

College World Series: Baton Rouge Super Regional

Saturday, June 7, 2025

Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA

LSU Tigers

Coach Jay Johnson

Kade Anderson

Josh Pearson

Derek Curiel

Postgame Press Conference



Q. You started 10 games at the Box and your team went 10-0. What does that mean to you?

KADE ANDERSON: Confidence in our team. An outing like today where I gave up a lot of runs, my guys had my back. I think that's the definition of a true team, when you need to pick someone else up when someone else isn't doing too good. I believe in our guys, and just proud of them.

Q. Josh, talk about the process of learning that not only were you going to be in the lineup today but you were going to be hitting lead-off. What goes into that mentality? How are you preparing for that? And obviously great performance today, what goes into that actually when you get on to the field?

JOSH PEARSON: Yeah, really nothing changes. Every day I kind of show up to the field as if I would be in the lineup at some part of the lineup. And I mean showing up today, Coach texted me last night and told me I'd be in it. I came today and got ready to go. And saw my name was in the lead-off spot, and I knew I had a job to do and had to get the job done.

Q. To build off of that, and Derek can speak about this as well, being in and out of the rotation, not having maybe the consistent amount of starts for the postseason, but to be ready for your moment kind of thing, what goes into that mindset? And then Derek maybe can speak to how impressive and important that is to just have those guys always be ready in those moments.

JOSH PEARSON: Yeah, I mean, we have a really deep team this year. I feel like we have guys who will play in the big leagues who don't start every day. Just kind of knowing that, showing up every day ready to go, like, we have guys who are ready to pinch-hit at any point in the game, ready to go in and execute on the mound.

I think that's what makes a great team is guys kind of owning their role and whatever their role is for that day, and not bringing, like, past failure with them into future at-bats and stuff like that.

LSU - 16, West Virginia - 9

JAY JOHNSON: Great win for our team today against a really good team, really good pitcher. Tough conditions. It was very hot today. But our guys came ready to play, just as they did on Monday night. And it was a good performance. Proud of Kade for gutting through that. That was not easy. I think everybody that was watching the game can attest watching the game wasn't easy.

So towing the rubber like he did and giving everything he had to every pitch was awesome. Great performance by Derek. Great performance by Josh. Really good job by our entire lineup throughout the game today. And get ready for tomorrow.

Q. Derek, moving into the 7 hole today, clearly that didn't faze you at all with the five RBIs. What was different about the lineup change for you, and what do you think sparked your bat today?

DEREK CURIEL: Nothing was different, to be honest. I just approached the game how we approach the game all the time. Me, personally, whether I'm batting first, second, seventh, just trying to go up there and do my job. And felt like I executed that well today. And that was just the plan.

Q. Kade, just taking that ball off the arm there, kind of walk us through it. Because it looked like you actually got better afterwards, which was a little surprising?

KADE ANDERSON: Just got hit and there's no reason to make an excuse out of it. And I thought that there's no excuse and just keep going.

DEREK CURIEL: Super proud of Josh. Josh has been a leader on this team since day one, since I've gotten here. He kind of taught me the ropes. And I look up to him a lot.

Two years ago, last year, watching him on TV, I wanted to be his teammate. I wanted to be his friend. He's been like a brother to me. I'm so happy to see him succeed. I wish nothing but the best for him.

Same thing with Larson, Jake, Ethan Frey, they probably all got spot starts. Some of them are owning their role. And I feel like they've all capitalized on it. I'm super proud of them. This is a deep team, and I think it just fuels us. And I'm super happy for all my guys.

Q. Kade, what kind of challenges did the WVU lineup give you today?

KADE ANDERSON: I felt it wasn't necessarily them. I wasn't commanding the fastball and working off of that as well. Fell into a rhythm for a little bit, but they put up a couple good at-bats. I don't think it was them; it was just me not making the pitches when I had to.

Q. Kade, you just mentioned the rhythm you sort of got yourself into, and obviously you had a ton of run support, but there were two long layoffs. How much did that affect things and affected your rhythm?

