

Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Friday, May 26, 2023

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

Texas A&M Aggies

Coach Jim Schlossnagle

Evn Aschenbeck

Hunter Haas

Postgame Press Conference



Texas A&M 5, LSU 4

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: Congratulations to LSU, awesome regular season, what a heck of a team they have, and best wishes in the postseason to their club.

I thought today was -- the game taketh away and it giveth. I thought LSU had a grip on the game. Floyd was outstanding. They had runners on base. Will made some good pitches, made some plays, had a good PFP on the safety squeeze to keep the game close. Kind of like we had a grip on the game against Arkansas the other day until the grand slam, and then today, Hunter got the big hit and Evan was able to continue to make pitches. Dugas is such a gritty, tough out. I know he wears No. 8, right, for a reason, and that's a big deal at LSU.

So Evan had to make a great pitch to get him there in the end, and Jobert had been staying on the ball. Evan just continued to make good pitches, and we were able to win the ballgame.

Q. Hunter, everybody wants to know about the hit. Walk us through that, and when you hit the ball, what are you thinking?

HUNTER HAAS: Yeah, honestly, I struggled obviously at the beginning of the game, so I kept telling myself, just keep competing. Don't think about anything else, just keep competing and you're going to get a big one.

The way the ball has been flying all week here in the morning, and the afternoon hasn't been carrying so I didn't really know if it was out or not so I was kind of hustling out of the box, but obviously very excited to see it go over the fence.

Q. For Hunter, you guys are going to get a fifth shot at Arkansas. Obviously you've had some real competitive games. What are you feeling about getting another shot at Arkansas and getting to play them for a chance to play for the championship?

HUNTER HAAS: Yeah, I mean, they're a great team. I personally have had a blast playing against them because they're such a great team and it's always a good competition. I actually talked to Coach before the game about how awesome this league is and everyone is so good.

I expect tomorrow to be another really competitive game, and I'm looking forward to it.

Q. Evan, walk us through the end of the game, crowds going crazy and LSU is making a big rally and you've got to come up and make a big pitch, or a bunch of them.

EVAN ASHENBECK: Yeah, LSU feels like they brought their whole state with them. It's just like playing their home game, but this is what we've been practicing for this whole season, and as a student-athlete this is what you live for. Just bearing down, making pitches what was called because I know that I have full trust in whatever Coach puts in the pitch call, and just making pitches is the biggest thing.

Q. You didn't have as good of an outing against LSU the last time you faced this lineup. Was that kind of in the back of your mind when you were pitching today and what was your plan? How were you able to execute, especially when they had runners on?

EVAN ASHENBECK: Yeah, the first outing was not good, as you can ask Coach, but went out there and just executed pitches as I've been doing all year, and just having full trust in my mechanics, having full trust when I let go of the ball. It's helpful with what they're calling and the pitch call. Feels great.

Q. You guys seemed to have figure out something,

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especially on the mound. This has been at least one of the best stretches of pitching all year, wouldn't you agree?

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: The best. By far. Our starting pitching has been so erratic for a lot of reasons. Although I do think the experiences you go through are kind of like the rest of life. The experiences you go through, you learn from them and you make adjustments, both as a team and individually. Will has been asking for a couple months to start the games, and really we were in such a situation where we were just trying to make the conference tournament and then we felt like we had a chance to be in the conference tournament, and then like okay, we need to win every single game to be an at-large team in the NCAA tournament, so you go in on a Friday night and you kind of need him available to maybe win because when you have a chance to win a game in this league, you really need to do it.

Then towards the end, then we said, okay, if we don't use you on Friday or Saturday, we'll pitch you on Sunday, which doesn't allow him to really get into a routine as a starter, but Garcia, although he hasn't pitched great the last couple times, but Garcia's emergence has really allowed us to have another good lefty at the end of the game and allow us to start Will.

I'd just like to think that it's either the head coach's fault that we're not at this point already or our best baseball is ahead of us. So if Wansing can build on his outing, Lamkin has been super consistent, now Will should have a lot of confidence, Aschenbeck is kind of our all-time pitcher. We need to get him some rest. We want to win this thing, but it would be really nice to shut him down until next weekend.

But we're also going to get to find out about some other people that haven't pitched in a while starting tomorrow, so that's going to be a -- you talk about that all year long, and young people don't believe you because they're sitting on the bench and they want to play, and then normally when you get in these situations it doesn't boil down to the one, two and three pitcher, it boils down to eight, nine, 10, 11, 12. We're going to find out how they're going to do tomorrow.

