

Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Sunday, May 30, 2021

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

Tennessee Volunteers

Jake Rucker

Postgame Press Conference



Arkansas - 7, Tennessee - 2

THE MODERATOR: If you don't mind, recap the game itself and then we'll have questions for you.

JAKE RUCKER: Obviously, I think the two top teams in the country went off against each other in this championship game. Atmosphere was crazy. Seeing all those fans coming out for the game. Certainly, definitely a Super Regional atmosphere. Like V said earlier, you kind of wanted to go through a brick wall when you see the crowd and the plane flying over the stadium. It was crazy.

Overall, I thought it was a decent game. Hef did as good as he could. They got some lucky hits here and there, and I just think that we shouldn't be down from this. It was a good game overall. We've got some guys in there that hasn't really thrown a lot. We can use this to bounce back and get ready to go for regionals.

Q. I know you all wanted to come out and win today, but big picture, I guess, how important is a week like this with a group of guys who haven't experienced much postseason at all? As a group, I guess, how important is it to play five games in five days and go on the run you all were able to?

JAKE RUCKER: If you told us at the beginning of the tournament we could make it to the championship game, we wouldn't believe you. We're going to come in here, just play as hard as we could, and whatever competition we have, we're going to play as hard as we can. Definitely, those guys that haven't experienced this kind of playoff atmosphere, especially in the SEC, it was definitely good for them, and they can definitely learn a lot from this once the older guys leave the program.

Like I said, just we can use this atmosphere and these five games to help us out in the regionals and further.

Q. Your pitching staff just gave up 12 runs in five games this week. How impressive is that doing that five straight games, and how much confidence do you have in those guys going into next week?

JAKE RUCKER: Those guys are awesome. They work their butt off every day. Coach A is definitely one of the best pitching coaches in the country, I think. Just them coming out there and having that mentality and throwing strikes to get ahead of batters, definitely, you guys saw how impressive that can be and can help us get in a good position to win every game. That's what they did this week, and that's what they'll do in the future.

Q. How quickly do you all kind of need to flush this one and move on? I know that you never want to lose and it is a championship game even though it's not maybe the biggest prize out there. How quickly do you need to kind of lick the wounds and get over this one as a team?

JAKE RUCKER: I agree. We definitely need to, like I said, just rub this one off because we can use this as fuel to get us into regional. Coach said in our hitters meeting that, even though we wanted to win this game really bad, we can use this game as one we want to win in the future and definitely in the regional. We can use this game as fuel, like I said, and we'll be ready to go.

Q. I guess you kind of just answered this, but was there anything new that you learned about this team, such as the way the last five days went and the way you guide responded. And as a second question, what did you like about what Jason Rackers gave you guys, having the year he's had to come in and throw like that?

JAKE RUCKER: Overall, this group is definitely one of the more unique groups. Everyone is different. We just feed off each other and feed off our energy. I think that's how we've been so successful so far this year. Just being able to go out there and have fun and be loose and focused at the same time has definitely been our strong suit this year. Yeah, it's been a lot of fun. You saw this week that we can do anything and play any competition and play hard every

game.

Rack, he hasn't thrown that much this year, but when he goes out there, he's got the good stuff to be able to throw strikes and get the result, and that's what he showed today. We just need guys like him to keep doing what they're doing on the pitching staff and give us some good position to win the games.

Q. Just in those last couple of innings, Arkansas' pitchers with Kopps, what were they doing to keep you all from getting a rally going?

JAKE RUCKER: They were mixing it up pretty good. They've always been able to do that. Their pitching staff is pretty good. They just knew what kind of pitches to throw to guys and maybe like work backwards or throw strikes that you might not expect. So I guess, I don't know, maybe we tried to do a little too much at the plate, and we just kind of focused on the scoreboard too much.

Overall, they threw pretty good the rest of the game, and so, yeah, I just think that we need to be able to, I guess, try to figure out a better game plan of how to approach that stuff. We've been doing fine. We don't really need to fix anything. We made it this far, and so we're just going to keep going on that positive route.

Q. I wanted to ask you about the bottom of the lineup. Luc, Pete, Pav all had terrific weeks. What does that do for you at the top of the lineup, Liam, Max, what does that do for you all when the bottom of the lineup is swinging that well?

JAKE RUCKER: It definitely gives us more confidence for us to get up there and do whatever we can to help the team win. Having those three guys come through that like that this week definitely gave us a lot of confidence and boost in our lineup. To be able to make that lineup even harder to get out, just the 1 through 9 aspect of it, they did a phenomenal job. That's definitely going to carry over to when we go to regionals this next week.

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