

2025 Men's College World Series

Thursday, June 12, 2025

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

LSU Tigers

Coach Jay Johnson

Kade Anderson

Jared Jones

Press Conference



staff did to assemble this team. Could you speak to the job they did of getting the right pieces, the complementary pieces you need to get to Omaha and potentially win here?

JARED JONES: I think he did a great job. Obviously we lost a good bit of guys the last two years to the draft. And the way college baseball is, guys are transferring in and out. I think we have a good blend of guys who have been here for three years and who have proven themselves at other places and transferred in, and then freshmen who are probably the best high school players to come out of their high school.

So it's just been a good blend of all three kind of types of players on this team. And coaches have done a great job of making sure we're all bought into one plan and being tough and together.

KADE ANDERSON: I think it starts with the leaders on our team. Jared and Josh have helped a lot kind of just laying the foundation for this is what is expected. When you play at LSU, this is why you're supposed to come here and win. I think that's one thing that Josh and Jared do a good job of.

Once again, Coach Johnson does a really good job recruiting the right guys. And that was something that I think we all try to continue to maintain, is just a healthy locker room.

Q. Kade, you and Anthony have not only been a 1-2 punch, but a 1A, 1B. Could you talk about your relationship with him, how you all have made each other better and even just the confidence it brings in the field like the men's College World Series?

KADE ANDERSON: We're already talking about our success and failures and learning from them as well. I think those experiences help us a lot.

Having a guy like Anthony on our team is fun to watch. Once again, like we said earlier, you bring the good guys in, this kind of stuff happens. I've learned a lot from

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by LSU head coach Jay Johnson and student-athletes Kade Anderson and Jared Jones.

JAY JOHNSON: Great 2025 for our team and our program. I'm very proud of our team. Felt like they're very deserving of being in Omaha. Very consistent from the start of the season through a tough SEC schedule and obviously the postseason.

As a coach, it's a pleasure to coach great players like Kade and Jared that also are exceptional people. And the common thread of the teams we've brought here has been that. Can't wait for Saturday night. Really excited.

Great opponent. It should be a great night for college baseball, and we're honored to be here.

Q. Jared, you've watched a lot of games and played in games in this ballpark, and they've played differently based on the weather. Do you pay any attention to that when you dig in park to park with the conditions and how you approach the at-bat?

JARED JONES: Absolutely. The biggest thing is plate discipline obviously. The strike zone will be the same no matter the weather conditions. For me I'm going to have to do a good job controlling the zone. And then just based off how the wind is playing, hard, low line drives are going to do best for me. Just keep me in a good, tight swing regardless of the weather. And home runs will be home runs, line drives are line drives. So just staying in a good swing on good pitches in the zone.

Q. You guys saw what last year's team looked like and how it was built, and you saw the work Jay and the

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Anthony. And Coach Yeskie has helped us both out and continuing to learn from each other.

Q. Kade, Jay talked about how devastating last year's loss you took at UNC. Is there any still lingering feelings of unfinished business?

KADE ANDERSON: Yeah, I think we're all playing with a chip on our shoulder that was there. Jared feels that way as well, I'm sure. We don't like that bitter taste.

Like I said, LSU plays here often. There's no reason for us not to be here. And obviously it's a game of baseball. You learn from each thing. And we're taking that, and it's not gone. We still have that feeling left in us. We'll take advantage of that feeling as well.

Q. Could you guys just talk a bit about going through the SEC, the gauntlet that that is and how that prepares you for the big stage like this? And just kind of the irony of getting here and then you're facing another SEC team right away.

JARED JONES: I think it's a good advantage for us. We've already seen Arkansas once this year. Obviously that was at our place. Now it's a neutral site. But going through the SEC all year, Coach Johnson talks about a 56-game playoff and the SEC is 30 games. And every game counts the same.

You've got to go out there day in and day out and give it your all. You're going to get tested every day by each and every team. There's not a bad team in the SEC. Everybody has really talented players they're all coached really well.

It's just good preparation and good training ground for Omaha. Now that we're here we've just got to stick to kind of what's made us successful all year and not try to do too much or get caught up in the emotions of the game and just play our brand of baseball.

KADE ANDERSON: Yeah, I think there's a reason why you come here and play in the SEC. And having those experiences and learning from them as well, I think those type of things prepare you for the playoffs.

