

Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Tuesday, May 23, 2023

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

Alabama Crimson Tide

Coach Jason Jackson

Andrew Pinckney

Hunter Furtado

Postgame Press Conference



Alabama 4, Kentucky 0

JASON JACKSON: I thought it was a really clean game overall. Hunter gave us a great start, and he's done a lot out of the bullpen for us. He made a spot start a few weeks ago in a midweek game. And he looked -- we thought he looked really good in that outing.

So when this opportunity came up not wanting to throw some of those weekend guys on two days' short rest, the opportunity presented itself for Hunter, the matchup looked good versus throwing a left-handed pitcher against them. So we went to Hunter, and I said, Hey, dude, it's yours if you want it. And he said, Heck, yeah, I want to.

Just really wanted to get two or three innings. We talked about it before the game, Hey, man, just go out and give us two or three 0s and get the game off to a good start.

And we got a little bit more than we bargained for with him going five scoreless.

Huge start from him. Huge home run from Pinck. Pitching, hitting. And I thought we played really good defense. I thought it was a pretty clean game overall. I was proud of our guys, and they've been awesome.

Q. Andrew, career game, shining on all levels. What's the confidence level for you? There's a lot of good players in the SEC, but do you think you're one of the top ones, if not the top here in Hoover?

ANDREW PINCKNEY: Yeah, I'm not really worried about everybody else. Just trying to be the best version of myself every day and make my teammates proud, make my coaches proud and make my parents proud. If they're

happy and we win, then I'm happy.

Q. Andrew, the play at the plate, where you threw the runner out, as the ball is coming down, are you feeling like he is going to go and you're readying yourself to throw? I know at times people haven't run on you as much. Did you kind of have that anticipation as the ball is dropping?

ANDREW PINCKNEY: Yeah, I mean, you could tell they were trying to scrap for runs, so everybody pretty much knew he was going to go, and my teammates were yelling for it the whole way, and I just wanted to make a good throw, and I did.

Q. What's the mindset of this team? You guys have won 9 of 11 since March 4. What's the mindset? Is it kind of "us against the world" kind of mentality since all that happened?

ANDREW PINCKNEY: Yeah, I mean, we're not really worried about any adversity or anything. We're just playing no pressure, playing for the guy beside us and just taking everything a pitch at a time. When you do that and you just play as a team, good things happen, and we'll just be happy to be playing tomorrow.

Q. You guys have been playing so well entering this tournament. Having a shutout to open the postseason, how much confidence does that give you guys going forward for the rest of this week and into the NCAA tournament?

HUNTER FURTADO: Well, I just believe in our pitching staff a lot. I think we have one of the top pitching staffs, and we have a lot of guys in the bullpen that are ready to go and a lot of starters that are ready to go, too. And I think it sets us up really well for the rest of the week.

Q. Do you have any thoughts on what happened with Brad Bohannon and the team, that whole incident?

ANDREW PINCKNEY: No, sir.

Q. Hunter, they had runners in scoring position in



each of the first three innings. You were able to get out of it each time. What did you do to center yourself during those situations and get out of those jams?

HUNTER FURTADO: Well, I just take it one batter at a time, and I knew I had great guys behind me. I thought the biggest play of the game was when Pinck threw that guy out because we had one at the time, caught the ball and threw the guy out. And once that happened, I just knew that if there were guys in scoring position, all I had to do was just get the next guy out.

Q. Hunter, essentially like a year ago today Ben Hess came out and did what he did against Georgia in the opening round of that tournament. You were put in a similar position making your second start of the year. What kind of confidence did it give you that Jason wanted you out there, and how cool was it to go out there and do what you did today?

HUNTER FURTADO: Yeah, I love having the ball, and I love starting games. It's something I'm comfortable doing, I've done the past two summers in the Cape. And just having J.J. trust me with the ball with a big game like this, I just had the confidence and knew that I was going to give the best I could out there for the team.

Q. It sounds like from players that they've done a really good job of shutting out the noise, considering all that's happened in recent weeks. That's easier said than done. What have you tried to do to foster that environment where a really difficult situation appears to have not gotten the best of them?

JASON JACKSON: Right. Well, I think fortunately we have a really older, mature team. And I know we've said that a bunch, but I think that's so important. With something like this, they've done a great job of just keeping things consistent.

And that's what we've tried to do as coaches, too, is just keep things business as usual, and the more we can stay in our routines and the more we can keep things business as usual and the more it feels like that for them.

But they've done a really good job of kind of blocking everything out, and sometimes just stuff kind of helps you focus a little bit.

Q. Jason, you entered the game kind of on that fringe of hosting a regional. This is a big RPI win for you guys. Do you feel like you've done enough now?

