

# 2024 Men's College World Series

Sunday, June 23, 2024

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

**Texas A&M Aggies**

**Coach Jim Schlossnagle**

**Jace LaViolette**

**Chris Cortez**

Postgame Press Conference

Tennessee - 4, Texas A&M - 1

**JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE:** I thought it was a great ball game. I guess the difference in the game, two two-out homers. They got the big swings at the right time.

But we battled back. Combs obviously settled down the game really well for them. And I thought Chris battled. I thought I was proud of Kaiden Wilson. Two pitches got him. Dreiling was on the fastball. And he hung a breaking ball to the catcher.

So close ball game. Just exactly what you'd expect with these two teams. To think you're going to roll right through it in two games would be, that would have been nice but it's obviously -- we get to play. We don't have to play. We get to play the last college baseball game of the season. And that's awesome.

**Q. Jace, looking at you and Combs, what was he able to do to you guys? He just was able to keep you from getting in a groove, especially with guys on base.**

**JACE LAVIOLETTE:** I felt he was executing pitches when he needed to. Obviously they have a really good pitching staff. You give a lot of credit to them.

But I just feel like we make a few better swings and a few balls land it's a different game. But that's baseball, and it happens. So credit to them.

**Q. How good did it feel to get that first home run in a while and kind of get off the snide there? And, Chris, what did you see from Zane and his first start?**

**JACE LAVIOLETTE:** In the moment that felt great. Would



it have felt a lot better if we had won that, but it's baseball, as I say again. I mean, it's baseball. There's ebb and flows. You try not to ride the highs and lows and I feel I've been riding the low a little too much.

Coach pulled me over talked me about my body language. He told me I'm one of the best players in the nation and I need to act like it. And I feel that's one of the things that changed today.

**CHRIS CORTEZ:** I'm super proud of Zane. It's not the easiest thing to go out there the championship game. He's the older guy. I always had a hard time starting. And he went out there and did his thing.

**Q. Chris, how are you feeling physically and how did you kind of try to just labor through -- not only your appearance, but kind of getting up and down, loose a couple different times and staying fresh?**

**CHRIS CORTEZ:** I felt good. I just got a little dehydrated at the end. I just wanted to compete. I didn't really care about my feelings. I would have kept throwing. But Coach is looking out for me, and I just wanted to compete. It didn't matter how I felt.

**Q. Jace, this is the first time that the team has faced elimination in the postseason. Could you talk about what gives you confidence, this team to be able to bounce back and how you guys go about doing that?**

**JACE LAVIOLETTE:** I've heard a few guys already saying that, I mean, this is the most comfortable we felt playing baseball in a while. I have full faith in this team. I think every single person on this team has full faith in ourselves.

I mean, at the end of the day, it's another baseball game. Like, elimination or not, we always put our pants on the same, we all do the things the same. It's about who can settle in first and the quickest. And at the end of the day it's baseball and we get to play tomorrow. As Coach said, we don't have to. It's a blessing to wake up and be able to play this game. Obviously it sucks that we lost today but at the end of the day I get to wake up tomorrow and play the game I love. It's a blessing.



**Q. Jace and Chris, you could sense it just walking around in the stands, how tense it was. And you say it's another game. Could you feel that tension as that 1-0 just kept rolling through inning after inning?**

JACE LAVIOLETTE: You feel the difference in the game as we get to the sixth and seventh, it's a 1-0 ball game. You could feel it get tense. But that's where our mental work comes into play; it's still the same game. It's still one pitch at a time. Literally we try to teach ourselves to do everything one time at a time.

What's the most important thing we're doing now? And it's pitch to pitch. And they made a few good swings and that's what happens. I mean, you know, it's baseball.

**Q. Jace, getting a couple of hits in the ninth inning and feeling the tension rise, what does that do for an offense as far as carry-over confidence into tomorrow? And also how important is it that some of your teammates got to see Snead in the ninth inning?**

JACE LAVIOLETTE: I mean, I feel like that ninth inning -- once I say, again, if that ball falls, it's a different game. And as long as we keep putting good quality at-bats together and keep doing what we've been doing this whole tournament, this whole postseason, honestly, I feel like we can do everything we want. We can win the whole thing. It just comes down to if we put together good quality at-bats.