And this is just another week for us, realistically. Coach Johnson prepares us that way. And we'll be ready when it comes Saturday.

Q. Could you talk about facing Arkansas's hitters and what you saw from them the first time you saw them? And, Jared, if you could talk about the pitching Arkansas brings to the field.

KADE ANDERSON: I look at every lineup the exact same, whether that's the first team we played or the last team we played. Realistically, you don't look at a batter, you look at how you're going to pitch each guy. With Coach Yeskie's help, it will be just another game.

And we'll have a plan, and we'll stick to that and just continuing to work out there and be present in it.

JARED JONES: Arkansas' pitching staff is probably one of the best in the country, if not the best just the talent and arms they have. I think back to the weekend series against them, they pitched pretty well. I think we got to them on Saturday, though. That will give us a lot of confidence going into the weekend.

And just sticking with, we understand that there's going to be some times or some innings where we don't score and maybe we have guys on base and we left them on. But we've just got to stick with it, keep taking quality at-bats and get the next guy to the plate.

Q. Kade, just with this being a bigger ballpark, a pitcher's ballpark, does that change your approach at all?

KADE ANDERSON: No, sir, it doesn't.

Q. Kade, for you, having a guy like Casan Evans in a setting like this, how much could he be an X factor for this pitching staff when he's been a guy for 63 games, he's filled a plethora of roles for you so far?

KADE ANDERSON: He's a big-time pitcher. He pitches the best in the big-time moments. That's a really great trait to have. He gets to learn from this. He's a freshman in college. And learning from these experiences, being able to play in Omaha is a big deal for the future of LSU.

And just, I mean, with all the pitchers on our staff, we're really grateful for the guys we have. And the character shows. That's why I think we're successful.

Q. Could you guys just talk a little bit about Steven Milam as a teammate and what he's meant to the team?

JARED JONES: I actually live with him. Gotten to know him pretty good over the year. And he's been the best shortstop in the country all year long. There's not a day I go over there to first base and catch a throw it's not chest high, middle of the bag. He makes every play -- if he can get his glove on it the play's made.

I know it's huge for Kade going out there pitching knows he's got a defense behind him. He brings a lot of energy to the field. He's very competitive. And he wants to win and he wants to be a really successful baseball player. And I think you see that in the way he goes about his business.

He's a good roommate. We've got four dogs, so it's a little chaotic. But other than that, he's a good roommate.

Q. Can you just talk about the importance of Cooper Williams coming in as a freshman, being one of the more reliable lefties in the bullpen so far in the back half of the postseason?

JAY JOHNSON: Cooper's been great. It was a big recruit for us. Obviously got him under unusual circumstances with the coaching change last year at Texas A&M. And he was available, and he was a guy that I had paid attention to from the time I took the job at LSU. I think he committed to Texas A&M very early in the process. And every time I saw him pitch it was like, man, I'd love to have that guy.

I think he's very intelligent. He's very mature for his age. He's got a great heartbeat out on the mound. He's athletic. He throws strikes. Throws multiple pitches for strikes. He has a great future but is a big part of our present.

And his ascension throughout the back half of the season has really, really helped our team, especially in close games like we saw in the super regional game 2.

Q. What have you learned of this ballpark coming here? And you say you kind of build your life around Omaha. Do you build a team based on what you have to do in this ballpark?

JAY JOHNSON: That's a good question. I love it. It's the only ballpark I want to play in this time of year. I think it's much different than the places we play in the SEC. It's much different, but you can't get here unless you have success in the SEC. I think it would be very shortsighted to say we're going to build our team around this ballpark.

I think when you talk about offense, something I've always tried to take pride in is we have the ability to function however we need to or however the game dictates it, whether that's slugging, home runs, the ability to move the offense, hit with runners in scoring position, situational hit, bunting game.

And I think this team is very good at all of that. I think it does give us a chance or a blueprint to be successful in a place that is much different than we play in throughout the year.

Q. I wanted to ask you about Casan Evans as well. In a setting like this where you can play multiple games in a very short period of time, how is he able to sort of be a bridge guy for this pitching staff? He's been so versatile for you guys all year long?

JAY JOHNSON: He's awesome. As much as I said with Cooper, he's very intelligent. He's very mature for his age. You guys don't see any of this, but when you're in those recruiting battles, if you will, you know when one's going to tip the scales.