Q. Can you talk about the point of the game they were up 3-1, looked like they were going to add to the lead and your guys hunkered down, they laid down a bunt and you guys played that really well?

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: Yeah, they had a runner on third base and nobody out, and I think we got a punch-out and then the bunt if I remember.

But yeah, you just keep executing pitches, and then that's the thing about LSU's offense is they're super physical. I coached at Tulane for eight years when Coach Bertman was there and when Beloso came up to hit, I was like, this looks like every LSU player ever; it's Blair Barbier left-handed.

So they can out-physical you, but Coach Johnson coming from the West Coast says, they'll also safety squeeze and do those things, and I don't remember Coach Bertman ever doing that.

I think they do put pressure on you that way, and the guy got down and it was just back towards the pitcher just enough to give us a chance to make a play.

Q. Having been in some other leagues, what do you think about this league? They're talking 10 teams in the postseason and eight hosting. What about those numbers?

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: Yeah, I mean, it's just -- I have great respect for all the conferences that I've coached in. Certainly TCU and the Big 12 is very good baseball.

But it's just the depth of this conference. Number one, there's just more teams, and you play more games. In this league you play 30 conference games. In the Big 12 currently, I think they're going to change next year, but you play 24, so you have two weekends where you don't have to play a conference game, and maybe you can play off a little bit.

The depth of this conference now, especially in the transfer portal era, where kids from the West Coast, i.e., Thatcher Hurd or Hunter Haas, Jack Moss, guys -- I don't care what they say, no matter where you are or what other conference you're in, when you go back to the hotel at night, you turn on the SEC Network and you watch those games and you see those atmospheres.

Now you have a lot of players that right, wrong or indifferent, depending on how you feel about the transfer rule, there's a lot of great players coming into this conference, and they're not just at LSU. They have great players, but it's just all across the league, Kentucky, Alabama has as strong a team as we've played the whole season. It's literally a super regional every single weekend, which if you can just survive it -- and then I heard Coach Johnson say then just get your team some rest before the postseason.

It doesn't guarantee you to get to the World Series, but you're not going to be surprised by anything. There's no atmosphere, there's no pitcher, there's nothing that's going

to surprise you or be something you haven't seen.

It can be as good, but it's not going to be better.

I do believe that this league deserves -- you look at each individual school, do they deserve it relative to their season? If they deserve it, then they get it, whether it be a national seed or a host. It shouldn't be worrying about -- the days of regionals being regional are long over, and whoever earns it should get it.

Q. I'm going to ask you a two-parter. Do you know who you're starting tomorrow, and how do you feel about your pitching depth, because you seem like you have a pretty deep staff. Then round 5 against Arkansas. You haven't beaten them yet but come awful close. How do you feel about playing them again?

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: You know, I mean, first of all, I don't know who we're pitching. Do we have pitchers to pitch? We've got some guys that haven't pitched in a while. We're going to have to run some different arms out there because I'm feeling pretty confident that we're in the NCAA Tournament, so I don't want to hurt anybody or stretch anybody too much.

But yeah, we're going to have to have some other guys go out there and compete against the Razorbacks.

As I told you the other day, their program is at a point that we need to get Texas A&M to, where you have guys go down and then someone like Holt who hasn't played much the whole year, he has so much confidence in that jersey, and there's such a culture of winning and championship baseball that Coach Van Horn has built that it's just kind of a next-man-up mentality.

We'll get there one day, and playing teams like that and playing teams like LSU, that's how you do it. The players look across the field and say, that's what we need to be, and as coaches we look and say, all right, we need to get to that level of recruiting.

We'll get there, but Arkansas is the preeminent program to me in this league right now.

Q. I just wanted to know what made Evan so effective against this LSU lineup today, and what went into the decision to throw him against LSU today?

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: I think just -- they're great hitters versus left or right. There's no question. But the numbers are way different versus lefties than they are righties, and our best pitchers are left-handed.

We knew we were developing Will as a starter, Evan hasn't pitched in a couple days, so he was pretty rested.

You know, when you're on a team like LSU or some of these other high-end programs like Tennessee that have the big, big, big arms that everybody throws hard, then when you see a guy who's just flipping it up -- he got up to 90, 91, but he's throwing a lot of off-speed pitches, so they don't see that nearly as much in practice as other teams.

A guy like Evan is usually more effective against the better teams. When we pitch him maybe in the mid-week games against teams of different -- not outside of the SEC, he actually hasn't had as much success.

But to punch out Crews in that one moment, that was -- we have a lot of respect for Dylan, so those were big pitches.

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