

Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Thursday, May 23, 2024

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

South Carolina Gamecocks

Coach Mark Kingston

Cole Messina

Postgame Press Conference



LSU 11, South Carolina 10

MARK KINGSTON: Well, I thought we might be in trouble this morning when I found out it was Skip Bertman's birthday, and I know how that leads to things, especially in this tournament.

But, look, we did a lot of great things to win that game tonight, and we did a few things that obviously caused us to lose the game.

It was a hell of a game. Both sides did things to win. Both sides did things to lose. They got the one more hit, and we've got to wear it today, and we'll be ready to go tomorrow, like we have been all year.

Q. Cole, you continued to hit the ball well. Can you take us through the at-bat in the sixth on the two-RBI single?

COLE MESSINA: I mean, I felt like he -- Christian Little has got a really good fastball. He's had a really good fastball since we were 14. I was geared up for it, and threw a cutter away, and I felt like I stayed through it just enough to hit it in that gap and have a good at-bat for my team.

Q. Obviously giving it everything you could after the effort two days ago. Did you notice any fatigue or anything different about Chris in the ninth inning from behind the plate?

COLE MESSINA: No, I didn't. I thought Chris was himself. I thought maybe a few pitches got back to the middle of the plate. But I thought Chris was himself. Like I told him after the game, nothing to hang his head about. He's an assassin up there, and keep doing what he's doing.

Q. When Matt came out to chat with Chris there in the ninth, what did he say to Chris and you guys in that moment?

COLE MESSINA: It was more of like just making sure we're covering everything, if he was to bunt there, but Matt at the end of the day told Veach: Hey, it's time to buckle down and be who you are. Stuff just didn't go our way.

Q. Coach, was there any hesitation in going to Veach in that situation with him having thrown 67 pitches on Tuesday?

MARK KINGSTON: No, he made it very clear that if we got in the right spot that he felt he had probably three to four outs in him. He made that very clear. We were in the right spot. He's obviously done for the weekend. We had made the decision that if he did pitch today, that would be it for the week.

So everything lined up, and you know what, he made some pitches, and they put the ball in play and found some holes. Sometimes it just is what it is.

Q. When you guys are up by three, you pull off the -- you try pulling off the double steal. What went into that decision, and how much do you feel like that play impacted what ended up happening in the game?

MARK KINGSTON: No, there was a left-on-left matchup. We had the right guys on the bases speed-wise. It's a play that we work on. Monte thought it was the right time to try it, and again, we didn't come here to play scared, we came here to play aggressive and push the envelope and do some things that we think might help create runs.

Again, you do a lot of things that work out, and you do some things that don't work out. That's why it's competitive athletics.

Q. Obviously a game this close, to have four errors and the ones late in the game, how tough is that, and anything to pin those on?

MARK KINGSTON: I mean, that was clearly the difference



in the game. They made no errors, we made four. Clearly that was the difference in the game. The ball to Gavin, it was almost like a cue ball, and he did everything he could to get down and get in front of him, and it snuck through him.

Look, it was a tough play. It was unfortunate. Nothing you can do about it now.

Q. This is the first time your team has faced LSU this season, but I don't know how much time you had to prepare for them, but obviously they had a really slow start to the year and have really turned things on. What do you think has been the difference for this team in terms of them playing much better baseball as we head to the postseason?

MARK KINGSTON: Well, it's LSU. They're supposed to be one of the best teams in the country, and generally they are. At some point when you have Tommy White, when you have Jared Jones, when you have Hayden Travinski, you've got a lot of good players, Thatcher Hurd is still a guy that helped them win a World Series last year, started the game for them.

They've got good players. Again, we talked about it in Columbia some. There are ebbs and flows to the game, to the season. Teams go through things. I know they went through an unbelievably tough stretch in the middle of the season. It happens. It's the SEC.

At the end of the day, I think we're all really enjoying this week, the competition, the pageantry. But I think come next week, I think we're all going to be happy to get out there and not have to look at each other.

Q. You got two true freshmen on the mound for your first two pitchers today. What did you see from Pitzer and McCoy, and do you feel more confident using them in a regional after them getting their feet wet in the postseason today?

MARK KINGSTON: It was really good. They needed that kind of experience. They needed that stage. They're very talented. They're going to be very good moving forward, and they needed it. Whether it worked out or whether it didn't work out, they needed this experience for their growth.

They probably both wish they would have done a little bit better, but thought they had their moments, and again, they'll be better because they were in front of that crowd on that stage, and they'll be much better because of it.

Q. I guess it was baseball fate that Braswell comes up

in that situation. What were your thoughts just seeing one of your former guys there in position to beat you guys?

MARK KINGSTON: Yeah, you know, I think I felt a little bit like Tim Corbin watching Parker Noland and Gavin Casas. It's the age we're in, the transfer portal age, and guys are moving around to different teams and trying to make the most of their careers. That's something you don't begrudge anybody.

Q. On the sacrifice fly that tied the game, you went out to chat with the umpires. Were you trying to challenge something there?

MARK KINGSTON: We were just trying to see if they were absolutely 100 percent positive because we had already appealed it and the umpire was right there, and they just felt like there was no reason to go look at it, and we didn't go. But we talked about it, and the umpire assured me that he was 100 percent positive the guy did not leave early.

Q. How have you seen Michael Braswell's game evolve since he's departed from South Carolina?

MARK KINGSTON: Yeah, we didn't play them this year, so it's hard for me to say. Outside of today -- that's a hard thing to say.

Q. When you have a tough loss like that, you have to turn around and play tomorrow afternoon against a really good Kentucky team. Are you concerned that your guys have emptied their tank? Is there anything left in the tank?

MARK KINGSTON: Yeah, again, if you watch our guys, our guys love to play. There was disappointment in that dugout. It stings. The only reason it stings is because it matters so much, and they love playing together. They've got a chance to do it again tomorrow. That was our message. If it didn't sting so much, it's because it doesn't mean that much.

Look, it was a hell of a game. It's a hell of a week, and it's going to serve us well moving into next weekend. One of these teams was going to be very disappointed coming in here tonight. Today is our turn. But it doesn't do anything for our resolve to continue to get better, continue to support each other, and be ready for the next one.

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