

Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Saturday, May 27, 2023

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

Texas A&M Aggies

Coach Jim Schlossnagle

Matt Dillard

Jordan Thompson

Postgame Press Conference



Texas A&M 5, Arkansas 4

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: Yeah, really awesome win for our program. Congratulations to see Arkansas, great year, great regular season. Obviously they have a long postseason ahead of them, I'm sure.

Couldn't say more about Matt Dillard. Just a guy that at one point was thinking about giving up baseball, and we had a talk this morning in my room about how awesome is this. Felt like he was playing with house money, just go out there and enjoy it, good or bad. There's no way it could be a bad thing for him with where he was maybe this time last summer thinking about giving up baseball.

He made pitches and kept us in it. I thought he ran out of gas there at the end. Sdao who threw 50 some pitches the other day came back and gave us an awesome outing, and Brandon got us the outs we needed. Troy picked us up there at the end, and J.T. had an awesome game, and LaViolette's RBI in the bottom of the eighth proved to be a massive run. That's why you just have to keep playing and keep scoring, especially against a great program like Arkansas, who you know is not going to cash in.

Q. Matt, why were you thinking about giving up baseball?

MATT DILLARD: There were a lot of underlying reasons. I was dealing with a season-ending injury. Didn't know what was going to happen with that. Based off of what the doctor was telling me, rehab, talking with Coach, and yeah, I was just waiting for answers with that pretty much.

Q. When that was your mindset not so long ago, how cool is a moment like this?

MATT DILLARD: Oh, it's amazing. I was telling the guys before the game, I was like, this is what you lay in bed at night at 11:00 and think about, dream about. This is so much fun. You want to be in moments like this.

When Coach gave me the opportunity, I was thrilled to have his respect and his trust to go out there in a situation like this, semifinal game. It's awesome.

Q. Jordan, you guys have been 0-4 against Arkansas but obviously could have won the other day, could have won some of the games in Fayetteville. How good was it to break through against them? And how good a run do you feel like you're on?

JORDAN THOMPSON: I mean, it feels amazing. I thought the guys did a very good job today, keep pounding the zone, putting together good at-bats. Last time we played them here a couple days ago, things just didn't turn our way, but today we kept doing what we do, and felt amazing to get this one.

MATT DILLARD: Yeah, same with Jordan. Fill up the zone on the pitching side, make them earn their way on, and the guys the whole week so far, these hitters are tough outs, every single one of them 1 through 9, and it's fun to watch.

Q. Jordan, how could you compare the run this team is now on this week to what you guys did last year where you got hot at the right time and started playing your best baseball in the postseason?

JORDAN THOMPSON: I mean, there are a lot of comparisons for us getting hot. Hmm, great question. You stumped me.

It feels great. I really trust these guys. I love them to death. They're my brothers and my family, and I have nothing but faith in them to keep pounding the zone pitcher-wise or the hitters hitting good at-bats and stuff like that. Just full trust.

Q. If I'm not mistaken, you guys are about to play your

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ninth game in 11 days, so I'd imagine you're excited this time of year but also really tired. Jordan, how are you guys feeling overall?

JORDAN THOMPSON: To be honest, I feel pretty good. Playing baseball, you do it your whole life, and summer ball as a little kid you play all those games, and in tournaments you just get a little bit older. I think that's the only thing that really changes. I'm just excited to keep playing baseball.

MATT DILLARD: Yeah, I mean, I was getting a little tired towards the end of that outing. I wanted to communicate that with Coach. As bad as I wanted to keep going out there and getting outs for the team, I also don't want to try to be the tough guy and something else happens.

Communicated that with Coach. He made the right decision for the team, and Shane did an awesome job, and so did the rest of the guys, and we ended up winning the game, so it was great.

Q. Back-to-back wins over two of the best teams in the nation. How are you feeling right now, and how do you feel about your team?

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: I'm feeling pretty good. I'm tired. I don't have to play, but yeah, it's been a while since we left College Station. But we've been here this long, so we might as well hang out for one more day.

I think throughout the course of the season, I've only been in the league two years, but I think this league has proven that on any given day if you don't play well, you're going to get beat, and it doesn't -- the depth of the conference is absolutely amazing.

