

# 2024 Men's College World Series

Monday, June 17, 2024

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

**Texas A&M Aggies**

**Coach Jim Schlossnagle**

**Hayden Schott**

**Kaeden Kent**

**Ryan Prager**

Postgame Press Conference



you walk into a ballpark and see the flags coming straight in, as a guy who keeps the ball in the zone are you, like, this will be a lot of fun?

RYAN PRAGER: After last week as soon as I came out there was some frustration. But once we made the last out all that went away and it was super fun. We just want an opportunity to come to Omaha. I thought that went away pretty quick.

But those first couple of days afterwards, there was maybe some thinking, maybe a little bit of overthinking. But really coming back to neutral and understanding that what I've done all year has led to some success and nothing really needs to change. There doesn't have to be a drastic change.

Showing up to the park, I think we knew what the conditions were. And that definitely had a play in it, but also just staying true and doing what we do and letting kind of everything play out how it played out.

**Q. Kaeden, first could you walk us through your RBI at-bat? And, second, how tough was it to kind of make the shift from second to third there when Jace had to come out when you've been playing second pretty exclusively for a while now?**

KAEDEN KENT: My at-bat, to score a couple of runs was -- the guy was throwing a slider/cutter thing and a heater. And I got a hold of one of his cutters. He left it a little too much over the plate, but I pulled it foul. And he threw me a heater that got too much of the plate. So I was able to handle it.

Making the shift over to third is not as bad as, I think, it seems. I take ground balls. I take ground balls there, second base, shortstop. It's nothing different except for the ball comes a little faster. So I was able to make a play.

**Q. Ryan, what's it like to have a guy like Jackson behind the dish be such a commander to you guys as a whole for the pitching staff? And keeping the seven guys behind you active, nine fly outs, six ground outs also with four strikeouts. How do you feel the biggest**

Texas A&M - 5, Kentucky - 1

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: It was a great ball game. Tough conditions to hit. I thought both pitchers -- Ryan was obviously outstanding. I thought Mason was outstanding for them. We just happened to get Appel's big hit to break it open a little bit, get us in scoring position.

Both Hayden and Kaeden did an awesome job of staying on the baseball and using the whole field to hit and keeping it low.

Really tough night to hit. Really good night to pitch. That doesn't take anything away from either pitcher.

But I thought well played game by both teams. We're excited to win. And I'm sure Kentucky will do great tomorrow.

**Q. Ryan, with your story and missing all of last year with Tommy John surgery, what does it mean to come out on this stage where you threw your last pitch as a freshman and have this kind of night?**

RYAN PRAGER: Super grateful to be back. Last time we were here, left a sour taste in my mouth. And to be able come back with this group of guys and do what we did, I think it was just a testament to who this team. We showed we can do it with a variety of different ways. To be honest, we just love being around each other. And the more days we can be around each other, we're truly grateful for them.

**Q. Ryan, looking back to last week to this week, what was different about your stuff? And as a pitcher, when**



**tempo for you and your mechanics coming out of tonight?**

RYAN PRAGER: First off, with Jackson, it's great to have trust in a guy back there and have a good relationship and be able to know what each other needs to kind of keep going. We've had a great relationship and it's been super fun to be able to basically go to work with him every day.

And just, I guess, keeping the guys in the game is just, we play really good defense. So we know when the ball is hit to somebody we have the utmost confidence that the majority of the time it's going to be an out. So that's a testament to the work our guys do and the work they put in. And gives us confidence to fill up the zone and make other guys beat us.

**Q. Kaeden, what has this postseason been like for you, kind of getting back into the lineup and stepping up to the challenge and just this College World Series experience for you?**

KAEDEN KENT: It's amazing. Anytime you can play playoff baseball it's amazing. The fans are crazy, especially at Olson Field. And my teammates are ultra supportive of everybody.

We have each other's backs and we play for each other, like Ryan said earlier. I mean, we have full trust in everybody in that dugout.

So it's amazing when a team can come together like we are and enjoy being around each other so much where we can win ball games. And it's super fun to play.

**Q. Hayden, as a guy who is kind of commanding the vibes in the dugout, how were you all approaching Prager? Were you talking to him? Not talking to him? What was kind of the situation in there?**

HAYDEN SCHOTT: I would not say that I was commanding the vibes in there. You had a guy like -- the fact that Braden is in there and he's the loudest one in there. And he just had surgery. I don't know, it's so dang cool to see. Our team is so selfless. That's the beauty of playoff baseball is just playing for each other.

I would definitely not say I was the king of vibes in there. I think Braden did a good job. Got guys like Hank Bard doing a great job. Takes a village, man.

With Prager, I didn't say a word to him. Are you kidding me? You think I'm going to be that guy who goes over and says something? No way, no way. I'm not that guy, no chance.

**Q. Update on Jace LaViolette? And, second, the outing that Ryan had, what's that mean for the team itself moving forward in the tournament? And also to see a guy like that after what he's been through the last year and a half or so.**

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: The first two games we've been here, that's about how we drew it up. So I was glad to see him get a little bit of a cushion. Also glad that he didn't have to go much farther than he did, because if we have a chance to win this thing, he's going to have to pitch again and on much shorter rest.

