

Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Wednesday, May 24, 2023

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

Arkansas Razorbacks

Coach Dave Van Horn

Kendall Diggs

Jared Wegner

Zack Morris

Postgame Press Conference

Arkansas 6, Texas A&M 5

DAVE VAN HORN: Yeah, just a really good job by our pitching staff today to eat up a lot of innings there. A lot of those guys are bullpen-type guys, and maybe gets us a chance to get back on track with our pitching.

Zack Morris was the story, five-plus innings, I think 80-something pitches, and gave up a run. Just a super job by Zack.

Then Will coming in and just throwing nothing but strikes, he gave up one home run. They hit a couple balls hard, obviously, but he also got them out front a lot, and we had some quick innings.

Offensively we struggled a little bit. Looked a little rusty to me. We haven't played in a while. Practices have been very average because of the weather. Haven't been on a real baseball field, honestly, until today when we walked in here.

And I felt like we started taking better at-bats the second half. I was hoping we could put together an inning. We were down four runs or three runs, and we had a catcher's interference, a walk in there, and then Jared got him a fastball in, and I'm sure he was hunting it after his previous at-bat, and he got it and he didn't miss it.

Exciting way to end the game. Walk-off homer is about as good as it gets, and just proud of the guys for hanging in there.

Q. Diggs, take us through your walk-off, and Wegner,



take us through what would have been the go-ahead home run there in the seventh.

KENDALL DIGGS: Yeah, for me, going up there, I didn't want to jump on something that really wasn't over the play. Wanted to make him come to me, and he did with that first pitch fastball. Next two were really good pitches, probably maybe a ball down, so 2-1 count.

I knew he was going to challenge me with something, just trying to get the head out, and it was good.

JARED WEGNER: With my grand slam, the previous two at-bats I was kind of late on a lot of fastballs, and they were attacking me with fastballs, and they brought in Garcia who has velo, and was kind of hunting a fastball middle in and got it off on that first pitch.

Q. Kendall, you found yourself saving the day once again. Do you do anything to prepare for these clutch scenarios?

KENDALL DIGGS: No, not in particular. I think our team as a whole, we're just playing for each other. We all want to win. It's a really selfless group of guys, so I'm just doing whatever I can to help the team win.

Q. Kendall, Jim Schlossnagle was in here talking about seeing you on TV and what a clutch player you have. I know you've hit a lot of big home runs. What do you think makes you such a clutch guy?

KENDALL DIGGS: Like I said, it's just doing more what I can for the team. It's also like you're put in a situation, like it's now or never. I think subconsciously you might lock in a little bit more in those moments or you know what you need to do and what you want to do. I've been blessed to be put in those situations, and I take any of our guys in those situations, as well.

Q. Jared, I know it's not easy coming back at Vandy when you've been off for a while and I think you've been hit three times included today, 1 for 11. How good did it feel to hit that slam, and do you feel like you're back on track now?

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JARED WEGNER: Yeah, coming back off the injury it's been a struggle kind of getting my timing down. After that swing I feel confident.

Q. Zack, what was working for you today and what do you think made you so effective today?

ZACK MORRIS: I'd say a little bit of everything, all four of my pitches were working, especially the fastball, the split and the curveball were all good early in the game, and I kind of found my slider towards the end.

So I thought I mixed really well today. I made a few mistakes and they kind of paid -- those pitches paid off. I just felt like all of them I started to find the groove with each of the four.

Q. for Kendall and Jared, you're playing LSU tomorrow. I guess you took one of three down in Baton Rouge. What are your thoughts playing LSU tomorrow?

KENDALL DIGGS: It's going to be super fun. Really fun. I think it's going to be a great game. They have an amazing team so it's going to be a battle, but just looking forward to it.

JARED WEGNER: Yeah, I think I'm excited to play them, get a chance to go after those guys. They're a really solid club and I'm just excited for the challenge.

Q. This could be for any of you that want to take it. You guys are down, I think it was 4-0, you come back, take the lead. Then they hit that home run to tie it. That could have been pretty crushing for a lot of teams. You guys have been pretty resilient. What was the key today and what's been the key to that all season?

KENDALL DIGGS: Yeah, you mentioned the injuries. Every team takes punches all year-round, but a lot of guys that we know, they would kill to be out there, and we're blessed to be able to go out there and play every single day, so we're putting them on our back. We're playing for each other, and I think that's the core to all of this.

JARED WEGNER: I think it just kind of comes down to how close this team is. We're a tight-knit group, and when our backs are against the wall, guys step up, guys keep cheering on for each other, and that's been awesome to be a part of.

Q. Coach, Zack Morris really stretched for you today. How much of a help is that going to be going forward,

and it was a season-long stretch, I believe.

DAVE VAN HORN: Well, you know, he got off to a slow start this season, and we tried to stick with him. He kept working. He wanted us to know earlier in the season, don't give up on me. I've been there before, I want to do anything I can to help the team.