KADE ANDERSON: I don't think it affected it at all. As a pitcher you go through those all the time. It's how you bounce back from those. It's a part of what we do.

Q. Josh, there's not a ton of postseason experience on this team, and Coach mentioned you guys had a meeting after the regionals about the lessons you learned from the regional round. How did you all implement those lessons into this game, and how will you implement those and whatever's next?

JOSH PEARSON: Yeah, this team does a really good job of taking it one pitch at a time. When we're out on the field, there's no difference in the game today versus opening day. It's still baseball. It's the same game we've played our whole entire life.

It's just guys realizing that, realizing that the moment will never be as big as they make it be, I guess. And just kind of attacking this opportunity. I mean, it's a lot of fun playing in front of 12,000 people every day and kind of making the most of it.

Q. Josh, their pitcher, obviously the goal is to get the starting pitcher out of there, but he left earlier than

expected. It was very hot out there; you could attest to that. Were you surprised you guys could get to the bullpen as quickly as you did?

JOSH PEARSON: We did our best to make him work like teams hadn't done all year. Just make him go out there and throw as many pitches as he can every inning. We knew it would be hot, so we knew he wouldn't go out there every inning if we kept putting his back on the wall. We did a really good job of that today and got him out and got to their bullpen early.

Q. Coach Johnson talks about how you've been so clutch throughout your career here at LSU. This will be your last weekend at the Box. Hitting a grand slam, what did it mean to you?

JOSH PEARSON: It's been awesome. These have been the most fun four years of my life. I wouldn't trade it for anything. I'm going to miss the Box. I'm going to playing in the Box, but we still have one game tomorrow. Going to make the most of it for sure.

Q. Derek, the plate approach today, you guys seem to be getting on top of the plate but also being patient, like Josh said. How important was that to kind of have a good approach and see everything coming at you?

DEREK CURIEL: Pitcher was good. Obviously they're a great team. They're here for a reason. I feel like we stuck to our plan well today. The hitters, lefties, we got on top of the plate, made them throw it over the plate. The righties did a good job of letting the ball travel.

I feel we stuck to our plan today. And when we do that, I think we're pretty tough to beat. So hopefully we continue doing that.

Q. Derek, you guys were getting no-hit up until your home run. What did you see in that at-bat and what did you see maybe in your first at-bat that you adjusted to in your second?

DEREK CURIEL: Heater in, sliders away. And he threw me two fastballs, low and in, I took them. I saw the ball kind of tunnelling down, and 2-0. I saw the slider pop. And it looked big to me, so I went to go swing at it and put a good swing on it.

Q. What a talent-filled roster. How does one go about managing and finding who is hot and who's not and trusting in the guy when you least expect it?

JAY JOHNSON: I think just taking it one day at a time. Focus on the game in front of you. I think our method to

how we treat the season helps us in postseason play, as we treat the season like a 56-game season playoff.

And everybody understands what their job is on a particular day. We try to communicate that well.

As far as choosing, just put a lot of hay in the barn as far as preparing. I don't have a better explanation for it other than try to get it right and don't just throw things up on a board. But a lot of time and effort and looking at things. And when you have good players, it certainly helps.

Q. From June to February, what did you see in Kade that took him from whatever his role was last year to what he is now?

JAY JOHNSON: I think there's a few things that come to mind. When we lost last year in Chapel Hill, it was a very difficult loss for all of us. The first thing I noticed, he took that really hard. Like, he pitched in the game before that we won. Didn't pitch in that game. Wasn't able to. And he took that hard.

And that was the first, like, kind of like that. I knew he was a great kid and all that, but I kind of liked that. And then he really went to work physically on his body. He's much stronger. He's very lean. He's athletic.

I said this, if I let him hit, he would probably be an everyday player for us at first base or in the outfield because he's such a good athlete. But he really worked hard in the weight room, put on some good weight, good strength. Continued to be a good mover. So I think that was probably the second thing.

