

# Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Thursday, May 25, 2023

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

## South Carolina Gamecocks

## Coach Mark Kingston

## Jack Mahoney

### Postgame Press Conference



week, and starting Monday, life isn't going to be that easy around Founders Park. We're going to have to earn it, put our faces back in the mud a little bit, just get back to doing what made us successful earlier in the year and play with a chip on our shoulder.

Like I said, we've got eight days to get this thing right, get healthy, and get this chip back on our shoulder because obviously we're going to need it, and a new season starts on Friday.

**Q. Jack, you talked a lot after that Tennessee series about this being a really good baseball team and getting hot at the right time. How confident are you that you have these eight days to get this thing right, and how confident are you you'll be able to do that?**

JACK MAHONEY: Yeah, we'll see. This team has spent a lot of time around each other and seen each other every day for the past couple months, and it's a tight group. We're not going to stop doing what we do.

Obviously today got our butts kicked pretty good, but we respond pretty well usually, and like I said, over the next eight days it's going to be really important to get our mojo back.

And Coach King and the coaches are going to put in a really good plan to get us back on track. Just got to put our noses back to the grindstone and get back to doing what makes us the best.

**Q. Mark, I know you said before the tournament you were confident in the team's hosting resume. Where do you stand with that now? Still believe the same with this team?**

MARK KINGSTON: Yeah, I think if you look at the full picture, if you look at everything in totality, yes, absolutely. If I had watched us over the last few weeks, I would say, yeah, I understand why there are concerns. So I'm not going to stand up here and bang the table for why I think we should be a host. I think the numbers speak for themselves very loudly.

Texas A&M 5, South Carolina 0

MARK KINGSTON: Tip our cap to Texas A&M and Schloss. I think what they've done this week now solidifies them going to the NCAA tournament, and I know they had some concerns about that. A lot of respect for them and how they go about their business.

I think they've earned their way in pretty comfortably at this point, so want to tip my cap to them. They were better than us today.

**Q. Jack, just physically how did you feel bumping up a couple days in rest, and in that fourth inning what happened with those two walks and the big inning there?**

JACK MAHONEY: Yeah, I just lost a little gas today. Pregame knew I really wasn't going to have much in the tank as I usually would like, but that's not an excuse. Those two walks, you can't have back-to-back walks to lead off an inning. It's just not acceptable. So it just kind of came back to bite me today in the outing.

And obviously Beck threw really well, Veach, was good to see him back out there. And just didn't have as much in the tank as I usually do and as I'd like to.

Just got to get back to work. Got eight days to get this thing right.

**Q. Jack, you've been very vocal about the camaraderie of this team. What will you say over the next week as you get prepared for the NCAA tournament to guide these guys?**

JACK MAHONEY: Coach King made it very clear in the dugout that we're going to have to earn it over this next



If all the games matter, if a game in March is as important as a game in April, as important in May, then yes, it's pretty clear the metrics scream that we should be a host. If we're not, I think that's a penalty to the SEC, and it's a penalty to us for saying that there's too many teams that are good enough to host in the league, and we're not going to reward all the teams that have earned it. If that's the case, then I think that's a topic for another day.

**Q. You sort of answered what I was going to say --**

MARK KINGSTON: Imagine that.

**Q. The Big 12 may not have any hosts, Pac-12 may only have one, SEC is sitting here -- we have nine contenders coming into the week, still certainly have eight at least. Just your thoughts on -- the committee has got to make a decision and then go back to their constituents and explain it. With you guys and the SEC trying to get that final spot, how would you -- what's your perspective on that?**

MARK KINGSTON: So you want me to sell it, in other words, after you said --

**Q. What's your opinion of it?**

MARK KINGSTON: Here's what I'll say. Again, every student-athlete across the country is important and valued. Everyone deserves the opportunities to earn everything that can be earned in the NCAA.

So an SEC athlete, they should not be penalized for being on one of the teams that deserves and has earned a spot in the NCAA tournament, and if it's a spot to host, if it's a spot to host supers, just because of the conference affiliation, it shouldn't hurt you good or bad. If you're one of the best 16 teams, I believe these student-athletes have earned it and deserve it, wherever you are, whatever uniform you put on.

If you've earned it, then you should get it. It's that simple. Whether you're out West, whether you're in the Southeast, are we rewarding the teams that have earned it or are we trying to spread it around?

I think, at the end of the day, that has to be asked. What is the motivation? I know the people on that committee will work very hard and be very diligent to try to make good decisions because I think they've earned the right to be on that committee and they care about our sport.

