

Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Saturday, May 29, 2021

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

Arkansas Razorbacks

Casey Opitz

Postgame Press Conference

Arkansas - 3, Mississippi - 2

THE MODERATOR: Now we have Casey Opitz.

Q. You were behind the dish at LSU when Connor had his first game back after a while off and it didn't go well. What do you see that's different in him since that outing and today?

CASEY OPITZ: Actually, I wasn't behind the plate. I was in the dugout. Still a good question. I just saw confidence out of him. He came in the game, and he was ready to go. All his stuff was really working. It looked like it was working at LSU. It just didn't come out with that killer mindset.

Today I could see it in his eyes that he was ready to go from the jump, and that's what made the difference for him.

Q. We haven't seen Heston Tole a whole lot this year, but when we have, it's gone pretty well. What makes him so effective?

CASEY OPITZ: It's awesome to see him come into those situations because that's another piece that we just discovered. With freshmen, it's like can he do it in this situation? It's kind of iffy. You kind of worry about it, but he's just come in in big situations and just done the same and just thrown strikes. That's the difference with him. He throws a lot of strikes, and he has his fastball that he can put where he wants and keep it away from barrels, and then his slider is really good, and it's really deceptive, and he throws it well.

Q. What was working for Caleb Bolden tonight?

CASEY OPITZ: All his pitches. First two, I think the slider was kind of iffy. He wasn't starting it towards the middle of the plate, which is tough, because it's so good that it freezes guys, but if it's a ball, we're not going to get too many swings. He started to start it more at the plate, so it



was a little more deceptive, and then it got swings and misses.

Q. I saw you kind of hugging Connor after the game, and you said something to him. Do you mind sharing what you said to him?

CASEY OPITZ: I think I just said, that's you, and I kept repeating it. Like that's the guy I've seen in the past, and that's what he can do for this team. He showed it today. So I was pumped for him.

Q. People are used to seeing a guy come in and close out three innings, but obviously, it's always been Kevin. What did it mean to you all, to the team moving forward, that it was Connor this time?

CASEY OPITZ: It was huge. The whole team's behind Connor. He's a guy we all root for just because he works so hard and he's a great teammate. To be able to have him come in for those three innings and just shut them down and throw those strikes and be really effective, it got us fired up.

Q. I think the last two games you've thrown out a guy at third -- I think it was the last game, right, that you threw out the guy at third. Are you surprised people keep running on you?

CASEY OPITZ: I mean, I like it, so I'm not going to say I'm surprised. It's fun for me. It's a challenge. I like challenges.

Q. And then Arkansas has done a lot of great things in its baseball history, never won the SEC Tournament. How fired up are you guys to play for it, and what would it mean to you all to win it?

CASEY OPITZ: We're really excited. We want to win every game we play in. We came into this, and we just wanted to keep winning and keep winning and be here for a while. Now that we're there tomorrow, we might as well win the whole thing.

Q. And the Tennessee series, obviously, was a really



good series, three one-run games, I think it was, and could have gone either way. Just what do you remember about that, and what do you think it will be like tomorrow?

CASEY OPITZ: They're a really solid team, really good lineup, and tough to pitch to. We were effective at their place, but I know they're going to come in fired up. We just got to match their energy and come out there, and it's going to be a good ball game tomorrow.

Q. Including the guy you threw out at third, threw out McCants trying to advance to second, you guys erased two of their base runners at second and third, playing with kind of a makeshift defense, I mean, with different guys playing different spots. What did you think about that? How big was that to cut down two of their base runners?

CASEY OPITZ: Yeah, that was really big, the McCants play, and they have guys second and third, I believe, if that happened. Maybe just second. I'm not too sure. But that was big. I mean, we can play anywhere. We can play guys anywhere. It's something that we kind of pride ourselves on is guys to be able to be versatile, and that's what we're showing.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports