

2023 Men's College World Series

Friday, June 23, 2023

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

LSU Tigers

Coach Jay Johnson

Cade Beloso

Tre' Morgan

Dylan Crews

Pregame Press Conference



COACH JOHNSON: Obviously excited to be here as a college baseball coach. This is where you want to be this time of year. Very proud of the team, especially coming through the losers' bracket after a tough loss Monday night to, again, one of the best teams that I've seen in recently times, in Wake Forest, particularly on the pitching side of things.

Really good week that we put together to get back to this point. And now it's about moving forward. Wanted the players to feel good about what they accomplished last night. And something we've talked about all year is mastering moving forward, moving on to the next step, whether that's through success or adversity.

They've shown a lot of maturity in doing that throughout the year, and I expect us to do that moving into tomorrow night.

Q. How much has your experience of just being here at this level the College World Series final, the national championship on the line, how much has that helped you prepare this team?

COACH JOHNSON: I think there's benefit to it. It's just like with the players, something I tell them all the time the best coach they'll ever have in their life is playing time. When you get here and get to experience playing eight games in one World Series back in 2016, that definitely helps.

You know what to expect. You know where the pitfalls are, you know things that I try to take a notebook with me everywhere when I'm doing everything and being in

Omaha you certainly want to do that.

And it's been helpful. Reflected a little bit on that last night. And more so of how do you transition from the bracket to the championship series. And we had a good plan for that coming in. And excited to get into that phase of it now.

Q. Looking at the talent across this matchup alone and the matchup we saw last night, multiple first-, second-round draft round picks, what do you think has enabled college baseball to feature this kind of talent over the years?

COACH JOHNSON: I think the development platforms, the places like LSU have, that can feed the players' dream of becoming a Major League player. When you look at nutrition, strength and conditioning, mental coaches -- some of the best coaches in baseball; not college baseball, in baseball -- are a part of these programs that have been playing in the College World Series.

So it's a real opportunity for the players to accelerate achieving their dream of becoming a Major League player some day and get to play in an environment like this, which is second to none. You won't experience anything like this unless you're one of the very few that get to play in a Major League World Series.

Q. Can you speak to what a great player and star Tre' Morgan is, the electricity he brings offensively, defensively? All the kids are screaming his name for autographs whenever he walks in here. What is it like to observe all that?

COACH JOHNSON: If I gave you a full answer we might be here all day. I think as I've said before, throughout the year and rightfully so, he's one of the best competitors that I've ever coached. And just his will to win, his will to succeed, come through for our team when we need him the most is really next level.

And I think it starts there. Great parents. Was raised incredibly well. I think the maturation process, if you will, that I've seen is that he's become a leader on our team. And getting to spend these two years with him, it's been



really fun to see that evolution and hear him speak here in Omaha about his teammates and what we're trying to do and how we're trying to do it.

And in terms of the play, nobody embodies that better than Tre'. And on top of that, he's a phenomenal baseball player. Very rarely do you put that competitive character with the hand-eye coordination, the two-strike-hitting ability, defensive versatility and all those things.

Shortly after we're done a professional team is going to be very happy to have Tre' Morgan.

Q. Coach O'Sullivan was talking about how different it is to set up a team for SEC schedule and when you get out here it's a little bit different how you manufacture runs and stuff. Can you talk about that element in terms of how maybe you've had to shift the way you play offense in this tournament?

COACH JOHNSON: Yeah, I think I have a good perspective about that coming from the West and the Pac-12. It's bigger fields. It's a different style of play. Most of the parks in the SEC are launching pads, for lack of a better word. This is not here.

And when we talk about building an offense, early on, very early on in the fall we want to be able to win any type of game -- pitchers' duel like last night, one-run game, slugfest, wind blowing out, small park, big field, doesn't matter.

And to have a skill set to be able to do that -- and there's some hallmarks in that skill set that travel, if you will, without sounding too football coach-ish, that things that we've done all year long have helped us score some runs here.

But there's a different nature to it, especially in the games that we've played with the wind blowing straight in, the size of the field, the quality of the pitching. And, again, I think it's unique and probably appropriate that our last three opponents, in my opinion, on this year's schedule, are three of the best pitching staffs in college baseball.

Q. Without tipping your hand too much or giving away state secrets, what's in the notebook? What have you discovered from '16, what did you learn from your side of the bracket this time that you feel like put you in a position to be successful?

