

Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Saturday, May 25, 2024

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

South Carolina Gamecocks

Coach Mark Kingston

Parker Noland

Postgame Press Conference



PARKER NOLAND: I think we just focus on us and growing as a team. I think we're just focused on getting better and how we can improve and how we can win our next game.

Q. Parker, you were at the plate during that crazy play in the 10th. Can you take us through your vantage point and the craziness of that 20 minutes?

PARKER NOLAND: Yeah, to be honest, I was just up there trying to put a ball in play and score a run. I saw Blake barreling down the line of third base. Wasn't really sure what was going on.

I kind of just tried to let the umpires officiate the game because I know they're really good at their jobs. So I was just trying to compete the best I can.

Q. Parker, have you ever seen anything quite that, I guess, confusing, nuts? How do you sort of try to deal with that as a player?

PARKER NOLAND: I've played five years of college baseball and I haven't really seen anything to that scale. But I mean, it worked out in our favor, and we were just focused on getting back on the field and stopping them from scoring.

Q. Parker, you played five games here this week. Do you have kind of a big picture or an overarching takeaway from this team coming out of it going into a regional next week?

PARKER NOLAND: Yeah, this team is tough. We really enjoy playing with each other. We've got a lot of love for each other, and we've got a lot of heart, too. I know these guys are going to fight until the very last out of the season, and I'm very proud of how this team has come together and how we've played this past week.

I think it's going to give us a lot of confidence going into the regional.

Q. Coach, talk about the overall run you had this week, regardless of the result today. Talk about how it

LSU 12, South Carolina 11

MARK KINGSTON: Yeah, again, I don't know why every time we play LSU, it gets crazier and crazier and crazier, but that seems to be the trend. Again, I wish we came out on top for our fans, for our players. Just not meant to be sometimes, and it wasn't meant to be for us today.

I can't wait to watch our team go play in a regional, and hopefully a super regional, and hopefully Omaha after that. Obviously if anybody didn't believe we were capable of that before this week, I think we passed the eye test. We're one of the best teams in the country. We're not perfect.

We had some self-inflicted errors in both LSU games that have to be shored up, but they will be, and as I said, I can't wait to watch this team play a regional.

Q. As a veteran kind of representing the infield, it was a tough day out there for you guys in general defensively and really the tournament. How do you go about tightening up defensively over the course of the week?

PARKER NOLAND: Yeah, we'll just get back to work. I've got a ton of confidence in everybody out there. Those are my brothers. I know they're going to do a better job, and I know we're going to work at it and keep getting better.

Q. You played 35 plus games against these guys all year in this conference. Now everybody is going to a regional. It's a fraternity that we're not a part of but you guys are. What's it like now when you see your competitors go play in a regional? Is there an esprit de corps where you cheer for each other and cheer for the SEC?



was for you and your team and going forward how it's going to help you.

MARK KINGSTON: Yeah, we loved it. Again, it's the greatest conference in America. It's the greatest players in America. It's the greatest coaches in America. I'll say it's the greatest umpires in America.

It's the best of everything. It's the best -- like this stadium and what this town does for this week is incredible. I haven't had anything that reminds me of the Omaha experiences that I've had anything more than what is put on this week.

It's everything that everybody that's in baseball wants to be a part of. It's tremendous. It was tremendous for me to watch our team.

It's hard to think that you can have significant growth on a team this late in the season, but we did. We did, because there were so many different challenging situations that our kids will be able to learn from.

We were able to put so many young guys in situations. Through thick and thin, through good and bad, they're going to be better because of it. It's the biggest stage they'll play on until they get to the Big Leagues.

This is a very similar feel to Omaha, especially when you're the team playing LSU. That was hostile territory out there, and our kids will learn from it.

Our kids aren't perfect. Nobody's team is perfect. These are 18 to 22, 23 year olds. They're going to make mistakes. It's our job to help them get them through it, learn the lesson, and be better because of it.

It's a tremendous week. Hard to think it can get better until you get to Omaha.

Q. Errors seemed to really be a lingering issue this week and obviously today. What do you do this late in the season to work through that, and is that something you just play through at this point?

MARK KINGSTON: You know, we fielded .979 in 30 conference games this year. It was not a problem all year. Why it was a problem this week on this field, I don't know. We've got to dig into it, got to talk to our players, communicate a little bit, ask them as we get to a regional, is there anything we can do to help get you more ready.

I don't think there is, because our guys prepare very well. Our guys are good. We fielded .979, that is pretty good all year. For whatever reason that type of defense didn't show

up this week, and we'll do everything we can to get it better.

Q. When did you guys first notice that something might have been awry with the way Griffith threw the ball to home plate?

MARK KINGSTON: Yeah, it was a crazy play honestly. I do want to say on the record that was a very difficult situation for Derek Mollica and that crew, and I think they did everything they could to try to get the call right. I think they did get the call right.

That's not a comfortable situation for umpires to be in. Nobody wants that. I know they don't want to be at the center of attention, but it was a crazy play. There was a very similar play recently that was kind of almost -- if not the identical play, very, very similar.

