

Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Tuesday, May 24, 2022

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

Alabama Crimson Tide

Coach Brad Bohannon

Ben Hess

Andrew Pinckney

Postgame Press Conference



Alabama 5, Georgia 3

BRAD BOHANNON: Really proud of our club. Obviously it was a do-or-die day for us, and really proud of the way they came out. You could tell that our kids were really excited today and came out hot.

It was tough after the rain delay for both teams. How about Ben Hess sitting there for two hours, didn't even know if he was going to pitch today, and he comes out and punches out seven of the first eight guys. So really proud of our team and excited that we get to stick around for a little while.

Q. Ben, just talk about the moment when you realized you were going to pitch, and how did you get yourself ready during that?

BEN HESS: Actually two weeks ago we were playing Auburn, and it was kind of the same situation. Rain delay, I was coming in, and I treated it kind of like that. I get myself ready in the locker room, and it was a bit of an abbreviated catch play, so I kind of know that going into it. Get myself ready in the locker room, and from there it's pretty much just treating it as a start, so I got some experience earlier in the doing that. That's basically what I did.

Q. You guys got scheduled to play early this morning. What kind of steps did you take to get ready and bring the energy this morning at 9:30?

ANDREW PINCKNEY: Really just going to bed early, take some melatonin, and just trying to get as much sleep as possible and waking up and getting a good breakfast and trying to just come out hot and spark plug the team. And

kind of came out hot, and that was able to get us the win.

BEN HESS: Yeah, treat it like any other game pretty much. Once you get to the field, it's kind of the same, no matter if it's 8:00 in the morning or 10:00 at night, it's all the same, it's just baseball pretty much.

Q. Andrew, how did you feel you guys were able to get off to such a hot start today?

ANDREW PINCKNEY: You know, I just think we came out hot because we were just clearly excited to play. We know we have got to win to keep our season alive, and you can definitely see that in our at-bats and the way we took the field. It was definitely really good to start out hot and be able to stay for a little while.

Q. Andrew, what do you want to capture -- now you've got Arkansas again coming up, what do you want to capture from the past weekend heading into the matchup this week?

ANDREW PINCKNEY: Really just taking it a pitch at a time. Every time, you just treat it the same way, and just come out with good at-bats and good energy and not try and do too much, and the results will take care of itself.

Q. Andrew, just talk about that heads-up baserunning for that play back in the first inning at third base. Pop-up to the third base side and you had the presence of mind to tag up on that. Walk me through what was going through your mind in that moment?

BEN HESS: Well, it was less than two outs and anything in the air, I'm tagging automatically. I'm not looking at the play, Coach Bo is. So he's telling me score, score, score, so I just took off and it worked out.

Q. Andrew, what goes on in two hours and seven minutes when you guys are just waiting to play? What's going on in the locker room? Take us through that.

ANDREW PINCKNEY: Yeah, definitely a lot of snacks, a lot of just talking with the guys. I try not to get on my



phone at all, just try to chop it up with the boys and just have a good time.

BEN HESS: Yeah, we got some Jimmy John's, so that was nice.

Q. Coach, how were you able to keep your team within the game and ready to go with the two-hour rain delay today?

BRAD BOHANNON: The players deserve all the credit. I really didn't do anything. When you get this deep into the season, you've had some of these experiences. We've actually had a pretty good weather spring from a precipitation standpoint, but the kids deserve all the credit.

I really feel like after the Friday game at Arkansas you could just feel a different level of looseness within our team, and what do you know, you're seeing some better production, especially offensively.

These kids like to play. They really like each other. They really like playing the game of baseball. They didn't need any pep talk. I ran out of those about three or four weeks ago.

Q. Yesterday you said in order to make a run in this tournament, somebody is going to have to step up, whether it's out of the bullpen, at the plate. Ben Hess obviously stepped into that position and struck out 10. How big was his performance in that spot right after the rain delay to kind of finish this thing off and put your team in a good position to win?

BRAD BOHANNON: Well, it was huge. It's really the story of the game. If you look over the last 10 or 15 years, there's been a lot of really talented freshmen come to this tournament, and people are like, oh, wow, who is that guy, and I think that was kind of Ben's moment today.

He's somebody that we've been really high on from day one. He had a non-throwing injury over Christmas break. He got started a little bit later in the season.

I think if all that had not happened, he would have a lot more innings and maybe would have moved his way into a weekend starter role. I'm not surprised that he pitched so well. You just never know when you put a freshman in this environment how they're going to respond. And I think it says a lot about the competitor that he is that he was his best today.

Q. Considering you're facing Arkansas again for I think the fourth time in less than a week, how do you approach in a?

BRAD BOHANNON: You know, we just go play. Arkansas is a great team. They didn't play their best at our place. They're one of the best teams in the league.

You get in the SEC tournament and the deeper you go into the week, the better the teams are. Everybody you play is going to be really good. Some of the teams have different strengths and weaknesses, but at this point we've just got to go play.

Q. You mentioned your team being loose, but during that break, that delay, we saw Will play catch with the fans, we saw a couple players sign autographs. How much do you feel like your team is enjoying being here, and how important is it with it being in Hoover playing in front of the fans and going out like that?

BRAD BOHANNON: Yeah, I brag on this group a lot. We just have awesome kids from great families. When I see a video on social media of Will Portera playing catch with a little kid or I see some of our players just talking to random little kids outside the dugout, I'm not surprised. We've just got really high character kids in our program, and really proud of them for that.

I've talked about this a couple times, every time I see a foul ball hit down one of the lines and I see little kids rolling down the hill or chasing after it, I'm like, one of those kids is my second baseman in 2032 or something, because we have several kids on our team that were that little boy doing that several years ago.

I'm not surprised that last year and to this point that we've played really well because I do think when you have so many kids that grew up in the stands here that maybe it does mean a little bit more to them.

Q. With today's win, you've obviously extended your week through at least Thursday. How advantageous is it now to have your Friday starter, Garrett McMillan, having only pitched two innings and moving forward where every game means a lot this week?

BRAD BOHANNON: Yeah, to play two or three or four more games or whatever it could be, you're going to have to have some more pitchers step up like Ben Hess did today. I would certainly assume that Garrett McMillan could bounce back and maybe he throws in relief and maybe it's not a start and you're getting five or six innings. I would not be surprised to see him pitch again on Thursday or Friday in relief.

We would like to -- let's get to the park tomorrow, see how he feels and that kind of thing, but it is nice knowing that he

might be available because he's obviously one of our best guys.

Q. Do you have a plan on the pitching rotation for tomorrow?

BRAD BOHANNON: Yeah, I'd like to just get with Coach Jackson before I announce anything, but there's a good chance it'll be Jacob McNairy.

Q. A little bit off topic, but you saw the exchange between Coach Saban and Fisher and football. How is the relationship between your head guys in baseball here in the SEC? How would you characterize the relationship between coaches here?

BRAD BOHANNON: In my opinion there's just a tremendous amount of mutual respect. You don't typically get these opportunities much less get to stick around very long if you're not really good at a lot of things. Not just the teams and the players, but there's a lot of great coaches in this conference. I've been fortunate that when I came up through this league as an assistant that a lot of the guys that are currently head coaches treated me with a lot of respect. And I think there's just a lot of guys that are really talented and really good at what they do. I'd be surprised if you saw any kind of banter like that within our group. It won't be from me.

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