COACH JOHNSON: I think having a plan for everything just coming into the tournament. And whether you win game one, lose game one, win the first two, lose one of the first two, and you can't get too far down the road.

And that's probably the thing that helped us the most, I would say, over the last few days. I think if you lose your plan, you know, this is over quickly. And I think that's probably the thing I'm the most proud of the last couple days.

I thought we were not on it in the first inning of Wednesday's game. And we brought it up to the team. Like, we had had this conversation a month ago to, like, we have to stay right here, right now and in character.

And when you have old players that have had success that have a good blueprint in their eyes of how to be successful and have had success with it, you can kind of get them back on track. And then they're good enough to go execute it. That's the most important part of it.

And then staying right there right now. And last night was special. That was a special game for all of the country to watch. And it was a big win for our program. And I wanted our players to feel that because if you don't you lose sight of why you're doing this.

And there becomes an expiration date on that and then master the art of moving forward. And when you're going to play seven or eight games here like we are, you have to be able to do that.

Q. Just talk about the two different dynamics -- LSU, perhaps the team with the momentum heading into the final, compared to Florida, the team that's probably a little more well-rested.

COACH JOHNSON: I say this all the time. In baseball it's very unique. It's different than basketball and football. I think talent wins out in basketball and football more often. In baseball, it's not always the team with the best players, it's the team that plays the best that day.

And as hard as it may seem to get anybody's head around, it's about tomorrow. Tomorrow's the only thing that matters tomorrow. And there's advantages to both. Maybe you talk about rhythm. You talk about routine. You talk about confidence.

Both teams will play with a ton of confidence as they should with the rosters. And I think it's awesome. When you look at selection day, and I'm a very stay-in-the-moment type guy, my Baton Rouge media friends will tell you.

But you look at the bracket and you look on the other side, it's like, yeah, this is not a surprise to me who we're playing.

Q. Back in February, you and I talked about the challenge of transitioning this new age of transfers coming in. Doesn't seem to have been a problem. Certainly wasn't last night. What's the secret sauce for taking guys from other programs and plugging them in with guys that have been here since they got out of high school?

COACH JOHNSON: It's a good question. And it's fit. We're not for everybody. You know what I mean? Florida is probably not for everybody either.

I think building team. You have to be really intentional about building team. And we have a great freshmen class as well. There's guys that haven't seen a lot of time here that are the future stars of our program.

And I think about Brady Neal who has been hurt; Paxton Kling; Jared Jones. They've all contributed to this team's success and will be the headliners of next year's group.

We got here in large part, in large part because of Gavin Guidry and Griffin Herring. I had a meeting with those guys in January and February, like, you're going to have to spearhead this thing going forward.

The reality of it when you look at the SEC West and SEC East, you cannot win without age, experience and all those types of things. I mean, I think I know who the three players were who up here for Florida. Those are grown men.

It's not a little boy's league. And you have to have some age and experience underneath you.

Q. Having to play the four games in four days, obviously the pitching was really, obviously worked pretty hard. Curious about how you welcome is a day off, first of all, and how you feel about your pitching setting up, given the number of arms you had to use to get through this?

COACH JOHNSON: Yeah, I'm way okay with having a day off today. That's going to work out well for us.

I have faith in a lot of the guys. We have 12 on the roster, on the active roster for this thing. And they've all pitched in games that we've won this year and games that we've had success.

And I think there's a pathway for them if they execute to be successful. And it really doesn't matter what I think or feel about it; we are where we are. We earned our way here the way that we did. And so now we have to go with how

we're set up.

Q. Is Hayden Travinski available to play for the rest of this series? And the second question is just the scouting report on Wyatt Langford.

COACH JOHNSON: Yeah, in terms of Hayden, he was nursing a small injury, and it became a little bit bigger injury earlier in the tournament. Massive, massive gratitude for him giving it a go on Monday. He did the best he could with where he was at. And this time of year, that's the way it has to be.

He was not available to play on Tuesday. Might have been available to pinch-hit on Wednesday. We had some progress yesterday, but we've got a little ways to go to know where we're going to stand with what he will be or won't be available for going into the weekend.

Wyatt Langford, great player. I mean, I don't know how much else to say. Somebody's going to pay him a lot of money, as they should. And I think, like Dylan, like Paul and a couple of other guys on their roster, it will be a short arc in terms of minor league baseball to the big leagues. He's a very well-built player.

