

Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Tuesday, May 21, 2024

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

South Carolina Gamecocks

Coach Mark Kingston

Dalton Reeves

Chris Veach

Postgame Press Conference



South Carolina - 10, Alabama - 5

MARK KINGSTON: Yeah, well, obviously big win for us. Coming into Alabama, playing Alabama in such a big game, I'm just so proud of our team and the effort and the execution. It all starts with the guy to my right, five and two thirds, no earned runs, on that stage, can't say enough about him and how proud I am of him, competitor he is. We felt when we started him in that, what was it, the fourth inning, hey, if you can give us two or three, that will be tremendous, and he finished the game.

So the great thing about post-season sometimes is guys start to create moments that they will remember for the rest of their life. This is our first one in this post-season, I hope we have a lot more, because again, I think this team is very capable.

Q. Chris, great outing today, Alabama was just in here, and their players were talking about they knew the change-up was coming, but they really weren't able to hit it. When you're throwing that pitch, just what works for you so well when you were throwing that change-up?

CHRIS VEACH: Yeah, for sure, I bet they did say that because I figured out they were sitting on it the way they were weight shifting in the box. And you just kind of mix it up. That's why I slide-step fastball a couple times, and then just hang my leg and like wait a little bit and throw. But getting ahead with the heater, like that was surprising, for sure.

Q. Dalton, you got ahead in the count on that grand slam. Were you sitting on anything there and did you know you got it as soon as you hit it?

DALTON REEVES: Yeah, I mean, I had just missed a slider my last AB, so I figured they were probably going to attack me with fastballs, so I was more or less sitting fastball and adjusting from there. I was able to see the curveball enough early and to be able to sit back a little bit and keep enough back to be able to put a good swing on it, and I was pretty confident I got it.

Q. I saw you kind of snicker when they talked about the Alabama guys struggling with the change-up. You obviously have faced him in practice, what's that like?

DALTON REEVES: I can't hit it. It's just kind of impossible to hit. I don't think I've ever got a hit off Chris Veach. Even back in the PC. But, yeah, it's a disgusting pitch and it's really hard to sit on even if you know it's coming.

Q. I think Matt came out there to the mound in the ninth to talk to you. What did he say? And what does it mean for Coach Kingston and Matt to trust you to go out there and pitch as long as you did today?

CHRIS VEACH: Yeah, 9th inning I slipped and hit that guy with a fastball, so they basically came out and said, Just go at 'em. And they're going to be swinging, so get ahead with the change-up. And they swung first pitch change-up, and that's kind of what happened.

And for sure King and Matt, I mean, that's what I'm here for, you know. They trust me to pitch with that, and it's like a big amount of trust, allow me to pitch that long. Just basically Matt said, One batter at a time, once I was at my third inning or so. So just a lot of trust, and I appreciate that from them.

Q. You mentioned it briefly, but having the opportunity to play together at PC and this stage in the SEC Tournament, what's it mean to both you for you to be sitting next to each other today?

CHRIS VEACH: Yeah, my sophomore year, his junior year, I think, and we were at PC and, you know, it's where it started, grinding there every day. And then making our way to the big stage, I would say, and just moving up to top



competition, that's what you want to do. And just getting after it, really.

DALTON REEVES: Yeah, I think he was just as crazy at PC if not more. I mean, he's a hard worker. He's a good teammate. He's one of the best guys in the dugout. He's always picking everybody up and really getting the energy up. But, I mean, to be able to play at PC together and play here on the biggest stage in college baseball, it's something really special.

Q. Dalton, you guys got down early there, and you come up and just blast that home run to give you guys a lead. Was that partially relief, or was it just complete joy of when you rounded the bases?

DALTON REEVES: It was a lot of joy. We knew that we're a good team and we're going to take it one pitch at time. We got down, and nobody flinched, really. It was, All right, guys, let's keep doing what we're doing. We've hit some balls hard already in the first and second inning.

So we came in, we were having fun, we were picking each other up, we were just taking quality ABs and swinging at the good pitches we need to take.

Yeah, to be able to come up in that situation and do that for the boys is a really fun time.

Q. Career high in pitches. How do you feel physically, and when do you feel like you'll be able to go again if it was later in the week?

MARK KINGSTON: Wednesday.

CHRIS VEACH: I feel pretty good. 64, I believe, was thrown, or 67, sorry. I feel good. We got -- I got with Matt mechanically the past month, and it's kind of helped me with my arm health and everything.

I just feel fine. A little sore in the bicep, but probably feel it a little bit more tomorrow.

Q. You talked about the opportunity for these players to make memories in the post-season, today and beyond. For y'all coming into this tournament the way you closed the regular season, did you feel like your guys were able to flush it and almost view this as the start of a new season and a new chance to make your stamp?

MARK KINGSTON: Yeah, part of my speech to the team this morning was I keep getting asked that question, how are they going to recover from a tough couple weeks. With all due respect, I told our team, People that are asking us

those questions don't really know what you guys are made of, don't know what's going on inside this building, don't know the investment you have all made to support each other for the last 10 months, starting on the first day of class.

So we are very intentional about trying to build a group of guys that know there are going to be ups and downs in this league. Very few teams will ever go through this league unscathed. You're going to have ups and downs.