But he did a great job. We played good defense behind him. I think anytime the wind is playing the way it was, it gives every pitcher more confidence to throw the ball in the strike zone.

Jace, tweaked his hamstring a little bit. Thankfully we don't play tomorrow. We have a little less than 48 hours to see if we can get him functional to do something on the field.

But last two weeks have been losing players left and right. Gives other guys opportunity. So hopefully it will make a good story.

**Q. You mentioned Jace having the time to rest, but the fact that you guys have been on the winning track in this winners' bracket, having the day's rest, just how meaningful has that been on this run and the fact you don't play until Wednesday?**

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: It would be really meaningful in the old bracket because we'd have three days off. It's huge because we're down a pitcher. So it's just incredibly important that we stay in the winners' bracket and don't have to play too many games.

We brought plenty of guys to pitch, but when you're down Shane Sdao, and a guy that gives you great innings like that, that's a big hole to fill for any team, at least for our team.

The fact we get an extra day's rest here and hopefully only have to win one -- I've been in this situation before, 2016, and we had to win one game and Coastal Carolina had to win three, and they did.

We've won a couple of ball games, but we're not where we want to be yet.

**Q. Follow-up on Jace, did the game situation have anything to do with taking him out? Or would he have come out of the game regardless of what the situation**

was?

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: He wanted to stay in the game. Being up five helped a little bit. It wasn't just the hitting and running bases; it was playing defense.

Being up five with the wind blowing in, the wind blowing definitely played a role. We were able to give him one more at-bat. He struck out, but we were able to get him one more at-bat so that spot in the lineup didn't come.

And Grahovac and Bell both took balls in the outfield all week, including while we were here. I've seen Gavin play all three outfield positions.

And Kent obviously has incredible value. He can play all four spots in the infield. And Jack Bell has played third, short and second for us this year. So we feel good about the versatility. But we only brought 13 position players. It's getting a little thin.

**Q. Just looking at Ryan's performance, what do you kind of see from him, stuff-wise? As many times as you've been here, where does that rank in terms of stellar performances from the mound from one of your teams?**

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: 2015, Alex Young had a no-hitter going against Vandy for us at TCU. Preston Morris pitched some great games here. But I've seen, whether it be teams I've been a part of -- I've watched every College World Series game -- and there's been a lot of great pitching performances and that one ranks right up there with them. Especially, Kentucky is a really good offensive team.

I thought Appel's play earlier in the game, the two-out bunt, that was a huge play. Getting the strikeout, first and third nobody out -- I'm sorry, one out -- that was a huge pitch right there. But he had all three pitches going, and they were -- he filled up the strike zone enough where I think Kentucky started swinging more, got him some early outs in some situations where he could pitch deeper in the game.

And the same thing for Stewart, Josh Stewart, did an incredible job. We got Aschenbeck up. We didn't have to pitch him, so that was big.

**Q. When did you know that you wanted to start Ryan Prager against Kentucky? And, I guess, do you think Justin Lamkin will be available to start for Wednesday's game?**

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: Yes, he will be available to start.

I'm not telling you he's gonna. I want to see who we're going to play, see how Justin feels, get a feel for our team, the match-up and conditions.

But we just knew going into the tournament, once we lost Shane last weekend, we were going to have to get creative; we'd have to see what the match-up is, and just felt like -- it was actually more about when to pitch Cortez than it was to pitch the two lefties. That was the decision, was when can Cortez pitch and who does he match up best against. We felt like the best matchup for Chris was against Florida.

**Q. I was hoping to get your thoughts on a few of your older gentlemen, Mr. Schott, Mr. Burton and Mr. Appel, the impact they had, not just on today's game, but the season as a whole and their influence in the locker room.**

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: Just incredible people. You know, like I said, I think you take those three guys, plus you throw in Braden, gotta give credit to where they came from. Gotta to give a lot of credit to David Esquer on Braden Montgomery, and the coaches at Columbia and Michigan and Penn because they developed these incredible young men.

They come from great families. They were already awesome people. But it's really neat to see those guys come to a big SEC school, they're so appreciative and thankful for the resources they have at a place like A&M. And they're good players and they don't get freaked out by -- all those guys played in postseason. Schott's played in a Regional. I don't know if Teddy has. Did he play in the World Series? I don't know. But Schott has, he's played in a Regional too. So they're cool, calm, steady, and I really think for the bulk of the season the secret sauce of our offense has actually been those guys, because Grahovac and LaViolette and Montgomery, they're superstar players, those guys are good college players and potentially professional baseball players, but having that age of player there in a row after those guys creates depth.

If you talk to the other teams in our league, they'll say a lot of great things about Jackson Appel and what a tough out he is.

**Q. I know you certainly want Prager to go out there and be efficient. When you have a guy throwing a no-hitter, you mentioned about you're short staffed pitching, does that make things a little trickier because you want to see him go out there and succeed, but you also want to minimize pitches and use him for later games?**

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: Had he kept that going that may have been a decision that I had to think about in the eighth, ninth inning. More than likely a guy gets a chance to throw a no-hitter in the College World Series, I'm not going to take the ball from him. We'll worry about it later. Maybe he'll do it again.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