I think we drew on watching that on television and having seen it already. We just thought, hey, let's bring this up; let's see what happens and see if we can get the interpretation in our favor.

Q. I want to ask you about the depth of this league. You kind of mentioned it earlier, but we've got five teams that are probably going to be national hosts and we've got six on the verge. Can you talk about the depth of this league?

MARK KINGSTON: Well, depth, our depth has depth. Let me put it that way. You're watching pitchers today that have thrown very few innings and you'll probably see the same thing tomorrow. You're watching pitchers that have thrown very few innings all year for these SEC teams that are 96, 97 miles an hour.

You're like, wow, how is this guy not pitching? It's because of the depth in this league. It's incredible. It really is. And it's not going anywhere. It's only going to get better and better. All the clubs that invest and really do everything they can to try to make sure their programs are in a great place for growth, those are going to be the teams that continue to develop and keep up pace. That's what this thing is all about.

It's an incredible league. It really is. Like I said, players, coaches, umpires, fans, it's the best of the best.

Q. Do you have one or maybe two takeaways of the games here before you get a week off before the NCAA Tournament?

MARK KINGSTON: Takeaways, couldn't be prouder of my guys. Couldn't be prouder of how they handled -- I struggle

to use the word adversity. You don't get adversity on a baseball field unless you get injured. Adversity is health problems. Adversity is those types of things.

We had failure to deal with this week, but every team has, and I'm just so proud of our guys that they are trying to make sure they learn from the failures, that they handle them properly, and they're better because of it.

But my takeaway is I'm glad the country got to see what we're all about, what we're capable of, the good and the bad. We're not a perfect team. We have some warts that we need to try to cover up at times, but we know how to win, and we can beat anybody. I mean, we've shown that. We can beat anybody.

Back to the question about the league, too. I'll just go ahead and say in my opinion every team in our league that gets to the regionals will have a chance to go to Omaha. I don't think there's any question about that.

It's going to be a matter of who gets good draws, who's in a spot where they're playing hot against teams that maybe are not quite as hot. But every team in our league that gets to a regional will have a chance to go to Omaha.

Q. Was Jackson stealing on his own --

MARK KINGSTON: I'm not going to give you the secrets of that play because we might want to pull it out in the future, so I'm just going to leave it at that. Sorry.

Q. When you approached the umpires, were you approaching them about the interference or the ball or a combination of --

MARK KINGSTON: When you go out there -- I talked to Derek, and again, I think Derek handled that situation of chaos about as good as you could possibly handle it. It took longer than we all wanted, but I think their goal was to try to get it right.

When you go out there for a situation like that, you know there's a million different things that might lead to something that goes in your favor. Did he step off or did he stay on the rubber, did the catcher come out in front of home plate. All those things, sometimes you roll the dice and you know it might go our way.

There are certain times you're very confident that it will, but you just hope that the interpretation is in your favor.

Q. (Indiscernible) (regarding Casas.)

MARK KINGSTON: Yeah, Casas, no positive news on

Casas yet. It is a hamate issue, so we're just going to have to continue to see what the doctors and him come up with and our athletic trainer, Corey Barton, who does a good job. Just going to have to see if they come up with anything that would allow him to play.

Q. Did Eli Jones get hurt covering the bag?

MARK KINGSTON: No. He came out just in the interest of, again, making sure all of our pitchers were not overextended this week so they're ready to go next week.

Q. From a pitching standpoint, what did you learn about playing so many games in such a short period of time about your pitching staff and how to handle them with a regional format coming up?

MARK KINGSTON: Yeah, I hope we don't have to play five straight games next week. But we had a lot of kids step up.

Sam Simpson pitched for the first time in a long time today, and I thought he handled himself well.

Eli got us out of a big jam.

Matthew Becker had a couple decent outings this weekend.

Garrett gave up that home run there at the end, but he's one of our guys, and that will not change.

I thought Roman Kimball really represented himself today and had poise and gave us a chance to win.

Even the box score, it's hard to imagine he gave up four earned runs. That's probably a topic for an official scorer and myself to talk about.

But I thought Roman did a really nice job today and stepped up in a way that was great for him and great for us as we move into the future.

Q. With the regionals coming up next weekend, like you said, with playing potentially five games next week, is there anything from this week that you feel like you would -- if you could go back and change it, would you, or would you kind of go with the same thing that you did this week?

MARK KINGSTON: Look, no, you have to make decisions in the moment. You have to live with the results, and then you move on to the next one. Whether it's who you're playing, who's coming in to pitch, do you bunt, do you hit and run, where do you shade your guys. You have to

make decisions in the moment that are based on information that you have, and then you live with the results.

Baseball -- Augie Garrido said it a long time ago and no truer words have ever been spoken: This game was designed to break your heart. It broke our heart today again, but also if you survive it, if you thrive in it, it will make you such a better person moving forward.

Look, it broke our heart a little bit this week, but we also played a lot of great baseball. I mean, we're one of the last four teams standing here. Our kids have nothing to hang their heads about.

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