We have a weekend in Arkansas where they're down two players, all the pitchers they've lost, and I remember walking -- coming into Fayetteville, like if there was ever a year for us to win a game or two in Fayetteville it would be then, and we get swept.

Then you think it's the end of the world, and you've got Florida coming in, and they're as great a program, as immensely talented, and if we get one more ball to fall in on Friday night, we sweep Florida.

It's utter insanity, this conference. Every single game is a street fight. It's not even a boxing match; it's a street fight until the very last out is made.

Every now and then there's one game that'll get out of hand, but the level of play, the talent, the coaches. I've talked many times about what I think of Coach Van Horn. Again, like I said yesterday, I think all the other SEC

coaches say the preparation that it gives you for whatever is beyond this week is better than anywhere else.

Q. I think Wansing threw eight innings the other day, right?

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: Yeah.

Q. What did you think about how he pitched, how he closed it?

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: Yeah, he wanted to pitch yesterday. No chance I was going to do that. I was trying to get threw this game without using him, and then for sure, whether it be start or pitch him out of the bullpen a little bit tomorrow, I don't mind doing that. Wouldn't stretch him out.

Now we'll see. We'll have to see how he feels and see what our other options are, see who we'll play. But this is the time of year that you might do something like that. Not crazy, but he said he felt great, and our bullpen coach said he looked great down there, and he came in and made some really nice pitches, especially to Bohrofen and Wegner who are two guys that have really gotten us, specifically Wegner, coming in there. Both those guys are great hitters.

Q. Playing five games in five days against the competition you guys have, what do you think about the job your pitching staff has done for the tournament?

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: Yeah, just awesome. We've really only given runs up in, what, three total innings? No, four total innings, the seventh today, the ninth today, the grand slam to Arkansas and then the walk-off to Arkansas, right? I think we've only given up runs in four innings, something like that maybe.

But it's been outstanding. The starting pitching has been great. Dillard, him getting that experience helps us in the NCAA Tournament. Will Johnston obviously was awesome, Lamkin, Wansing. If we can get Dettmer going, then I really like our chances.

I mean, we're going to face great teams next weekend regardless, but I feel way -- this is the best I've felt about our team and our pitching all season.

Q. I was going to ask about Jace. You mentioned that late RBI proved to be the difference. How has he been able to have such an impact for you guys this year in his first year?

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: Yeah, we just left him in there. He's a great player. I told him when he came, listen -- we tell every recruit, the biggest jump you'll ever have in your career is between high school baseball and elite Division I baseball, especially the SEC. The jump from SEC baseball to professional baseball is not nearly as big as it is when you go from high school to here.

So be ready. But I'm not taking you out. You're going to have to figure out how to hit the lefties. As long as you're healthy, you're playing, and I think we're seeing the benefits of that, and he's like every other hitter. Sometimes he gets up there and he wants to guess pitches and then he gets caught in between, behind the fastball and in front of the breaking ball instead of just seeing the baseball and putting a good swing on it.

His first couple at-bats, first three at-bats weren't very good, but like yesterday, Hunter Haas's first three at-bats weren't very good, but then the game came calling and he came through for us. Every single run you score, obviously that two-out RBI played a massive role in the final score.

Q. Between the improved health in the lineup as the season has gone on and the way they're starting to produce getting top to bottom contributions, is it starting to feel a little bit more like what you saw towards the end of 2022 where you made that deep run where your lineup was about as pesky as they come?

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: Yeah, we're missing that power element that Dylan Rock gave us, but Werner is giving us some of that. I think Bost now, having him kind of hit down there in the 7 spot, he's starting to get some really big hits. Had some big hits today.

I still believe Brett Minnich, even though he's playing with an injured shoulder as a DH, that he's going to -- he hit a grand slam for us last week at Mississippi State. Kaufer actually has awesome at-bats. He doesn't get a ton of hits, but he gets on base, and so yeah, it's not the same offense, but it's certainly one that can be effective.

But our starting pitching has to be able to match the other team's. Last year when we would get to the third game of an SEC series, we could bloody you up pretty good. We scored a lot of runs on Sundays. This club I don't think quite has that power, but it can -- it's pretty balanced, and it can get on base.

If we can continue to pitch, and we've played really good defense the whole season, then that'll give us the best chance either tomorrow or next week.

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