

Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Wednesday, May 26, 2021

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

Mississippi State Bulldogs

Chris Lemonis

Postgame Press Conference

Florida 13, Mississippi State 1

THE MODERATOR: If you could just open it up with a quick statement, and we'll have questions for you.

CHRIS LEMONIS: A disappointing day. There's not a big statement here. Just didn't play well in any phase of the game. It's easy to blame the pitching, but we didn't defend well. After the first, Barco really settled in and pitched a great game. Then even base running, I'm just -- we weren't real good in all phases of the game.

Q. The thought process seems pretty straightforward in starting (inaudible) and get a good outing at him, and you've got others to work with later in the week. How frustrating is it to not get the start you wanted out of him? It kind of sets you back a whole day.

CHRIS LEMONIS: It's really frustrating. I was really hoping to get out there and give us a great start so we could have him as a starter in the regional. He still could do that. They did a good job staying on him. Fought off some tough pitches in two-strike counts early in that game and then they extended some innings. He had some good stuff. His stuff was good. He just didn't pitch great.

Sitting where we're at, it's hard to move your starters around and move them around a lot to jockey, but you end up -- when you look up and you're facing their -- to me, that's one of the better arms in our league. We've seen most of them. That's a really talented player. So it put us behind the eight ball for sure.

Q. As you mentioned, a very disappointing day. Were you more disappointed in the lack of hits and offense or pitching, or is it a combination, and really why?

CHRIS LEMONIS: Probably more of the pitching and defense -- us making plays, us getting off the field. The hitting, obviously, we could have been better offensively,



but when you give a guy like that who has ten wins now, I guess, and you give him a lead, that guy's going to settle in and pitch. I thought we could have hit better, no doubt, but tournament baseball, you've got to pitch and defend, especially hard field, balls bouncing everywhere. We've got to make plays and give our pitchers as much help as we can.

Q. Bouncing off of the last question about Brandon, it seems you haven't been able to find somebody, after Will and Christian, that you can count on consistently as a third starter and even fourth starter. Are you concerned with that moving into postseason play and the regionals, when you're going to have to extend past those two guys?

CHRIS LEMONIS: Yeah, obviously, you'd love to have a third guy. In this day and age, I can have an opener and let some guys pitch. We've played well on Sundays just trying to let somebody get one time through the lineup and letting our bullpen work. So that's probably what we're going to have to do as this goes forward, but maybe somebody will jump out there. Something could happen this week as you get playing in games, and somebody has to get out there and get hot.

We have talented arms. They just have to pitch in the right roles.

Q. If I could follow up on that, Cade Smith gave you two good innings. The freshman looked really comfortable. Did you like what you saw from him?

CHRIS LEMONIS: I did. He had a great breaking ball and change-up today. I thought he was really good. Let us get some guys out there and get comfortable. Cade's one of our more talented guys. He's just behind everybody because of the late start. So we're still trying to get him some big game experience.

Q. What was your message to your team just what they need to do to put this game behind them and move to tomorrow?

CHRIS LEMONIS: I just told them don't blame the hole



that we were in by pitching. That was the first thing, that we all were accountable in this loss, including the head coach probably more, as much as anybody. The reality is it's tournament baseball. You can't worry about what happened today. We have to go back and clear our minds and get ready to play. I challenged them because we're a really good team. We're a team that talks about going to Omaha, talks about winning it all.

So a loss 4-2 or 13-1, it's a loss, so we put it behind us, and we've got to move forward. That's what good teams do this time of year. That was kind of the message to the ball club.

Q. I don't guess you guys have officially announced it yet, so it may just be my assumption. Assuming Christian is your guy in the morning to pitch -- I guess you could tell me he's not if he's not -- but if he is, is it just going to be a normal start? Will there be any extra limits on him or on full rest, kind of just like any other week?

CHRIS LEMONIS: Yeah, it will be Christian. It will be a normal week. We kept him on his day, kept him on his routine all week, and he'll pitch tomorrow morning. He'll be in his normal limitations that he has, normal pitch count. So nothing different for the tournament.

Q. Just going back to the theme of pitching that you mentioned potentially starting Brandon in a regional if all went well today, going off of that, how important is winning tomorrow and extending this game and giving these guys more before the do-or-die regional begins?

CHRIS LEMONIS: Yeah, we want to win tomorrow. That's the -- we want to win just because we want to get that bad taste out of our mouth from today. Play good baseball, feel good about our ball club. The last thing you want to do is go home. We're going to come out guns ablazin'. We'll have everybody ready to go. I'm sure we'll have a lot of energy and be ready to play.

But our goal is to go out and play well. I told them not to worry about the rest of the tournament. Just stay focused on tomorrow and that game and play that game as hard as we can and do what we've got to do to win that game, and we'll reassess and go to the next. I don't want them to think too far ahead. I want them to be locked in on right now.

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