And then with a freshmen you've got to get them through the professional draft. And when both of those things happen, the commitment to LSU and getting him through the draft, I knew that was a big win for the Tigers.

He obviously has all the physical talent in the world, but the mental disposition, the makeup, the pitchability, we could really do anything that this team needs with Casan, and he's really answered the bell.

If there's a freshman pitcher across the country that's done better than him this year, I'd like to see who that is because he's had a terrific season. And he's built for success here.

Q. You've been here now four times. Obviously winning the championship is the goal. But what's so special about the whole experience how do you kind of keep the kids from not getting overwhelmed by it?

JAY JOHNSON: That's a good question and something we've definitely talked about and paid attention to because there's only eight of those guys that were on the national championship team in 2023 that are still here. I actually don't think that's a small number in the current landscape, but most of our team, this is their first time here.

I think it's just being mature and being professional. And I want them to enjoy themselves. One of the coolest parts when you land the plane and you drive over here and you walk in, and they walk out, and seeing them smile and there's a lot of blood, sweat and tears put in the bucket to get here. I want them to enjoy that.

Then we go right over to Creighton and train. We need to be locked in for what we're doing for 90 minutes over there. And then go to a steakhouse last night. Enjoying being there. That's one of the things. In the postseason, you advance to the next round we go eat a steak. That was the deal for last night.

Then you come to the practice and training day, and there's kids wanting autographs and people in the stadium, and there's a palpable buzz. I want them to feel that. They



earned that.

And then to have the maturity to shift to preparation and execution at the right time. And I'm confident we can do that.

Q. Monster's made a seem less transition from second base to shortstop. Was that always the plan or is that something that he took the next step to move over there?

JAY JOHNSON: It was an interesting dynamic, because we were looking at it hard in the fall. Right about the time we were going to really go for it and go, like, this is what we're doing for three weeks, he actually got really sick and missed the last three week of the fall.

I actually didn't get the look I wanted to say this is what we're going to do and stamp it. And then it was going to be you're going to go to the left side. We wanted to move Danny to second base because I thought that was best for him and best for our team. And it was going to be a shortstop/third base thing with Michael.

And probably about 10 days into scrimmages in the spring I made up my mind that's what we were going to do. He's had the best defensive season of any shortstop I've ever coached. I think he only has four errors. One of them was in game 1 of the super regional. And he didn't make the play -- it was almost kind of weird because he has been so good.

And he has really, really lifted on your team. You heard Kade talking about the confidence he has in the defense. A lot of that starts with Steven at shortstop.

Q. Can you go back to Kade and Anthony, and how important is it to have two guys you can hang your hat on at this stage? And also the differences of the two that make them great as well?

JAY JOHNSON: Yes. It's made me very happy to have two pitches of that caliber. There's a lot of reasons our team is here playing as one of the last eight and in the College World Series. And it starts with Kade and Anthony and their performance.

I'd say they're far more similar than different. They both have exceptional pitchability with four pitches that they throw for a strike. If they're off a little bit, they have something they can go to to remain competitive and get zeros on the board.

In terms of differences, the only one is -- I really don't have one because of the trust, the competitiveness, the

pitchability, the support for each other. I think you heard Kade speak very well about that.

They both give us the greatest chance to win. And I am so confident and so comfortable with both of them and it's given us a lot of flexibility particularly in the postseason from the SEC Tournament to the regionals of what we can do.

It's been great. I'm proud of both of them and they're both going to make a Major League Baseball team very happy here very soon.

Q. You've spoken to it before about knowing that you needed to add pitching to this team, I guess. But to see the pay-off in the way you constructed this team, what are you most proud of the efforts and what you did to get them here?

JAY JOHNSON: I appreciate that question. When I came here from Arizona, we were going to have Dylan Crews for two years. That was a massive appeal for taking the job. But we had a lot of work to do of constructing a College World Series or national championship-caliber pitching staff.

I feel like we've had that the last three years. It does take a lot. When a Casan Evans are visiting your five biggest competitors that are at the frontline of the sport, and you have to find a way to get him to say LSU is the spot, that's really competitive.

Chase Shores was committed somewhere else and ended up committing to us. You get him on campus, get him through the draft, guns blazing for 19 innings as a freshman and then has Tommy John. That's a thunderbolt because it was so hard to get him in the first place.