And then just how he went about developing his slider, obviously, his big-game changer. And then it's been a constant work in progress to figure out how to use everything. And when he throws all four of them for strikes we can literally do anything we want.

I think the special part, you just heard him, we won, he's happy we won. He's ticked off because he gave up some hits and runs. Those are usually your highest performers that have that competitive level.

He's got all of it. There's very few guys that have all of it. He's got all of it.

Q. How much do you think the two long innings affected Kade in the later stages of this game?

JAY JOHNSON: I mean, knowing what a team guy he is, he said it didn't. So I believe him. I don't think there's a pitcher on the planet in the super regional game wouldn't

prefer 13 runs over two innings and a long rest.

We kept him moving. We've had long innings this year. When you have a good offense, it happens. But it was hot. I mean it was hot, and it was a good team.

I think the story is him persevering through that. If it was a regular-season game, maybe we would have taken him out a little bit earlier, but there's nobody else I want out there on the mound.

He gave up some rounds there in the sixth and the seventh, but just getting those two innings checked off without having to use somebody else becomes very valuable -- not just in the game today, but in tomorrow and the rest of the series.

Q. Josh Pearson always seems to deliver when you call his number. How is he able to do that day in and day out when you ask him?

JAY JOHNSON: He's a good player. He's a good hitter. Character, makeup, toughness, raised right, best parents in the world. It will be odd not having him here because it's my only guy. The four years together, like that's it.

And he's really dialed into the right things, much like Kade, much like Derek. The three guys that -- every time I come up here, I find them talking about who they are as people as much as players. He's at the forefront of that.

It's his last go-around here at LSU. He's had a good season. I'm pretty sure he's hitting over .300 or right at .300, has a bunch of homers, and kind of in and out of the lineup.

He's always ready when we call his name. Had a good series at South Carolina, started two of those games. He's the best. He's just the best.

Q. You mentioned just what Kade did saving those last couple of innings, but how about the three guys you rolled out there and how it's set you up for what's still to come?

JAY JOHNSON: I thought it was good. I thought DJ, very efficient right there. They obviously have a number of left-handed hitters in the lineup. We may need to utilize him again. Doing it in two pitches -- I thought it was good to get him back out on the mound, again, after the last appearance.

And then I thought William did some good things. And I want to get him in these games because he's going to be starting one of them probably at some point next year. I

thought that was good experience.

Kyle West is a heck of a hitter. He's a heck of a hitter. I wasn't worried about the homer. You want to go get the first guy when he got him to two strikes. I thought Mavrick was great. He's continually getting better, and that's great for us.

Q. You changed the lineup a lot the last two games. The guys have responded really well to that. You've written a lot of lineup cards in your career. Is that something that's special, the way these guys are, whatever their role is, just to adjust and produce immediately?

JAY JOHNSON: I think it speaks to good players, meant strength, attitude, team over me, understanding their job and what's required of them and have been trained for it. And there's a lot that goes into it. There's a reason we don't skip a day of skill work.

We literally start the first day of school, when it's a billion degrees, like it was today, and develop a process of being a good offensive player.

And you have guys for a couple of years or four years like Josh, and they're always ready and prepared. And it's happened a couple other times. And Griffin Kirn is good, really good. Not many teams have done much with him this year.

We really had to be on it, both from how we aligned it and then the execution of the players. And it was a good day for the offense today.

Q. You guys had eight hits, 16 runs. Obviously a couple of big hits in there. What did you see from your guys in those big at-bats in their approach?

JAY JOHNSON: I thought maybe the first inning it was a little fast. But, again, good pitcher -- 100 strikeouts, low ERA, less hits than innings pitched, deceptive, has a unique style in how he does it.

And then I thought the second inning the bats got a little bit better. I think we only swung, like, four times in the second inning, and the pitch count was up to like 28. So I thought that was good.

