

Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Thursday, May 25, 2023

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

LSU Tigers

Coach Jay Johnson

Postgame Press Conference



Arkansas 5, LSU 4

Q. How tense was it in the dugout in the ninth inning when you got -- when can you see got the run and you were down by one?

JAY JOHNSON: I don't know if it was tense is the right word, but exciting. We had a good series with them in Baton Rouge, a lot of respect, and they have great players. So do we.

Wanted to get one more guy on base and see what we could do right there, but we didn't. In my opinion, at least who we saw, and we didn't play everybody, Smith and Hollan are the two best guys we saw all year. So that's twice that they've used both of them against us to win.

I think that speaks a lot about our team offensively that it takes two pitchers like that to hold us down, and credit to them for doing a good job.

Q. The five-run-inning in the fourth, can you walk us through that?

JAY JOHNSON: Yeah, I mean, I tip my hat to their hitters because they did something nobody has done all year, and they were able to get to the right part of the ball and hit some balls hard through the infield and created three or four good at-bats in a row.

And in spite of all that, we get the catcher's interference call. If that doesn't happen, we're out of that winning and it's 2-2. Bohrofen is one of the best players in the country, and you give him a chance with a two-out RBI, and he came through.

I tip my hat to their team. The top of the lineup is as talented as anybody in the country.

Q. Can you elaborate on that catcher's interference

call and what was relayed to you by the umpires?

JAY JOHNSON: That Diggs's bat hit Milazzo's mitt, and if it hit his mitt, then it's catcher's interference.

Q. In Baton Rouge it was Hollan and Smith and then today it's Smith and Hollan. That was Hollan's first relief appearance. I think he made in 14 starts. How weird was it facing them in reverse order, and what did you think about Hollan? Because he's used to starting and comes in bases loaded.

JAY JOHNSON: Yeah, off of Hagen, we did part of what we wanted to do well. I think we made them work a little more than we did the first time around, got five hits off of them. I think four of them were Travinski and Morgan. Those guys took good at-bats as old players.

They have four pitches that they can execute, and it's like that's what you have to have, the pile-up strikeouts against us, and they executed very, very well.

A lot of respect in the same way I talk about the top of their lineup, I have the same respect for those two guys on the mound. They're two of the best left-handed pitchers in college baseball.

Q. What did you see from Riley Cooper today in such a big outing from him?

JAY JOHNSON: Yeah, he looked fresh. He only threw to two hitters at Georgia, and so kind of an extended break. He extended in that last Mississippi State game and gave us a chance to win.

We didn't use him a whole lot last weekend. So I thought he looked fresh, looked rested. Other than the single to Bohrofen, can't ask for much more right there.

Q. You talked about the plan coming into this week, you and Wes having those conversations. Was it a pitch count for Paul, or was it just kind of a decision right there not due to pitch count?

JAY JOHNSON: Oh, no, that was totally due to pitch

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count. He was like 38 to 40 pitches in that inning alone, and I can promise you, if it was any other situation, in any other game, he would not be coming out of the game right there, 1,000 percent. Really irritated -- he probably hit his glove, so I'm not saying the umpire is wrong on that, but irritated that Riley came in and picked us up right there.

But that's a tough way to give up three runs. But when that happens, you've got to get Bohrofen out. He was phenomenal, other than we didn't get Bohrofen out. Really pleased with Riley. That was about the max of the tipping point we were going with Paul.

Early on, we were 42 pitches through three innings. The hope was to get to the fifth or through the fifth, and again, credit Arkansas. Those guys battled and did a nice job.

Q. What does Riley's performance today mean for this team moving forward into the postseason? And maybe you could add Thatcher into that mix, too.

JAY JOHNSON: Yeah, I mean, they're going to pitch. They've pitched well at times, haven't been perfect, but when they're good, we're good. He was good today.

In spite of making some mistakes, made a base-running mistake at third base, that was killer because there was a lot of game left at that point in time and we're hitting first and third with one out.

We shot ourselves in the foot right there. That was a tough one to take.

Yeah, but he did a good job. He's pitched in the College World Series before. I think him and Christian Little are the only two players on the team that have played in Omaha. He's pitched in regionals, super regionals multiple times, and the moment is not going to get too big for him.

And I didn't think it did today. I think he actually rose to it against one of the better teams in the country. He did a really good job.

Q. Peyton Holt has been filling in Stovall. I hear he's done for the year with his shoulder, and I think he's batting over .400 against SEC teams, and he had two hits today. What are you seeing in scouting Arkansas for this game and tonight? What are you seeing from Peyton Holt?

JAY JOHNSON: Yeah, gritty player, does the things that help your team win. Stovall is a great player. He's from Louisiana. I would have liked to have had the opportunity to recruit him. I wasn't there in time. That's a tough loss for them because he's super talented, too, and you throw

him in there with those guys, it makes them even deeper.

But you look at what Holt has done, you can't do much better than that over the last few weeks. Great teams have guys that can step in and fill roles when guys go down, and you look at their team, they've had a number of injuries, and guys have stepped up. You look at our team, we've had a number of injuries, and guys have stepped up.

That's what makes for a great college baseball game tonight. I wish we were on the winning end of it, but there's a lot of really talented players playing good baseball tonight.

Q. Is Ty the likely starter for tomorrow?

JAY JOHNSON: Need to talk to Wes and Ty and the rest of the guys, and we'll see where we land on that.

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