

Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Tuesday, May 23, 2023

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

Texas A&M Aggies

Coach Jim Schlossnagle

Troy Wansing

Jace LaViolette

Postgame Press Conference



we were kind of just being men. We were kind of just having fun in the locker room, kicking back, relaxing.

If you're always locked in for, what was that, four and a half, five hours, it's going to be mentally draining. So whenever it happens, you have to take a step back, relax, and think: We can't play right now, so there's no reason to be mentally focused. So take a mental break, and whenever the game comes back to play, we can be locked in again.

TROY WANSING: Yeah, same thing on the pitching side of things. We talk about having an hourglass. That was one of those moments where you were allowed to get out of your hourglass. But as soon as we knew when the game would start back up, it was time to get back in it and refocus, and yeah.

Q. Troy, was your plan going into this game against Tennessee different or just the execution better from your end?

TROY WANSING: Yeah, I think it just boiled down to execution and me finally feeling like me. I think that was a big thing. Like I struggled some this season, but I think today, like I said earlier, it's just like a combination of everything, and it feels good to be able to go out there and do that.

But from a game plan standpoint, it was just attack, throw my stuff, get ahead early with fast balls and put guys away late with sliders, and I did that for the most part today.

Q. Jace, given how tough it is to transition as a freshman in this conference, was there some point in the season where you felt like something sparked for you and gave you the confidence to say, "I can compete at this level, I do belong here with these guys"?

JACE LAVIOLETTE: Yeah, definitely. I would say this was by far the hardest transition in baseball I've ever had to go through. And honestly it boiled down to me talking to Jack Moss, and he kind of gave me insight on, "Dude, you're meant to be here. You belong here. Just remember

Texas A&M 3, Tennessee 0

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: Great win for our program, considering where our season is at this point, and really excited for Troy. Troy has been through a lot this year. We've never lost belief in what he's capable of doing, and he had a really good outing to finish a game the first time he's pitched out of the bullpen all year, to finish the game all year on Saturday at Mississippi State, got four outs on minimum pitches, threw a lot of strikes, and felt like that was a good springboard into him starting today and did a great job. And even then towards the end we had some luck, which you need.

They hit some balls really hard right at us, but he kept throwing strikes and scored some early. Jason's home run certainly proved really big. We're excited to be able to stay in town a little while longer.

Q. Troy, safe to say this is the best you've felt, your best outing in a college uniform, whether here or Purdue previously?

TROY WANSING: Yeah, for sure. There's no doubt about that. It kind of felt like everything came together today, and I just hope I can continue that kind of momentum and carry that into the postseason.

Q. Jace and Troy, rain has always been a part of this tournament. It happened with you guys today. How do you stay focused or loose or how do you spend time in between?

JACE LAVIOLETTE: Yeah, it's obviously not what you want. You want to keep playing, keep the momentum going. But rain is part of the game, and we kind of just --

ASAP sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

why you play this game," and had to put into perspective like I'm not dying, none of my family is dying, I'm playing baseball, and it's meant to be fun, it's meant to be -- like it's a game. We played it because we love it.

And I had to realize that and realize that it's a game of failure. You're not always going to succeed. When you do succeed, you just have to stay -- you can't ride the highs and lows. That's what we always talk about. And you have to stay level, and that's what I did, and it helped me out a lot.

Q. Coach, I was wondering what the biggest difference was from the team on the field today to the one that faced Arkansas back in April.

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: Well, we threw a lot of strikes, way more strikes. I think there was a middle game there or one of the games at Arkansas where we walked 14 guys in a game, which I had never been a part of something like that.

That's been such a while ago. We're a different club. I think we've won six of our last eight SEC series. We have some guys pitching out of our bullpen that -- Shane Sdao and Brandyn Garcia pitching with a lot of confidence, so we have a couple guys there.

But, frankly, Arkansas outplayed us. It's amazing the job that -- I mean, Coach Van Horn has always been one of the -- if he's not the premier coach in our sport, he's in the top one or two, and the job he's done with his team this year is really, really impressive. They play such sound baseball, overcoming injuries and doing all that stuff.

I never want to lose, but when you lose to a program that plays the game the right way and has a true system to what they're doing, they throw a lot of strikes, they play sound defense, they get the timely hits and there's a lot of belief, and certainly playing them in that ballpark is tough.

But we're a different team. We're playing with a lot of confidence. We've played better down the stretch with the exception of two games against Alabama. So this time of year, you're either hot or good or both. I think we're solid, and these guys are playing with some confidence.

Q. Is that the best you've seen Troy this year in terms of controlling the strike zone? And then secondarily, to what extent did it feel like Tennessee played into his hand with eight or nine outs in the first two pitches of an at-bat?

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: Yeah, I'm glad you brought it up instead of me. I have a lot of respect for Tennessee. They're an aggressive swinging team. I think the general

game plan, they can really hit against anybody, but their numbers are a lot better, especially their extra base hit numbers are a lot better against right-handed pitching than they are against left-handed pitching, even the right-handed hitters.

This is certainly a different ballpark and different environment than their ballpark. That's not to say they can't beat our rear ends. That's an Omaha team. It's an Omaha team. They just have to go play like it.

But yeah, there were times when Troy would scatter a couple and then 2-0 count or something and they were swinging early in the count, and that helped them pitch deeper into the game.

And as we got towards the end where he was running out of gas and I'm just riding him as long as I can ride him, he was a batter away from coming out in the last couple innings, but they hit those liners right at us, a couple to shortstop, one to third base, the ball up the middle that we had Bost positioned when Merritt hit the ball.

It was outstanding pitching, but also we had some things go our way today for sure.

Q. You alluded to it a little bit, but in a world where the rain doesn't come down, was the idea always to go to the pen for the ninth --

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: Yeah. Yeah, I was going to say, the rain delay went perfect for us because if that would have happened in the sixth inning, then we've got a whole different game and a whole different decision to make. Troy was already out of the game. The only question was Aschenbeck had gotten hot and then had to sit.

So we kept him moving. Our strength coach, Jeremy McMillan, did a great job with him and kept him moving around, and it was good to see Evan be efficient there in the last inning.

Q. I guess whether it was fair or not, there was talk that you were a bubble team coming into this thing and could use a win or two to get things started. And to play a Tennessee team, everybody knows about the talent there. To get that win, do you feel like that can sort of free up your guys for a big week and kind of relax a little bit?

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: Can you get John Cohen to call me and say "You're in," and that'll free us up? But no, I mean, obviously I have my own personal opinion as to where we are going into this thing, having won six of our last eight series. We played 37 of our 55 games this past

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

year without Brett Minnich or Trevor Werner in the lineup, or both.

So we're the healthiest we've been all season. Our starting pitching, Dettmer, Lamkin, now Wansing and Will Johnston, have all been really good in their last four starts. So I think we're certainly deserving.

I haven't been in the league very long, but Nolan Cain, my assistant from LSU, assistant coach, has been in the league a long time, and he feels like this is as good as the league has been during his last 10 years. And if we're talking about eight to nine teams potentially hosting regionals, certainly there has to be a 10th team get in.

So, yes, I would like to think this continues to prove that we do belong in the NCAA tournament, but that's not the only reason why we're here. There's a championship to be won, and we're a long way from that. There's a lot of baseball ahead. But let's just see what can happen tomorrow.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports