

# Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Thursday, May 25, 2023

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

## Arkansas Razorbacks

## Coach Dave Van Horn

## Peyton Holt

## Hunter Hollan

## Hagen Smith

### Postgame Press Conference

Arkansas 5, LSU 4

DAVE VAN HORN: Obviously a really good win for our team. You've got to give LSU's pitching credit. They did a really good job with us for most of the ballgame, as they held us to that one inning, but we put together a big inning and got a couple -- at least one really big hit, catcher's interference in there, and just able to capitalize on a couple of things.

But on our side of the ball, we played great defense. I thought that Peyton Holt made a super smart heads-up play on the double play ball. He knew he couldn't get that double play at first, ball was hit in the hole a little bit, and he spun and made a perfect throw, heads-up play by Cali being there at the bag waiting, and I think that really slowed them down.

But to me, the story was our two pitchers. I thought they did a great job. Between the two of them, we didn't have to field a lot of balls. I think we struck out 17, 18 guys, somewhere in there, and we fielded all the other ones.

Just a really good team win, and get an opportunity to rest a little bit tomorrow.

**Q. Peyton, how important was it early in that game, even in innings when you didn't score, that you guys saw a lot of Skenes' pitches and were able to run his pitch count up and get a good look at him?**

PEYTON HOLT: It's really important, especially against a guy like that in this kind of game. We had a really good approach prior to the game that we talked about, and



Tavian's first AB kind of set that tone, and I think he did a really good job seeing pitches, and it trickled down the lineup, and I think we did a really good job against him.

**Q. Hagen and Hollan, going in the order you guys pitched, when you beat them in Baton Rouge, it was reversed roles. What do you think about the fact that you comboed up to beat them twice, and what was it like starting against them? Hunter, I think that was your first relief appearance. Do you remember the last time you came in relief, and what was it like? You not only came in relief, you came in with bases loaded.**

HAGEN SMITH: Yeah, I mean, me and Hunter actually talked about that this morning at practice when we were taking BP. We were talking about how the roles were switched. And I thought Hunter did an amazing job, honestly, coming in behind me and pounding the zone, getting me the outs.

HUNTER HOLLAN: Yeah, that was my first time coming out of the bullpen since probably junior year of high school, so it wasn't really any different. You've just got to come in with the mindset that I'm going to compete in the zone and go with the game plan that you want.

We had a really good game plan the first time we played them and we kind of stuck to that, and it worked out.

**Q. Peyton, could you describe what was going through your mind that snap throw to third and then getting it? That was a huge play.**

PEYTON HOLT: You know, we've never actually worked on that play. It's just one of those things you keep in your back pocket, especially as a second baseman, like you know you're not going to get the guy at first. And it was just something that I knew that I could do, and I did it, and it worked out. It was really big for us.

**Q. Hagen, I just want to know what was your game plan against LSU's lineup? You faced them multiple times past two years, so I'm just curious to know that.**

HAGEN SMITH: Yeah, honestly for me, just my biggest



thing is attacking the zone, trying to get my pitch count low. They did a good job against me. Got me out of the game pretty fast. So they did a good job, but I feel like I pitched pretty decent today.

**Q. Peyton, offensively the approach, Skenes obviously has dominated the entire season, we haven't seen him struggle very much, but obviously his pitch count got up, so what did you do at the plate?**

PEYTON HOLT: I mean, we just tried to get on that heater. It's a really good pitch, and I think we did a good job of that, kind of put in a keyhole, not chase anything outside the zone. And Tavian's at-bat showed that for sure.

And then we just did that the whole way up and down the lineup, and I think it worked out.

**Q. Hollan, pretty successful night from the mound against a really dangerous team offensively. What was working for you and what wasn't?**

HUNTER HOLLAN: Yeah, really just executing pitches down in the zone. Getting strike one is probably the biggest thing, and I think that's something that me and Hagen both did pretty good.

Once you get strike one, it kind of opens up to where you can pitch a little bit. And you have to against a lineup like that. You can't get behind often because they're not going to miss. I'd say getting strike one and then executing pitches.

**Q. Hunter, when did you know that the plan was for you to come in and pitch in relief, and what was your reaction when you first heard about it?**

HUNTER HOLLAN: Yeah, it was yesterday. It was before they put McEntire in the game, and Coach Hobbs came over to me and just asked, Can you go tomorrow? And I was like, Yeah.

I didn't know if what he meant by starting or coming out of the pen, and he clarified that after the game, and I was excited because it was something different.

**Q. Maybe Hagen and Hunter, what have you thought about what Peyton is giving you defensively? But also he's hitting about .400. Stovall is such a big part of your team, and Peyton has come in and filled in well. Hagen and Hunter, what are your thoughts on Peyton?**

HAGEN SMITH: Yeah, it sucks to have Stovall go down for the year. That's a really big part of our lineup. But

Peyton Holt has been amazing for us. Defense, offense, he's been really good for us down the line.