It seemed like right after that we gave him the ball, and he had a pretty good outing, and he's just gotten better and better, so we have a lot of confidence in him.

We thought he could hold them down a little bit, give us a couple innings and see if we could get within a couple, and next thing you know we had the lead, and going forward, it's big having that veteran lefty in the pen that knows how to pitch.

Q. Obviously you talked about the best way to win is with a walk-off. Take us through your emotions during that at-bat.

DAVE VAN HORN: I just made the comment to the guys let's get three singles in a row and get out of here, and I guess they did not take my advice, decided to hit a homer. It was great. When it left the bat, I thought it was a double, uh-oh, it might go. That's what I was thinking.

I was begging it to get out of the park. We were running out of players. We did not want to use any more pitching. You think about it, first game of tournament, and we've already played 11 innings, so we were -- we all were ready to go, and I was super excited to see that ball disappear.

Q. Obviously you have LSU tomorrow. Just early thoughts on them, especially where they were when you played them to where they are now.

DAVE VAN HORN: Well, they were really good when we played them, and I think they're really good now. I think they're as talented as any team in the country, and they're dangerous. They're very offensive.

I imagine they'll throw Skenes tomorrow, I don't know, but he's incredible. They've got a lot of good arms.

No lead is safe. If we have a lead, we know that we've got to keep scoring. But they're obviously a really, really good team, number one, pretty much 88, 85, 90 percent of the season, and I just think it'll be a good ballgame. I think both teams are looking forward to playing each other.

Q. Jim Schlossnagle was in here talking about he's watched you guys play on TV, and Diggs is a real clutch player. What do you think makes Kendall such

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a clutch hitter?

DAVE VAN HORN: I think he's a clutch hitter because I don't think he gets too uptight, and he knows strike zone a little bit. And the biggest pitch at that at-bat, besides the ball left the yard, obviously he hit it, but the pitch before was a borderline strike. But he didn't like it, and he took it, and it was called a ball. He's up 2-1 in the count, like he said, he knew he was going to get a good pitch to hit, and he got a fastball and he got all over it.

But I just think it's makeup a little bit and he wants to be up there in that situation. I don't feel like he was going up there trying to hit a home run. He was trying to get on base. He worked himself into a decent hitter's count, and he got something he could handle, and he hit it.

Q. The resiliency this team showed today and all season, what would be your thought on that today?

DAVE VAN HORN: Yeah, I don't know if we've come behind a bunch this year, but we don't seem to get too uptight in the dugout. I just feel like there's a little bit of calmness about the team, but they're also still fighting, you can hear them talking amongst each other.

Like I said earlier, they were saying things like let's find a way to get on base, get a couple here, we'll beat them late. It was already getting late. It's the 7th when all that went down.

Just -- I don't know if you could -- all that we've been through this year, they don't get too uptight. They're kind of like, okay, well, that happened, let's go do this, and they go do it.

Q. In the 10th you bunted the runners over. Did you think about pinch-hitting for Rowland, or was that called bunt or did he do that on his own or --

DAVE VAN HORN: Yeah, I was definitely thinking about pinch-hitting for Rowland. My backup catcher was throwing up all night and this morning, been on IV. And he said he could catch.

It's just one thing after another. That was a little bit of my issue. I did call the bunt, and we've worked on it a lot. We weren't supposed to bunt it to the third base side. I don't know if the ball ran away, got his bat wrong.

He got it down, but he didn't bunt it the right way. If I pinch-hit for him, I've got to bring in another catcher, and I get that, but if I pinch-hit for him, then I don't know what they're going to do.

We had runners at first and third I think at the time, I don't remember -- second and third. My thinking at the time was they're probably going to walk him if I bring up my best pinch hitter and then taking a shot with one out also sets up a double play. Let's just bunt him in and go home.

It didn't happen. Luckily we found a way to win.

Q. With Wegner I think he was 1 for 13 before that grand slam, and he had gotten hit by pitches three times. How good was it to see him break out? And Josenberger hit the ball on the nail a couple of times. Do you feel like those two guys are starting to come around?

DAVE VAN HORN: Yeah, I do. The other hit that Wegner has hit the top of the fence at Vandy, hit the yellow and stayed in, and he also smoked the ball at third base, made a great play on.

But he's had certain at-bats where he didn't look the same, and he just looked like the last couple of days during batting practice, his swing started looking a little more normal. So I'm feeling a lot better about that.

And Tavian, feeling a lot better about him barreling up some balls, and he'll battle you, usually take a walk. He didn't walk today, but he usually sees a lot of pitches, so that's a good sign.

Q. Who is your third string catcher?

DAVE VAN HORN: I don't really have a third string catcher. It's probably Holt, but he's playing second base now. So I asked a couple guys at practice the other day about emergency catcher, and we had him catch a little bullpen, but that's kind of where we're at.

Q. Who do you play at second if you catch him?

DAVE VAN HORN: Yeah, I'll find somebody.

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