JASON JACKSON: Yeah, you know, the committee, they've got a tough job to do. There's so many good

teams, and there's so many teams that have had great seasons. I felt like going in that we were in a good position with 16, so I hope that 17 really kind of pushes it over the edge.

Q. The pitching run you guys have gone through this last 10-, 11-game stretch of SEC play has been a great turnaround. Is there anything schematically that you guys have adjusted to or maybe the guys believing in themselves more? What's led to the jump in productivity?

JASON JACKSON: Yeah, I don't think there's anything too different. We've gotten some really quality starts. We've had some guys step up out of the bullpen. Jacob McNairy and Garrett McMillan, the two older veteran guys, have done a great job on Saturdays and Sundays, and Luke Holman has been solid for us all year long. But some of the things out of the bullpen, Aidan Moza has really stepped up and had some really quality outings for us. Kade Woods and Alton Davis have been good. We've had some guys step up, but for the most part everything has kind of stayed the same.

Our catchers do a great job back there, so that's all been big parts of it.

Q. I asked Andrew and he was very humble, but he had a pretty awesome game all around. What kind of player is he, and what can a player like that do going through this tournament in Hoover?

JASON JACKSON: Well, you see, he can kind you put you on his back, right, and there's a lot of players like him in this tournament. There's some superstars, right. There's a lot of star power here in Hoover.

But he's certainly one of those guys. He can do it on both sides of the ball, and you saw tonight, whether it's that slide-and-catch in foul territory, throwing a guy out at the plate, he can change the game defensively, and then obviously offensively, too.

You just can't say enough about him as a person, either. I tell you this all the time; in the video games if you can create a player however you want to create a player, well, if you could just create a human, if you could create a human being, then I think it would be Andrew. He's just kind of perfect in pretty much every area. On top of all that, he was also the scholar athlete of the year, by the way, or co-scholar athlete of the year, I guess.

Q. We talked about your pitching. You said you only expected Hunter to go two, three. How important was it -- this is a long tournament. How important was it for

him to go five, and I think the guys out of the bullpen, their pitch count still stayed low?

JASON JACKSON: Yeah, huge. Anything you can do to save pitching in this tournament because you get to Friday, Saturday, Sunday, and you're kind of hoping you can get anybody out there, right.

So for him to go five and be able to save some guys for tomorrow -- we're fortunate we've got some depth. That's been one of the strengths of our team this year is I think depth on the mound. So we've got some depth, but shoot, man, I ain't going to walk away from five scoreless; we'll take that every day. So that was huge for him. Huge for us.

Q. Small ball has been Kentucky's MO the entire season. You witnessed that firsthand when they were in Tuscaloosa. You were able to nullify that tonight. Is there anything specific you maybe attribute that to?

JASON JACKSON: No, I mean, we spent a lot of time working on it. We spent some time this week once we knew that's who we were playing, we spent some time trying to prepare for it. They do great job with it. They're really, really skilled in their bunt game, and they're really good at -- they had four guys with almost 20 stolen bases.

We knew that going in, being able to control their action was going to be a big piece. I think trying to keep the lead-off guy off base kind of limits some of that. I think getting an early lead can kind of get some of that. Those were some things going in we tried to, hey, let's try to get out to a lead early; maybe that'll slow some of that down. Let's try to do a good job keeping the lead-off hitter off base. Usually that'll slow that down a little bit, too.

So I think we were able to do some of that, but yeah, that's certainly a strength of their game and certainly something that we tried to prepare for.

Q. When you were first told that you were going to be the interim head coach, what were your initial thoughts, and sitting up here right now, how nice is it to look and see how much success you've had in this position?

JASON JACKSON: You know, I haven't really thought about too much of that, to be honest. Whenever this happens, it's like your first -- like your first thought just goes to the players, like, hey, what do we need to do to make sure these guys keep moving in the right direction.

Since then it's just been every week. We're just kind of showing up and we're trying to go 1-0 today; let's make

sure we take it one game at a time, one day at a time, and they've done a great job of really -- I know Pink said it, of just kind of playing for each other, right, and showing up every day, staying in your routines, play for the guy beside you, and let's do a good job of trying to go 1-0 today.

Q. Talk about your confidence in Hunter, and obviously your schedule this part of the year now is a bit different than the regular season, but if you hypothetically needed a fourth guy, has he pitched his way into that spot?

JASON JACKSON: Yeah, I mean, he's certainly a guy in the mix. We've got some other guys that we would feel comfortable starting, too, but with what Hunter has done his last two starts, it definitely helps having a guy that you think you can go to as a fourth starter since we had a good kind of setup going, and then with Ben Hess and Grayson Hitt being out, we were kind of piecing together some of those midweek games. But Hunter has done a great job for us his last two starts, so definitely going forward it's nice.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