HUNTER HOLLAN: Yeah, I'd say it's been unbelievable the plays that -- he just is a guy that came off the bench and had to step up, and he did. He's swinging it unbelievable, and the plays that he's making in the field are huge.

**Q. Dave, when did you decide to use Hunter in relief, and did you have any misgivings -- not misgivings, but were you concerned? Because he not only comes in in relief, but he comes in with the bases loaded when he's been starting. What went into that, and did you have any second thoughts?**

DAVE VAN HORN: Yeah, we decided a couple days ago that there was a possibility that we would go this way if we won Game 1, got in the winner's bracket, because if you lose, you're thinking about I've got to give some of my starters some work and get them ready for the next weekend.

If you win, you know you've got at least two more games. And we just felt like we had a chance to win the game today, let's go ahead and bring Hunter in.

And at the time we felt like we had a chance to win the game, and I think we were down a couple runs and wanted to see how he could handle it, and I thought he did a tremendous job.

**Q. What was your view on the catcher's interference play?**

DAVE VAN HORN: Catcher's interference. He hit his glove when he swung. The amazing was he hit his glove. We heard it. We saw it. And the ball still made it to the outfield. If he hadn't hit his glove, he might have hit it over his head, the way we look at it. Other people look at it a different way.

But he definitely hit his glove. I don't know that big board replay showed, you could really see, but we knew immediately that he hit his glove.

**Q. You've been here many years now, and tonight was a matchup of the two pitchers that were the First Team All-SEC pitchers. Neither of them made it out of the fourth. I know a lot has changed in baseball. Is that an approach thing, the way you are approaching the tournament, or do you think the offenses were really able to take it to them today?**

DAVE VAN HORN: I think both offenses dictated a little bit

whether you were going to go four or five, but I mean, I talked with one of their coaches today in passing, and I got the impression that they were thinking like we were, that we weren't going to throw Hagen more than 70 pitches, whether it took three innings, five innings, or whatever.

I see on here it says 76. We thought he threw 70 on the nose. And you could see he wanted to stay in. He wasn't done. He deserved to get that last out if he could. Or the last two outs maybe.

Anyway, yeah, how do we -- we don't want to tax anybody. We want to be ready to play next weekend.

10 weeks in a row in this league and you come to this tournament, you've got to be careful. So I think both coaches were -- both teams were being cautious with their guys, and that was the plan. They weren't going to throw Paul Skenes 105 pitches, and we weren't going to throw Hagen 100. I think it's just the way you take care of guys, get ready for regionals.

**Q. Can you just briefly walk us through the massive fourth inning with five runs?**

DAVE VAN HORN: Well, I mean, obviously I don't remember everything, but I do remember catcher's interference with the bases loaded. I also remember a ground ball base hit up the middle that gave us a three-run lead.

There was a lot of things that led up to that. I know we batted around that inning. There was a couple of walks. I think maybe hit by a pitch. I'm not sure 100 percent.

But I thought that we did a good job of just kind of manufacturing a couple of things. Paul Skenes is such a good pitcher, it's hard to get that big hit on him, and we never really got it. Things just kind of went our way there a little bit.

**Q. I don't have the numbers in my head, but Jace has not been -- he was hitting better earlier, put it that way. What did you see on that at-bat where he got the big two-run single, and what did you think of how big that was?**

DAVE VAN HORN: Well, just that he didn't pull off on the ball, and I think it was -- at that time was it left on left, and he hit the ball through the middle, and they were kind of playing him to pull. He almost hit it right at the normal 4 hole spot, and when he hit it, we realized it was going to go through, and obviously gave us a little cushion.

But he has been struggling. He hit a home run at Vandy,

and that was his only hit in three games, I think, and he's had a lot of runners on in front of him, and he's had such a good year for us that obviously we've got to get him going if we're going to have some success next weekend.

Hopefully that'll kick him into gear a little bit.

**Q. LSU obviously has the home crowd. I think they've beaten you here six straight times. They beat everybody, I know that, but now nice was it to turn the tables on that and beat them in front of their big crowd?**

DAVE VAN HORN: Well, you know all the stats. I can't get anything by you. I had no idea. It's nice to win the game. There were a lot of LSU people here. We saw it when we drove up. They were standing out there with a lot of purple. We're used to it.

Yeah, it's great to win the game. To me, it's not all about all the other stuff. It's about playing good today and let's try to win today and advance. That's the way I coach our team. I don't like to rah-rah a whole lot. I want our guys to have fun, but I don't want it over the top because you've got to play again shortly, and there's a good opportunity to play them again.

Looking forward to playing on Saturday, whoever it is.

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