Q. Cade, Coach has you guys here for a reason, but he talks about the team that you guys have assembled, and putting "mental" in front of all that stuff. I think each of you represent different parts of this team, whether it be veteran talent or whatever. From a players perspective, what does it mean to have all those components gelling the way it has?

CADE BELOSO: I think it's necessary I don't think you'll find a team in the country having fun to play with each other than we do. It's our favorite thing to do is to play baseball, joke around, have fun with each other.

Like you said, there's different components of leadership on this team, whether it be like a glue guy, talent, lead by example, I think that's what makes us special. It's not like one person leading the way. It's a group, a collective of us.

DYLAN CREWS: It's very important to have a good team really, to have a glue guy like this guy right here, to have a leader like him who has one of the best mental approaches I've ever seen.

So I think it's very important, just gets the younger guys on board too, and just carries the tradition and I guess the approach on every single year.

TRE' MORGAN: Yeah, I think the most important trait we have as a team is the confidence we have in each other.

We believe that every guy in that dugout, every guy on the field is going to get the job done whenever their name is called upon.

And it's just a great feeling when you're in the game and you know that you have all those dudes in the dugout behind your back.

Q. I asked this question to the student-athletes from Florida. So I'll ask it for Tre', Dylan and Cade. As a fan of baseball what do you admire and like about Florida?

TRE' MORGAN: I don't really have --

DYLAN CREWS: I have a lot of respect for them. I'm from Florida so I know a bunch of those guys on the team. Played with them. I have a lot of respect for them. They have got great starting pitchers, a great bullpen, great lineup, no holes in their lineup.

So we've got to be ready. We've got to be ready to go. It's not going to be a cake walk. We've got to be mentally prepared and ready to go.

CADE BELOSO: I'd say one thing I admire about them is the confidence they play with. Kind of similar to us. And they're a gritty bunch and they all play with a chip on their shoulder. That's one thing I really respect from their team.

Q. Tre', two-part question for you. Can you talk about the fan base behind you guys last night? And what's it like to have another SEC team facing you in the championship?

TRE' MORGAN: I mean, we have the best fans in the country. And that showed last night. It was awesome, celebrating with our guys on the field and then we turn and we look at the fans and they're all on the rail standing up, cheering, chanting LSU.

I mean if that didn't give you goosebumps then I don't know what else would. But that feeling was amazing.

And what was the second question? I mean, it just shows, that's why we're here. That's why we came to play for the SEC. We believe it's the best conference in baseball. And I mean the history shows that trophy, where that trophy has gone multiple times.

Q. Is it easier for you to prepare for a matchup like this when you're facing a team that's pretty similar to you guys, big names, big guys in the order, et cetera, et cetera?

DYLAN CREWS: I wouldn't say it's easier, honestly. We

have the same approach every team. Everybody's nameless and faceless to us. We don't change based on the opponent. We just stick to our plans and our approaches. If we do what we're supposed to do and trust in our preparation every single day, good things will happen.

Q. Do you guys think the last three nights just being able to play in those high intensity, high emotional situations, do you think that's an advantage for you guys going into this series in terms of just riding that momentum into these next couple of days?

DYLAN CREWS: Yeah, I think we do well with games being played back to back to back. It keeps the momentum going for sure, just keeps the gas and the pedal to the metal, the old saying.

But, yeah, just keep going, keep the momentum going, keep it going for this weekend.

CADE BELOSO: I mean, I would say when you play in these like high intensity environments, you're battle tested, and throughout the course of the season we've played in different types of games, whether it be one-run games, two, three, et cetera, blowouts, we kind of know every situation, know how to react to every situation. Nothing's going to catch us off guard. I think that's one thing that's good for us. We've just got to play our game.

Q. Tre', there's the crowd in the stands, but how much did you hear from folks back home after last night in terms of the reaction of people you've known your whole life, not just after the play, but the quality of that win?

TRE' MORGAN: It was awesome. As soon as I checked my phone and seeing all the text messages, all the mentions on Twitter, Instagram. Just people really that I haven't talked to in a while, just saying how proud they are of me and this team and the history that we have the chance to make. It was awesome.

Q. How does being here for five years and all the things you've gone through shape the way you've thought about, like, the week that you've been here, trying to pick up like the name card and all sorts of things, how does that shape the way you've gone about being here?