So I'm very proud of that, and I think there's a lot of reasons for that. I think we're at the forefront of developing pitching in college baseball. If you look over the last three years in terms of draft picks, statistics, national championship, back at Omaha, you can't argue that.

There's no better place for a pitcher in the entire country to come right now and develop to be a major leaguer than LSU.

Q. You and Arkansas are a lot of schools. You've got guys who can throw 100 miles an hour, over 100 miles an hour. Yet hitters aren't completely overwhelmed. In this tug of war between the proliferation of guys who can throw it really hard and offense, what is allowing your hitters to still be able to hold their own?

JAY JOHNSON: That's a great question. I think the only reason you actually have a chance or we have a chance or Arkansas has a chance to do that is two things. Number one, we both have talented players on the position-player side of things.

And number two, I don't want to say immune to it, but you kind of get accustomed to seeing this elite pitching. And the more you see something, the more you get a little more comfortable with it. I don't know if "comfortable" is the word I would use.

But I think it's the beauty of playing in our league, which is really tough at times. But you get to the postseason, and there's really nothing that you have not seen. And when you feel prepared, you could lay it all out there and feel good about your ability to be successful.

And they're very talented on the mound, as good a pitching staff I've probably seen in my time in college baseball in terms of starters, relievers, arm strength, out pitches, pitchability, the whole deal. I think they would probably say the same thing about us. I think it will make for a great game on Saturday night.

Q. In 2023 you were pretty open about the ongoing strategy of this event. And obviously you won a national championship. How do you consider that thinking back to 2023 -- here's what worked, here's what won us a championship -- while seeing a new set of teams you are competing against?

JAY JOHNSON: I think it's all relevant. I asked the players to use their experience as well for helping us down the road. As coaches, we try to do the same thing. Playing eight games here in 2016 and only playing two games in 2021, that really helped us in 2023 as far as helping them understand what's around the corner. And I think those eight games in 2023 will help this team.

Not necessarily in the construct of there was eight players that were a part of that and here for the duration from first pitch opening night until holding the trophy, but you just want to help them understand what's around the corner.

There's a lot of things that are around the corner, when you're playing the caliber of teams that are here. I mean, there's eight championship caliber teams in this field. You look at what everybody did to get here, it's pretty impressive.

Then you roll the tape of, at least our side of the bracket, and you go, this makes a lot of sense just because less people have heard of Murray State. That's a real offense. I haven't got to their pitchers yet. I watched their offense a

little bit this morning.

And UCLA, I've played against Coach Savage forever. I'm 15 games, five years in the Pac-12, and I could tell you a lot about a lot of those games. I know how prepared they're going to be. They did a great job with their recruiting and that sophomore class with Cholowsky and all of that.

You know a challenge is around the corner. We'll have one Saturday. We'll have one Monday. And you try to take it a pitch at a time and not get too far ahead of yourself.

Q. As Omaha goes back to a double-elimination format and that could put a strain on innings, how does that affect your strategy with respect to your starters, two guys that have proven that they can go really far?

JAY JOHNSON: I think it's different. I think which side of the bracket you're on is different. And it's kind of condensed down because you don't have those 1-1 games where you get the extra day off anymore. If you're on our side of the bracket and you lose one of the first two, there's no more days off and you play straight through.

I think, and kind of going back to that previous question, playing four days in a row, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, you have to be on everything in terms of rest, recovery, how you set your pitching, matching up.

I do feel like our staff, we've developed enough depth that one loss is not a death sentence for us because we can go into the well and have guys that have started and come out of the bullpen and those types of things.

I made this comment the other day; I would like to try this thing through the winners' bracket once. That would be awesome. But I feel our team is built for anything.

Q. The 2023 team had a ton of stars. This team doesn't seem to have as many stars, but it seems their selflessness is really what made them successful this year. Is that how you see it?

JAY JOHNSON: I would agree with you on one front and disagree with you on another. I agree with you on the selfless piece, even though our motto this year has been "tough and together and team over me."

They've totally exemplified that through every stretch. We've got so many guys that have not only accepted roles, but have embraced the roles that they have and have excelled in those, even if it's not exactly what they want.



Relative to the superstar piece, we're going to have two pitchers drafted in the first 40 picks of the draft. Those are superstars.