Then they just progressively got a little bit better. Even though we didn't have any hits, we were pressuring him with pitch count and long counts and three balls and 3-2, all those things. I don't know how you guys felt holding a camera when it was a billion degrees out there. But I'm sure standing on the middle of the pitcher's mound wasn't

all that comfortable.

Maybe he ran out of gas a little bit so he lost his command. But good for us. Sometimes when you face a good guy you gotta hope he's off a little bit. Tough environment, like I said.

That's why it's amazing what Kade did today, to stay out there for seven innings and 100-plus pitches and execute well and give our team a chance to win.

Q. Last weekend you had that first chance to close the door, get to Supers, you had to play the if-necessary. From a mindset and approach perspective, what do you hope's different about the team when they get to the ball field tomorrow so you guys can get this in a sweep instead of having to play the third game?

JAY JOHNSON: Well, they want to win it. They want to do it, and doesn't mean they didn't want to win it or do it last week either. I think we'll be in a good position to get some rest tonight, use the football facility to get recovered, re-set, get body temperatures down, hydrate, get a good night's rest. Coaching staff go to work.

There's some things that I feel like I learned in the game today that we need to make some movement on to be better prepared for tomorrow. So use that time well. But this isn't about, like, motivation at this point in time. This is purely about mindset and execution.

Q. Was Kade hurt at all when he got hit in the arm? Was there any swelling, or was he in any pain right off?

JAY JOHNSON: He was okay. He just wanted to throw a couple. It stung him pretty square on the forearm. And that's why I stayed out there and stood behind the mound to see how the ball was coming out. Quickly turned and looked at the gun and it looked normal for a warm-up pitch. He's okay. That was in the second inning, I believe. So to go six after that, he's good.

Q. You made some changes because of the left-handers. Have you made a dramatic change like that before putting Curiel all the way down to 7? Just some of the background on the batting order changes.

JAY JOHNSON: He's not hit seventh this year, that's for sure. Just in a game like this against a pitcher like that, he's very different than what we have seen, even relative to left-handers and SEC left-handers.

And I just think the guys did a really good job of what they needed to do. I don't even really think it had a lot to do

with shuffling the deck and the order, but he had an excellent performance today. You really have to stay in there on him the way he steps and where he delivers the ball. It's almost completely out of the batter's eye. So he can be really, really tough on lefties.

But he executed it perfectly. He kept his feet in there and got hit by a pitch on the first one and stayed on that slider and hit a bullet out of here. That's impressive to be able to do that. So he did what he needed to do.

Like I said, I think it's more about the players executing than anything else.

Q. Going back to the 16 runs on eight hits, you guys also drew eight walks and had five hit batters. Can you talk about your offense making the most of whatever opportunities present themselves?

JAY JOHNSON: Yeah, I thought it was a complete performance. Again, the hits didn't come in the first few innings, but we made the pitcher work, and that was really important today, especially when we have a really good pitcher going.

And he had some really good innings there in the third, fourth and fifth, where their pitcher didn't get a chance to sit down; they had to go right back out there.

So I think those free bases helped. And then we set the table with two hit-by pitches. Both those were two strikes. That was really important. And Derek executed his plan very, very well. And then the next inning we really got going. And the free bases are part of that. It's like turnovers in football; you want to capitalize on them, and we certainly did today.

Q. Kirn wasn't afraid to throw the ball inside today. Three hit-by pitches. How much did you know that heading into this game? Was the lineup constructed to sort of take advantage of that tendency, I guess?

JAY JOHNSON: He's a good pitcher, throws to both sides of the plate, changes speed, has deception in his delivery. You're not going to be able to cover everything, so to speak.

But I thought our guys just did a good job of -- I thought we were a little, want to go get it, want to make something happen in the first inning, but after that I thought they just did a really good job of swinging at pitches they could hit hard, taking the ones they couldn't, battling when they got deep in the count, and we're fortunate enough to push his pitch count up.

But probably see him again. They brought him back on one day's rest last week. He was one of those guys that probably has a rubber arm, just great competitor, obviously. And so hopefully we learned something today.

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