

2024 Men's College World Series

Tuesday, June 18, 2024

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

Florida State Seminoles

Coach Link Jarrett

Andrew Armstrong

Jaxson West

Connor Hults

Postgame Press Conference



Florida State - 9, North Carolina - 5

LINK JARRETT: Great team across the field. Did a great job this year in our league. Won the league, and they're a phenomenal team. So the quality of that team explains how well these guys executed today to win that game on this stage.

They're dangerous. They have just a variety of arms out of the bullpen that they can use, and we saw basically all of them. And at this time of the year everybody's bullpen has been weathered a little bit.

So I know that both sides, those guys have delivered for them all season. And Armstrong got us into that, had a little tweak there that he was able to work his way through, and used the change-up well, kept the fastball down, there was a lot of weak contact today.

I thought our defense did a really nice job of managing the ground balls and things that came up. Really nice 3-to-1, the 4-6-3. Cam had a couple of nice plays at third. The pick at first base was a big moment in the game when Hults picked off Honeycutt I think it was.

The 5-to-4 in the ninth looks like nothing, but if you try to make more out of that that wasn't going to be a double play ball, so just to make sure you contain that and get one out just contains the momentum.

Both fifth innings were really good. The at-bats we had, our left-handed hitters hung in there beautifully on Pence. He's tough on the lefties, I think it was Pence. And our lefties were on it.

And if you're going to score in this situation, in this tournament, you'll have to do some of it with two outs because the ability to string it together with no outs or one out is hard to do because of the quality of the arm and execution and overall talent.

So the left-handed-hitter at-bats in the middle of the game and some of the two-out hitting was big.

And we walked today eight times, maybe seven or eight, got hit, I think, but we never really could separate. And then you feel like today's the day the home run's probably minimal. Jaxson's at-bat, had a great ball game for us. And then Max, to hit one through that 30-mile-an-hour wind, I didn't know it could be done, but he did it.

Hults response, four-plus innings, amazing. And he told me, we were going to the ninth, he comes in the dugout after that, "Don't even think about it." There were some other words mixed in there.

I'm so happy for him. And it's hard to walk off that field. You all saw it, know it. And he really answered it. Both of these left-handers really did a nice job. And Whitaker has been so good for us.

We mapped it out and sometimes you get in the situation where you line it up the way you line it up. And it doesn't always go the way you want it especially against teams that are this talented and players with those capabilities.

So Hultsy to come in and finish the fifth and just roll with it, just a phenomenal testament to his toughness and resolve to deliver.

Q. Jaxson, it felt like all postseason you've been poised and waiting for an offensive game like this, and then you bust out and finally get a big one on this stage. Could you tell us how it feels? And being able to catch Andrew and how well he worked the ball early.

JAXSON WEST: It feels amazing, being able to contribute, especially with an offense like this, being in the 9 hole, your job is just to get on base and set the table focusing. So

that's all I was really focusing on, not trying to do too much.

And catching Army, he's one of the toughest guys I've ever played with. And he really wasn't feeling too well today but he gutted it out for us. That's who he is and what he does. I couldn't be more proud of him.

Q. Andrew, just first of all how were you feeling, what did you have to work through today and what was your approach against this UNC lineup?

ANDREW ARMSTRONG: It was just like a little oblique something going on in there. I dealt with it in the fall and in the preseason. It hasn't bothered me in a while but it flared up today pretty bad. I was just trying to throw strikes, get ahead with the way the wind is blowing in today. Sometimes that's all have you to do.

I felt the change-up really worked, it was keeping them off the fastball and everything else. Great defense behind me making plays just makes it easy for me. 66er. That's what coach taught me this morning.

Q. Connor, seems like you used the fastball a lot more today. How big was that for you to keep them off the breaking balls?

CONNOR HULTS: It was probably the biggest component in my outing today. Being able to locate the fastball in any count was new to my game. I haven't done it in a few weeks. I mean, it's there, but me and Coach Posey have been talking about it.

We'll mix in some more fastballs and change-ups, start to get the hitters off the curveball. When I was able to locate some fastballs and then expand on my off-speed when needed, it definitely worked in our favor.

Q. Jaxson, since the Super Regional starts you guys have averaged 12.2 runs a game. Of course your offense was probably pretty good all year, but it's really clicking now. Why?

JAXSON WEST: I think we've done a better job as an offense kind of putting together better at-bats. There were times in the season where we were having quick at-bats, not really giving these guys what they need.

Our identity as an offense is just to continue to scratch and claw. And we've kind of morphed into that. I think it's just continue to go grow. We've just been running with that. I think that's been a big contribution to our success.

Q. Jackson, hitting a huge home run in the ninth inning, going back to back with Williams, what's it

mean to have that type of offense for you guys this season, even dating back to August for the fall season?

JAXSON WEST: It's everything. This is the best eight teams in the country. And all these teams can do just about everything. And being able to slug it with the best of them definitely helps and takes pressure off these guys. So we're just trying to do our job and set the table and kind of give these guys a good cushion to pitch with these offenses.

