock walks and then Chaney takes advantage of the bases-loaded situation. What can you say about the execution?**

SCOTT STRICKLIN: We had big bats the first inning. We drew a couple walks. Corey Collins drew a walk. Garrett Blaylock drew a walk. We made Marceaux work in the first inning. Once that, he started working that breaking ball, and he was really tough to hit.

Yeah, we had some good at bats in the first inning. I think Chaney hit a change-up, and it was a 1-0 change-up that kind of hung in the zone a little bit, and Chaney was able to barrel it up, and we were able to score three there.

**Q. With you having won this game today, is there a different sense in the clubhouse now you can play free? Whatever happens these next few days, you know your season is going to continue in a week?**

SCOTT STRICKLIN: I don't think so. We get to play Arkansas tomorrow, and that's no bonus. You get to play the No. 1 team in the country. Our guys are really excited. I thought we played really well when we went to Fayetteville a couple of weeks ago and had a chance to win the series. They're a really good team, and we have our work cut out for us. We're going to stay here a couple more days, and I know the guys are excited about that.



We're going to try to find a way to get a win tomorrow and just keep advancing.

**Q. I think you've said at this point in the year that freshmen aren't really freshmen anymore. That certainly seemed the case with Luke and Jaden today. How much growth have you seen this year, and how did you see that in their performances today, doing what they did?**

SCOTT STRICKLIN: I think I actually told Luke Wagner on the mound in Missouri, hey, man, it's time to grow up. He was kind of scuffling. And challenged him a little bit, and he's a really tough kid. I knew he'd handle it the right way, and he has. He's been really, really good these last few times out of the bullpen, and his start last Thursday against Ole Miss, he was off to a great start. He just took one off the chin.

For him to come back and pitch like that, especially after the first inning, where it's bases loaded, nobody out in a 2-0 count, he really gutted it up. Jaden Woods, you could argue we could have kept him in there, but he did his job. We gave it to Bennie Harris. Got interesting, but he got out of it. And Jack Gowen, man, he looked like he was on cruise control there in the 9th.

**Q. Coach, I did want to ask you about Jaden. It's understandable why you go to Ben Harris there with the situation, but Jaden was throwing so well at that point. He was on cruise control. Was there any pause, especially, I mean, just reading your face during the game when they're showing, and Ben walks on four pitches. I know that's the last thing you expected, but any second guessing there in your head?**

SCOTT STRICKLIN: We do it all the time. As soon as you make a decision and it doesn't go the right way, oh, gosh, I shouldn't have done that and I should have done this. That's what makes baseball so special. We felt like the close was in the 8th inning. The top of the order was up for them, and Jaden had already faced them once. Yes, he was throwing the ball really well, but Ben Harris is one of the best guys in the country, and we felt like that Ben needed to be the guy to get through that part.

It got a little hairy, and certainly when he walks the first guy on four pitches, your gut is saying, oh, no. We trust Ben. That's why we put him in there. Jaden got us to that point, and then Bennie was done after the 8th. He gassed himself and found a way to get through that, and then Jack Gowen got it done. There's obviously some second guessing when it doesn't go exactly the way you want it to go, but we felt like that was the right move.

Coach Kenny, Coach Daeley, and I, we all talked about it. We felt that was the right move, and it worked out.

**Q. Who do you expect to start tomorrow, and what do you hope to get out of your starter?**

SCOTT STRICKLIN: Most likely, Liam Sullivan. It's one day short rest for him. We haven't decided at 100 percent, but that's probably who we'll go with. Everyone in Fayetteville saw him Friday night under the lights. He pitched really well last time out. He's a freshman and big arm and has had -- last three outings, has been really good for us.

That's what we're leaning towards right now. We haven't named him yet. When we get back to the hotel, we'll talk about it, and most likely will be Liam Sullivan.

**Q. What made him effective in Fayetteville?**

SCOTT STRICKLIN: That fastball jumps at you, 93 to 95. He's 6'6", so that release point a little bit different, and it jumps on hitters. It's tough to get on top of it. He's able to throw two different breaking balls and a change-up. The Arkansas hitters, they were very complimentary of Liam, and the coaching staff was very complimentary to him the next day we saw him. He pitched really well. Just unfortunately we pitched against some guy named Wicklander, who's awfully good too.

**Q. I know we haven't mentioned Ben Anderson yet, but he got a couple of big hits for you today. He kind of got you going a little bit today.**

SCOTT STRICKLIN: Yeah, he did. I thought he had a little bad luck on the second double, would have been triple. It just kind of popped over the fence. Yeah, he had a couple of big at bats. That was huge for us. We give up a run in the first, it was a shaky first. And then he just -- I think it was the third pitch he saw, he hits a double in the gap and kind of got us going.

Bennie was good for us. He caught a lot of balls in center field. I think he had seven or eight putouts out there in center, and he played a really good game.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports