

Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Thursday, May 27, 2021

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

Tennessee Volunteers

Pete Derkay

Postgame Press Conference

Tennessee 12, Mississippi State 2

THE MODERATOR: Pete, if you don't mind opening up with a quick recap of the game.

PETE DERKAY: Early morning start. Kind of been our specialty all year, quick turnaround thing, something we've really invested in. Chad just does what he does and gave us a chance to win and filled up the zone with all his pitches. Then we kind of just wore down their starter. A couple big swings here and there and just kept trying to stack our quality at bats, and good things happened.

Q. Pete, on the home run, kind of what you saw there. I know you just spoke about the quick turnaround, and you being able to bounce back well this season. Was it just business as usual?

PETE DERKAY: Kind of just business as usual. To go back to that at bat, was really trying to hit a ball back up the middle. With two outs, hit a low line drive, and he kind of left me a little mistake over the middle, put a good swing on it. I had to talk to it a little bit to get over, but luckily it did.

Q. You saw Mississippi State and two of its best relievers, one of the best relievers in the SEC, and to hang 12 runs, how much confidence does that give you all going forward?

PETE DERKAY: It's a lot of confidence. We have a really good team and have a really good lineup, 1 through 9, and we kind of -- like we kind of care who's on the other side, but we also really don't. It's more kind of focused on us and just trying to put together a quality at bat and get it to the next guy, and we did that very well today.

Q. What was the importance of getting those runs? Obviously, in a situation like this, where you're kind of facing elimination, regional next week, you're in a situation where you have to pick it up next week. How



important was it to get those wins early?

PETE DERKAY: It's always important. We always say, when we throw up zero, the door is open to take the lead right away. So it's just something we've always believed in. We like to score early and often, but it definitely gives us a lot more confidence when we come out of the gate strong and score first.

Q. Pete, I guess when teams are in situations like you all are in, and maybe Vanderbilt and State, and you know that you're going to have a good seed going forward for the tournament, some people wonder just how much this tournament means. I guess you all playing an elimination game at 9:30 a.m. and you go out and score 13 runs, I guess it does matter to you all, doesn't it?

PETE DERKAY: Yeah, we're a very competitive group. We want to go out there each and every time and give it our best. These games mean a lot to us. Me personally, this is only the second time I've been here. I want to kind of prove that we kind of belong here and we can win here. We just want to go out each and every game and just kind of compete.

Q. On that home run, were you sitting on that pitch there, or were you kind of thinking more opposite field, lefty on lefty? What was your mindset, and what did you see on that pitch?

PETE DERKAY: I was kind of just looking for something to kind of hit back up the middle, like a little low line drive because there were two outs. I don't know if I was really sitting anything. He just left me a pitch over the middle of the plate, and I put a good swing on it and kind of the rest is history, but that's about it.

Q. What did you guys do to kind of rally back after the way that last night went? Just offensively, to then come out and have this performance.

PETE DERKAY: Coach V told us yesterday we could either let it fuel us or kind of let it like sit bitter with us. We knew that was a tough one yesterday, and we just really

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wanted to get back and get on the field to play again. Luckily, we had the very first game and the first opportunity to do so.

Q. Two questions for you of the first one you mentioned this team (inaudible). Just what is it about this team, when you do get punched in the face, you always seem to bounce back the next day?

PETE DERKAY: We always pride ourselves on being able to bounce back. This game has a lot of ups and downs, and if you can kind of keep yourself even keel and not get too high and not get too low, it gives you the ability to kind of take a punch but also give one right back.

Q. Second question, the program's first win here since 2007. What does it mean for you to be a part of it?

PETE DERKAY: It means a lot. We really are just trying to go out there and compete at the best of our ability each and every game and kind of play for each other. Just like you said, doing something that hasn't been done here in a long time for this program is always something special to me.

Q. It felt like you all hit the ball as well as you did yesterday. The difference was today they found holes and yesterday they didn't. Did you all kind of have that feeling in the dugout as well?

PETE DERKAY: I mean, we knew we hit some balls very well yesterday. It's just kind of how the cookie crumbles sometimes. It's baseball. Sometimes you hit the ball well, and it gets caught. Sometimes you hit a ball off the end of the bat and it drops and you get a double out of it. We just try to keep putting good swings on the ball. Today they found the holes and put together a lot of really good at bats to score a lot of runs.

Q. Obviously, 2019 was your first time in this tournament in a long time. A lot of first times for you guys in baseball. Do you feel kind of the mindset entering this week was better and you all are ready to enter the stage?

PETE DERKAY: Absolutely. I think the last time we might have been satisfied with finally getting here and maybe the whole environment itself. We spent a little too much time worrying about that stuff, but this time we're really just focused on ourselves and knew we had a really good team. And we knew, if we go out and compete to the best of our ability, good things would happen.

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