LINK JARRETT: Micah slid the scouting report at two in the morning, to know how hard he worked on that -- 2:00.

Q. In the CWS, where runs at a premium, why has your offense been able to travel well and do what it's done these three games?

LINK JARRETT: They seem very focused. They're talented. Our assistant coaches do a really good job of giving them an idea of what's going on with each arm. Like I said, Micah, he slid the scouting report for North Carolina under my door at 2:00 in the morning. He worked on it that hard.

And then Ty and Brad and some of our other staff put together video and other things. So those guys are doing some work that allows the hitters to feel comfortable when they walk up there.

And that's not easy to do. And you just had to run through two, three, four, five, six arms, all different, all really good. And when you see the information that's handed to the kids, it's not over the top, it's accurate and it gives them a heads-up. And that's part of it.

That's a new phase of the game with all the technology and the information that you have, it's how do you condense it and allow it to be something in the dugout they can use.

It's hard to go through with the team in a scouting report meeting, the 13 arms they have available. We'll touch a few, but they'll have the video access to glance at some of the stuff. And the black-and-white information in the dugout helps.

We have a nice mix of left-, right-handed hitter. I don't think it's easy to game plan and match up when we stagger it the way we do. There's length in the lineup. This is a young group -- sophomore, sophomore, junior, junior, junior, sophomore, senior, sophomore, sophomore, sophomore, sophomore. So they're still learning.

So I think the growth throughout the course of 60 games,

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

they're just getting better. And the focus, the talent, the information, the improvement, the maturity, the toughness of the overall team, you walk because pitchers fear making mistakes.

So you have to be then disciplined enough not to swing at everything to give your opportunity count-wise to actually walk or get hit. So it was a combination of everything today. That's really been our story all year. We have a lot of different ways that we can be a good offensive team.

Q. Curious about your thoughts about getting another shot at Tennessee, especially with the way the game transpired on Friday night and kind of the fireworks back and forth there?

LINK JARRETT: Can't wait. They're really good. They're really good. I've dealt with that program at their place in the Super in '22. Thought it was one of the most talented college baseball teams I've ever seen. This one's right there in that same conversation. That game was very close to being pendulum swung our way and it did not. It's tough.

I'll just say the response of these guys after how difficult that was, and for this kid to throw over four innings -- think about how he felt up until he probably threw a few pitches in this game. I can't imagine what that was like.

So they're ready. We'll figure out the pitching. If anybody wants to ask me who is starting just save it because I don't know. We'll figure it out.

They're really good. There's no wiggle room in the lineup. They have a variety of arms. They're talented. They've been here. They played in this stadium a lot.

So excited. I recognize the difficulty of beating that team. It takes everything you've got. You have to finish. You have to defend. You have to execute pitches. And you have to be versatile and compete offensively to figure out a way to do it.

Q. Connor basically pitched backwards to the way he pitched all year. To see him make that adjustment and execute it on this stage, what was that like for you?

LINK JARRETT: Micah Posey knew what he had to do and sometimes plan A isn't the plan that can get you through it. And when you get enough information on pitchers, you know the percentages. You guys all probably know it. There's a tendency for him to lean on that breaking ball. It's really good. Spins as well as any breaking ball in the Big Leagues.

But these hitters, once they've seen it and scouting report information, that probably alone isn't enough. And when you're coaching the game like Micah's calling the pitches, he's playing the game. It's Nintendo of "I'm trying to dial this correctly for them. Now they have to execute it."

So he takes ownership in the fact that sometimes what you wanted to do or that player has done for most of the year may not be the script that allows to you get through a championship-type game in this setting, and the fastball usage was beautiful.

He threw a change-up got a fly ball to right. Micah was disappointed in how that looked. But, fine, he mixed the fastball in and it changes how you view that breaking ball that comes up and has such bite when you can stuff one in there at 90 miles an hour really to either side of the plate. So great job by Hults and gutsy by Micah to go to that plan B in this setting. Brilliant.

Q. You talked about Hults stepping up, and after the way that pitching staff, the way the game ended on Friday, Oregon against Tennessee, now you come back, get early leads and are able to hold the last two teams away. What have you seen out of your pitching staff from that first Tennessee game that might have turned the corner?

LINK JARRETT: I guess you can say overall pitch execution. Pitch execution. And I had a bad feeling all of a sudden when we had a pitch clock violation out of nowhere when Hults stood behind the mound. Guys, what's he doing? Let's get going. He ended up walking that guy.

I think Oxford uncharacteristically walked -- didn't he walk somebody in that Friday night thing that got it going a little bit for them? So I had a little of a feeling of this ain't happening again. But I think the overall pitch execution simply was better, was better.

The stuff good. I thought the stuff the other night was good. Hults, when you hang that breaking ball, it's belt high or higher and it gets whacked into to left-center field. He didn't do that today. It's just purely the execution of good stuff.

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