

Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Saturday, May 29, 2021

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

Arkansas Razorbacks

Connor Noland

Postgame Press Conference



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Q. Usually it's Kevin doing what you did today. What did it feel like that you did? I know you've started and thrown more innings, but that was kind of a relief role maybe you haven't been in before closing out a game.

CONNOR NOLAND: It felt awesome. Obviously, it's a different role that I'm used to, but I've been watching Kevin do this all year, so he kind of gave me some inspiration. It was good to get out there and just close it out.

Q. Dave said they weren't going to throw Kevin today, and I guess you knew that too. He said the plan was to throw you a couple innings, but you were throwing so well, it was like why take Connor out? Was there a point where you thought I'm just going to finish it out? What was your thought process when you went into the game, or as things were going good, what were you thinking?

CONNOR NOLAND: The plan was one inning, but as things started rolling, obviously, it was going well. Just followed through the game, and after that second inning, I knew I was going to go finish it. It was kind of a coaching decision there, and I was feeling good and told them that. So it all worked out.

Q. I know it's been a tough season for you when you had to miss a good portion with, I guess it was an elbow strain, wasn't it, I think it was?

CONNOR NOLAND: Yes.

Q. What does a performance like this on a stage like this against a team like Ole Miss in a one-run game mean to you, and what does it do for your confidence?

CONNOR NOLAND: It does a lot for my confidence. Obviously, I've been through struggles this year. It hasn't

gone the way I planned, but I knew my time was going to come in a big spot in a big situations like this. That's all I can ask for, to go out there and perform with everybody, it felt great.

Q. You had a rough outing against LSU your first time back. What's been the difference since then? I think your outings since then have gone a lot better than that.

CONNOR NOLAND: It's been getting better. Obviously, I had struggles with my forearm earlier in the year. I really wasn't feeling good at LSU but pushed through it. Obviously, working with Coach Hobbs throughout this and getting better every week. I mean, the whole team's doing it, but really just focusing on my pitching and getting back to where I was.

Q. Is your forearm 100 percent at this point?

CONNOR NOLAND: Yes, it's 100 percent.

Q. And what all was working for you tonight? What was making you get through those outs?

CONNOR NOLAND: Stuck with the two-seam and big curveball today, 12-6, didn't throw any sliders. That was really my only two-pitch combo. Threw a couple of change-ups also, but I was really sticking with the curveball.

Q. You started with your freshman year, and you were the Friday night guy last year. What's the season been like for you just mentally, with the injuries, with the struggles? Does it kind of make it all worth it, a day like today?

CONNOR NOLAND: Definitely, it makes it worth it. Any time I can help the team. We know where we want to go, and any way I can help do that, even if it's not a starting position, I'm out there for the guys, and I'll play my position however I've got to do it -- closing, starting, anything I can help.

Q. And losing a guy like Peyton obviously sucks, but



when this that happens, do you kind of take it upon yourself, hey, a guy goes down, I've got to be one of those guys that steps up.

CONNOR NOLAND: Yes, I think we all have that mentality. Really tight knit group. When somebody goes down, we're all there to help out wherever we can and step up into big roles.

Q. Connor, just about as far as Heston Tole, how did you feel about his performance? Having a freshman come in the situation he did.

CONNOR NOLAND: That was big time. Obviously, that's a big spot to come into freshman year. He really took advantage of that and really did something special. So I'm proud of him and excited to see where he's going.

Q. When you pitched against SEMO earlier this year, Dave said he thought it was the best you pitched in your career. Do you feel like you've gotten back to that point?

CONNOR NOLAND: Yes, I think I've gotten back there, probably even better execution-wise. Just putting pitches where I want to and not leaving anything too far out over the middle of the plate. It's just been a good progression throughout the year and coming back.

Q. You pitched in a closer role against Arkansas State during a midweek game a couple of weeks back. How much do you feel like that prepared you for what you did today?

CONNOR NOLAND: It's a good preparation. Obviously, being in the end of the game is kind of different than starting. It's kind of fun. All the fans get into it at the edged of the game and really gets the adrenaline going. I kind of like it.

Q. Are you able to pitch a little bit more freely at the end knowing you have a limited number of pitches that you're probably going to have to throw?

CONNOR NOLAND: I wouldn't say so. I try to be more aggressive just getting ahead in counts because obviously it's a tight game, one-run game. I just try to use every pitch to your advantage.

Q. And then last question from me. You gave up a walk, I think, with one out in the seventh, and then Battles turned a double play behind you. How big did you feel that play was to the game?

CONNOR NOLAND: That's a big momentum shift.

Obviously, when you get a double play on a ball off the middle. I thought it was through when I first threw it. I was excited that he got there and was in the right position. That definitely helped the team and really gave us momentum going into the final innings.

Q. Casey obviously is a veteran guy, and he's throwing people out and doing everything behind the plate. Kind of what's he mean to you guys?

CONNOR NOLAND: He's the best. I think he's the best catcher in the country. When you step out there with that guy behind the you dish, you can throw anything anywhere and feel comfortable. Obviously, his enthusiasm behind there, I think that's what people miss out the most. He's fist bumping. He's doing everything he can to get you going. I really wouldn't be here without that guy.

Q. And then he was hugging you, or half hug, or whatever you want to call it, after the game. I could see he was saying something. He said he was telling you that's you or something like that. I guess what did that mean to you when he was doing that? How did that make you feel?

CONNOR NOLAND: It felt great. Obviously, to get back on this stage in a big spot, and then us having that moment is really cool. Obviously, me and Casey are good friends. Just having that in the future will be great. It was really special.

Q. After we finished the day, have you been drinking beet juice like Kevin, or have you ever tried that?

CONNOR NOLAND: Just a sip. He gave me a little bit before today.

Q. You don't like it?

CONNOR NOLAND: It's all right. Not my favorite.

Q. But you had a little bit, okay. Must have had three innings worth.

CONNOR NOLAND: Exactly.

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