Derek Curiel is a superstar. You just might not think of it because he's a freshman in that way. Casan Evans is a superstar. William Schmidt is going to be a superstar. Cade Arrambide is going to be a superstar. Danny Dickinson is a superstar. He just played at Utah Valley. He didn't have maybe the volume of time at LSU where fans knew his name and all that, but I think he's a Major League player. Chris Stanfield, what a season he's had.

I'm very bullish on the talent on our team. I think it's been a little bit different style of baseball. This is maybe not as in your face as hitting 156 homers as that team did or something like that. But I think we have a lot of high-end players that have done that selfless part very, very well.

Q. With the freshmen arms and obviously Curiel, John Pearson, some of the freshmen guys, has there been any pressure trying to get them in, especially in the new landscape of the transfer portal where guys feel kind of timid, where, oh, I didn't get -- I'm a five-star prospect, I didn't get these at-bats, then I'm gone?

JAY JOHNSON: LSU is not for everybody. But I believe we have seven here, seven freshmen and seven on the 27-man roster and it is for those seven.

John Pearson has 20 at-bats I think on the season. He has more than that, plate appearances, but walks, hit-by-pitches. I think he's going to be a great hitter here. I think he's a middle order of the hitter on the team that's capable of coming back here.

I think as far as like teams in our league go it's kind of a dying breed of guys getting out there, but we've run one out in the lead-off spot most of the season. Casan has started games in the SEC.

He's closed games. William has 40 innings or something like that on the season. Mavrick Rizio leads our team in appearances.

We went to Cooper Williams in a super regional for two and two-thirds to get to Omaha. It's a pretty special group. I think it's the makeup piece of that.

I will never make a decision of what's best for a team worried about losing a player, like that would be undermining that Team Over Me and that Tough and Together piece. We just got the right guys. I'm really proud of it, too, because it was a long recruiting window.

It's kind of under the old model of, I've known Derek since he was in seventh grade. And it's like, we're hugging mom and dad on the field the other night, we're going to Omaha. It's like, it's about time, five and a half years later.

Q. Your assistant Coach Josh Jordan is being linked with an open job. How do you navigate that, because I'm sure you want what's best for him but you also understand the moment you're in?

JAY JOHNSON: I think if anybody is qualified to talk about this, it's me, with having really good assistant coaches.

And programs should talk to Josh. He's one of the best in the country. I would support him for anything because he's done a lot for me. He's one of the best, if not the best, assistant coach I've ever had.

He's certainly capable of being a head coach and running his own program, and for me obviously I want to keep him because he's really good at what he does and he makes me a better head coach because how quality he does his work.

As far as the Omaha thing, that's just about being a man and compartmentalizing those things. I have no questions about our staff and our ability to prepare with other things going on.

I mean, the transfer portal thing is -- I mean, it's a distraction as well. But I expect them to be able to execute what they need to do in that space and have our team ready to play and have their areas locked up.

And I think how we're designed as a staff helps in that regard too because I do so much of the game management and the offense and strategy, and Coach Yeskie calls the pitches.

We're lined up good, and I'm happy for Coach Jordan that people are recognizing the work that he's put in, and I hope our people at LSU recognize it, too, because I want to keep him.

Q. With Casan Evans, do you have to communicate with him more just given the flexibility of his role where there's one week he's not pitching, another week where he's starting, another week where he's coming out of the bullpen? Does that require an extra level of communication with him?

JAY JOHNSON: He's one of the best pitchers I've ever recruited, and so I love communicating with him. I think every situation's different. I think last weekend, the super



regional, managing a super regional and managing the pitching staff is very unique.

It's like when you get to the end of the regional, you want to win the game at hand and in front of you, but you also have to have a plan for game seven of the regional, game three of the super regional. So I had a plan going into that game, what was the threshold where we would put him in to finish it to get here.

But we had a big enough lead. And then I took advantage of, he obviously threw 100 pitches on Monday night in game seven. That was Sunday night.

I felt like it would benefit him for this opportunity not having to use him. And I think we saw a similar thing from we didn't have to use him in the SEC Tournament. He probably would have pitched the championship game had we advanced.

But that rest from the end of the regular season to the regional paid off in one of the most important performances we've had on the mound.

He'll be ready to roll, and the makeup and the toughness and the ability to adapt and athleticism, all those things, he'll be ready to go, and I feel like he'll be in a great spot.

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