CADE BELOSO: I mean, it just goes to show you no matter what's going on, just keep your head down, keep working and good things will eventually come your way. Had some tough breaks through prior postseasons, but wouldn't change anything for the world.



We were all in Knoxville, Tennessee at that Super Regional and Florida State, et cetera, but it made us tougher as a team, made us better for the moment. Might have sucked in the moment, but it paid off. We're here, playing for a national championship. So wouldn't change it any other way, do it ten times over.

Q. Dylan, I know you had experience playing with Wyatt Langford last summer. Could you speak to his style of play and what it was like playing with him?

DYLAN CREWS: He's a great kid, great player, too. We have all the respect for him. Very special talent. I think he's going to be a Big Leaguer for a very long time. Some of the best bat-to-ball skills and power I've ever seen. Can really track the ball down in the outfield. I really like his game and going to hopefully play alongside of him one day. So it would be good.

Q. Coach talked about transitioning from the bracket style play to the championship series. I'm wondering what goes into that, and he's also shared a couple of stories like the whiteboard, planning out the pitching. Seems the simpler the message, the more effective it is. Is that accurate?

CADE BELOSO: I would agree with your last statement for sure. When he was listing out the pitching and you're seeing all these names on the board and you're seeing Skenes's name on Thursday, the plan seems pretty simple, get the ball to Paul. That was our goal, to get Paul Thursday and have Thatch come in behind him. The simpler the message, the better. At this point of the year you don't need to overcomplicate things. We are who we are. We have a great group. We're very competitive and we love playing baseball. No need to overcomplicate things. Keep it simple.

DYLAN CREWS: When we write it all down on the board, it seems so simple. That's something that I've learned this year, learning how to keep things simple, take it one pitch at a time. So that's our mindset going into this past couple of games, win that first one, give the ball over to Paul. That's what we did. And that was his game. And Tommy was able to hit the homer for us. It was awesome.

TRE' MORGAN: I'd say going into the championship series, our mindset doesn't change. It's always been like we're playing a one-game playoff, one pitch at a time. And, yeah, we know it's on the line. Like I said in the earlier interview, when our backs are against the wall, we know what's on the line. The plan never changes. It's about who shows up that day.

Q. Tre', it seems like your dad has gotten more media attention than you have so far in the tournament. Can you speak on your family's support and how that's contributed to your success?

TRE' MORGAN: Yeah, I mean, they're my biggest supporters. And my dad's very outgoing. I kind of didn't get that trait as much as he has it. But, I mean, that shows how much confidence and faith that they have in me. And, I mean, without my parents and my family, this would all be a dream.

From growing up in New Orleans, this really doesn't seem real. And I'm glad that I'm here to show kids growing up in New Orleans that this is a reality. Like this could happen. And it's all a credit to them.

Q. Dylan and Tre', you guys came in together. It's been Dylan and Tre' and Tre' and Dylan through these three years. Could you speak to your friendship and how far you've come since the Super Regional in Tennessee your first year, how much you guys have matured to be in this spot?

DYLAN CREWS: I mean, we've both grown tremendously because of this guy right here, really. I mean, we wouldn't be the people we are today or players without him.

And it's just we now know what it takes to get there and what it takes to lose those games. And it just makes us better, and now we're here. We're ready to go. And we've got two games to win. We'll give it our best shot.

TRE' MORGAN: These past three years playing with this guy, he's made me such a better player. He gave me a credit about my mental game earlier in this interview, and without him, it would be way worse. He showed me how to control my emotions, how to not get too high or not get too low. So I appreciate him for it. And we're the best of friends.

Q. Just talking to players throughout the season. Seems like you kind of took all the transfers under your wing and you and Gavin Dugas were kind of helping them buy into this team and really feel like a part of this team. What went into that?

CADE BELOSO: I mean, yes, you look around the room and you see the talent. You've got two guys up here that are going to play in the Big Leagues for 15-plus years if they choose to.

But we knew we were going to have a great team. But it's not about how good your team is, it's about your chemistry. That's really what it comes down to at the end of the day

is, how much you love each other, how much you're going to want to play for each other.

It's a team game. You can't just rely on one person. We knew that going in. Just hanging out in the fall, doing team building stuff with Coach J and a bunch of our mental coaches and stuff like that and just trying to be brothers, I think that's what it comes down to. That's one thing we pride ourselves on; we're a group of brothers.

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