But again, if you're rewarding the best teams that have earned it since February, what was it, 17th or 18th, then I think you should put the 16 teams that have the most

metrics. If the metrics matter, then let's use the metrics. If the RPI matters, let's use it. If the strength of schedule matters, let's use it. If quadrant 1 wins matter, let's use it. If last 10 matters and that's against us, fine. But if you're using it, use it. Use it all. Use it all and come up with the best 16.

**Q. You've obviously had a lot of guys out of the lineup over the course of the last month, but offensively it's not been very good for you guys. How concerned are you that this is just what the offense is for the rest of the year?**

MARK KINGSTON: Well, concerned, we don't have time to be concerned. We have to get to work and try to recapture that magic. We just do. We have to get Casas going like he was going when he was carrying us, and we've got to get Wimmer healthy, back on the field on defense and playing with the swagger he had when we were rolling. We need to get Petry dominating games again. We need to get Brewer back in a good streak.

We need to get all those guys that were really important to make us an elite team, we need to get them back going all at once, and we've got one less week to figure it out. Thank God we're not sitting here trying to justify why we should get in the NCAA tournament. We're going to be there, and whether it's at home or whether it's on the road, we've got one week to figure it out and try to get those guys going, because when we're going, then we can really get it done. Right now, we're not going.

**Q. You mentioned you have one week to get these guys going. What goes into kind of a crash course on maybe trying to fix a whole offense in a week? How do you go about making that happen?**

MARK KINGSTON: Well, it won't be a crash course. I don't want it to seem like we're going to try to insert the wishbone offense here in a pass-happy offense. We just need guys healthy. We need Cole back. We need Wimmer on the field.

We need those things. Clearly. We need those things to be our best team. We hope seven more days -- and Wimmer DHing for I don't know how many games. Feels like a long time. Unless the doctors tell us we can't, we're going to put him back out there on the field and let that spark us.

We just need to get him healthy, we need to let them catch their breath a little bit and hope that our bats get a little bit quicker because we're a little more rested. We need to get their minds confident again. Because again, when you struggle like this, there's going to be some bouts with how's

my confidence. We're going to have to walk a fine line as coaches of getting back to the basics and making sure we have our foundation taken care of but also do enough of confidence building through earning it this week of work so that when we take the field on Friday, we look like that team that was there for 45 games.

**Q. What will be your routine this week once you get back to Columbia, and what are your expectations for availability from Messina, McGillis and Sanders moving forward?**

MARK KINGSTON: You want our entire itinerary for the week, our routine? We're going to get to work. I'll put it that way. We're going to get to work. And because there's less NCAA rules now and generally there's hours throughout the week, there's less restrictions on teams now that school is out, so we will take advantage of having more time to be together. We will take advantage of more times to go to work, more time to get in the weight room properly. We will do all those things.

Second part of your question was anticipation of the injuries. Again, Cole was at the hotel today. Cole was not in the dugout with us today. That's a concern. We need Cole back there.

Now, French, I will say French had the best day catching that he has had probably in two months today. I was very happy to see that he stepped up for us behind the plate.

But when we're at our best, Cole is the heartbeat of this team. We need him leading us. We need Wimmer out there in the middle of the field helping our defense.

We just need these things. I'll say my prayers every night that we get some good fortune for all the bad fortune we've had, and give it our best shot next Friday.

I anticipate Sanders being a part of our regional next weekend. McGillis, not as confident.

**Q. You talked about getting this offense back on track. Have you sensed pressing from guys up and down this order, and have they gotten a way from that identity you built for the first 40 games?**

MARK KINGSTON: Yeah, I don't want to generalize too much and say they're all pressing or none are pressing. I'm sure there's a couple pressing because when guys go in slumps, they press. That's why you've got to walk a fine line of not letting them get down on themselves, and sometimes you've got to kick them in the butt, sometimes you've got to pat them on the back. Each guy is different.

There may be a couple pressing, there may be a couple that say, man, I've got to get back to my basics. You put it together as a team, but it's nine hitters that all are different and unique human beings, and you've got to try to make sure you reach them.

What was the second part of the question?

I don't think we've gotten away from that identity on purpose. Now, we've faced -- again, the last four weeks we've faced elite pitching staffs that throw a lot of strikes. You saw our identity in Game 1 of this tournament, but Georgia didn't throw as many strikes as these other teams have, so a lot of it is dictated by who's on the mound.

I wouldn't say that we've tried to get away from the foundation of our offense. Monte is very consistent in what he preaches to our guys. It's very consistent in the preparation, in the scouting reports.

But the last four weeks, the combination of who we're rolling out there in our lineup and the pitching we've faced has not allowed us to be as good. So that needs to change this week.

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