Sometimes if the schedule falls a certain way, they're going to be early. Sometimes if the schedule falls a certain way, they're going to be late. But they're coming. So you have to build the right foundation that they will be able to handle it when they do come.

Baseball's a game that demands consistency and a certain calm and a stable mindset. So we have always emphasized that to our guys that that's where we have to be, and I think that allows you to deal with the downs until the wave comes back to you and you start to experience some of the ups.

Q. How important was this win both for your tournament resume and for your team in particular trying to get off in the post-season on a good foot?

MARK KINGSTON: I think it means I'll stop having to read every article that Mark Etheridge puts out there and figuring out every last data point and comparing won/loss records and RPIs and strength of schedules. I think this, obviously -- I thought we were solidly in before; I think this just makes it a slam dunk now.

Now I think the focus changes to what happens if we go on a run, can we get in that Top-12 RPI now, which could be conceivable playing the teams we're going to play. So, it's amazing what a fine line it can be in this league. What it does to our psyche, I'm glad that our guys got rewarded for enduring a couple of the hardships that we've had over the last couple weeks, because it feels good to win, man, it really does. It's hard to win in this league, really hard, and so I'm just glad the guys got to experience that. The number one motivation for them was that they didn't want to have another seven-hour bus ride like we had yesterday to get here. So they didn't want to have to get back on that thing and head back to Columbia today. Now they know they're going to be here for a little while, and I'm just really happy that they're going to experience everything this tournament is.

Q. You mentioned yesterday that you may go with what you did on Saturday, letting pitchers go one time through the order and then getting somebody else in

there. With Veach, was it just how good he was to leave him out there?

MARK KINGSTON: Yeah, absolutely. Obviously Dylan went through the order. I don't want it to be lost how good Matthew Becker was for us there. He allowed the game to stay within reach, got a couple really big outs when he came in the game. Then he got to 39 pitches, so we thought it was time to hand the ball over to Veach. We had the other two or three guys that were going to come in after Veach, assuming he was going to give us two or three, but he was just so dominant that there was just no reason to take him out. The great thing about what he did today is he helped us win today, but because he finished that game he might have given us help in winning the next game and the next game after that, because we didn't have to use Gainey, we didn't have to use Good, we didn't have to use guys like that. So just a tremendous performance.

Q. I'll ask you a similar thing I asked Rob: Great teams at the top of this league and then there was a cluster at 13-17. How do you feel the committee should or maybe will view that compared to some teams in other conferences who will have better conference records, but maybe didn't play the strength of schedule that you guys did?

MARK KINGSTON: Here's, I was just talking to Lance out there about this. I have a couple opinions, I don't need to give you all my opinions on the matter because we probably have, we'll get the same question throughout the course of the week. Here's my opinion: If the SEC deserves 11 teams, give the SEC 11 teams. These players, these coaches, these athletic departments work very hard to become the best they can, and if 11 teams deserve to get in, 11 teams should get in. Because I guarantee you, if there's a year where the SEC has a down year and only eight or nine teams deserve to get in, eight or nine teams will get in. So I think you have to look at it both ways. If it's a down year they get less. If it's an unbelievable good year, which I would label this, then they deserve more than last year's record of 10 or whatever -- I think the record as it stands is 10. If we deserve 11, give us 11. If we deserve 10, give us 10. That's my opinion on the matter.

Q. Obviously over the weekend in Knoxville it was kind of tough to score runs against that Tennessee pitching staff. Today you score 10 runs. Seems like a lot of lineup was really clicking today, especially the middle of the order. With the bats what you did see in the approach today against Alabama, what was kind of the approach going into the game and how do you feel it was executed?

MARK KINGSTON: I'm going to give you an old quote that Tim McCarver used to use. Tennessee's really good. I mean, across the board Tennessee's really good. Sometimes when you face really good you don't score as many runs. Tim McCarver used to say that Steve Carlton and Bob Gibson were the luckiest pitchers he ever saw, because whenever they pitched the other team didn't score. Look, when you face great pitching, you're going to score less. Alabama today threw Farone, who is really good, and Davis and those guys. They're good pitchers, but, like, the guys we've been facing lately are unbelievably good. So, our approach remains the same. Our approach is get a good pitch to hit. Try to do damage when the count's in your favor. Fight your ass off with two strikes. That's our approach whether it's Tennessee, whether it's opening weekend, that's always our approach. Sometimes the pitcher dictates whether you have success or not.

Q. Chris said it would be Wednesday. Do you have an idea when he might be available again later this week, should you guys advance, and do you have a starting pitcher in mind for tomorrow?

MARK KINGSTON: I have to talk to Matt. I wouldn't be surprised if we use a very similar strategy, try to get guys in and out, it's been so successful for us and it was again today. But also I think we have to see how the game's going and developing just like we did today. I'm not ready to tell you who will start the game tomorrow. When Veach will be available, he threw 67 pitches, that's incredible for almost a six-inning outing. We'll see. Just have to see how he feels, have to see what the game needs, and we'll kind of go from there. But again, we want to make sure that he can give us that kind of outing again in the NCAA tournament.

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