**Q. How is Caden Sorrell doing after the collision at second? And how would you assess the base running and the errors there?**

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: As far as Sorrell, I don't even know. I think he probably just got tagged and maybe his helmet cut him or something. We were too busy in the moment trying to win the game. So I'll check with the trainer after.

The pick-off, I don't know if they're necessarily base-running errors as they are great plays. In our scouting report, we're very aware that Drew's got an awesome pick-off move. We weren't running there. And he picked him off. Can't stand next to the base, but we didn't have a big lead and we weren't running.

And then the same thing on the back picks. They're always searching for outs. Burke is like Cags for Florida. Those guys are super quick. They're really good with the tag being left-handed. Stark -- we talked about it, we showed the video. No one was running anywhere.

So, yeah, those are big outs. No question. Can't make

outs on the bases, especially when you're not running.

**Q. What did you see from Zane today? And when you brought Chris into the game, I know he was getting loose in the first inning, second inning. Was that part of we don't want having him get loose for two, three innings --**

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: We were just trying to squeeze a few outs out of Zane, take, as Chris admitted, he has some anxiety with starting the game. He's awesome -- or he feels better once he can just get ready quick and jump in the game. Felt that Zane was the best choice to get us maybe the first three outs, and he did.

And we're going to go one batter at a time after that. And I think he gave up a lead-off single to Amick, no, to Ensley, whatever. We just had to go right that was the plan to get as many outs out of Zane as we could, get Cortez in the game and hope we could score.

The story of the game was how they pitched. Combs, to me, is the story of the game. Two big swings and Combs shut us down. He did a great job. Give him a lot of credit.

**Q. Not having to use Evan today, is there some comfort having that in your back pocket?**

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: Sure, we took a risk. Obviously Evan was on my mind when Dreiling hit the homer. Just thought it was a lot to ask for him to get seven outs after last night.

I thought we didn't bring him in -- I thought Kaiden was throwing really well. I thought Amick had the best at-bat against Aschenbeck last night before Ensley popped out. I felt good about Ensley at that moment.

We tried to get a fastball. After those two breaking balls we tried to get a fastball up and it wasn't up enough.

We're going into the last game of the season and Lamkin is ready to roll. And Stewart now has a day and Aschenbeck has a day. I'll take that. And obviously we're playing a great team. So we'll see.

**Q. Bridging the gap between Cortez and potentially Aschenbeck was going to be huge. Was that something you deliberated over a lot last night? Or was it something that you did a feel-of-the-moment kind of thing?**

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: No, you're always playing out every scenario. We talked about it last night. Just feel like what the match-ups are, we really like Kaiden Wilson, we

think he's a super talented guy. Thought he threw well except two pitches. He made two mistakes against a great team and they got him.

We felt like if we could -- again, the difference is we didn't score. If it's a 3-0 game instead of a 1-0 game, I probably, to win a national title, I'd probably run Evan out there. But in a 1-0 game, it was just a lot to ask.

I felt like tomorrow would be a different story. But we had to take a chance. I said yesterday, somebody else is going to have to help us get these outs, other than the four guys that have mostly pitched in the tournament.

**Q. Is it a special moment to tell a guy like Zane that he's going to get the ball to start it out in the College World Series?**

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: I'm not the one that told him. But yeah, I think anytime you get a guy in the chance to play in Omaha, it's an awesome experience.

**Q. Similar question to the one I asked Jace about the back-to-back hits to begin the ninth and the confidence that can be carried over into game three, and also how important is it that the team has seen Nate Sned going into the winner-take-all?**

JIM SCHLOSSNAGLE: Nate's a good pitcher. I mean, I think we had some momentum going there, but how that affects tomorrow, I don't know. I mean, just like if you get your doors blown in in a game, I don't think it hurts you for the next day.

But we brought the tying run to home plate. Targo put a good swing on it. Didn't get out. On a different day maybe it gets out. Tomorrow I think the wind is blowing in a lot so that will play a role in the game.

Our guys are confident. We get to play the last game of the season. And that's awesome.

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