

2025 Men's College World Series

Saturday, June 14, 2025

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

LSU Tigers

Coach Jay Johnson

Kade Anderson

Derek Curiel

Postgame Press Conference



LSU - 4, Arkansas - 1

THE MODERATOR: Joining us is LSU head coach Jay Johnson and student-athletes Kade Anderson and Derek Curiel.

JAY JOHNSON: Great win for our team. Outstanding performance against a great team in Arkansas.

Start with Kade, outstanding performance. What we've been accustomed to on the opening night of every weekend this year. I thought he got stronger as the game went along. I thought he executed pitches at a really high level, which you have to do against that offense.

I thought the bullpen was great -- Chase coming in with a man on base, executing, getting two strikeouts right there. Then we got the fly ball or line drive, I should say.

And then Casan, great poise in the ninth especially after giving up the single to Davalan.

Offensively, we did just enough. And really good job by Luis drawing a walk, Derek falling down 0-2 and drawing a walk. And then great bunt by Danny. Chris, staying within himself, not doing too much, moving the ball to the outfield, getting another free base with the hit-by-pitch. And Josh moving the ball against a really tough left-hander to get three.

And Kade got stronger. Big hit by Derek there in the eighth inning, I believe, yeah, the eighth inning. And as usual really good defense by our team tonight. Good performance. Get ready for Monday.

Q. Kade, obviously last week you were super not

happy with your performance, I guess. Just speaking of the grinding nature of the last two games that you've played in, I guess, just where do you get that strength to kind of overcome some hiccups early and battle through there?

KADE ANDERSON: That's part of the game. You don't take those for granted. It's a learning lesson. To have that experience and to learn from that outing was huge. And Coach Yeskie and I went through it and found out what was the plan for next week to be better.

And just kind of taking it all in. And that was a really cool moment. But just excited to win. That's really all that matters.

Q. Kade, you pitched a great game today. Seven innings and you held the Razorbacks to one run. I'm just curious, will we see you pitch again this tournament? Do you have any energy left after that stunning performance?

KADE ANDERSON: Yeah, I completely expect to pitch. Obviously that's not really up to me; it's up to Coach. But I want to pitch again. And this is a really cool moment for our team and we'll be ready to go.

Q. Kade, as a kid growing up in Louisiana, probably when you were this guy's age, you probably dreamed of this moment. How did you not let it get too big for you?

KADE ANDERSON: I think just taking it all in. That's why you come here. Really just proud of our team. And at the end of the day that's all you need to do is win.

And it doesn't matter the stat line kind of how this paper lines up. But we won the game and that's really all I care about.

Q. Building off that question there, felt like a very business-like approach today for the offense and Kade on the mound. Is that accurate what I'm picking up on? And how do you manage that in this stage and

that crowd?

KADE ANDERSON: I think Coach Johnson does a really good job in preparing our team. And when you treat every game like a playoff, you get used to it. LSU is used to being in Omaha and that's something that we do often. We're proud to say that. But we're meant for these kind of games, and we're excited to keep going.

Q. Kade, you faced Arkansas earlier this season. What did you take away from that and learn from that game and take into tonight?

KADE ANDERSON: I take every outing with a grain of salt, just looking to prepare for the next one. Obviously you look back a little bit, but every week is different. And kind of how they prepare as well is different. So just continuing to live in the classroom, and that's the best part of it.

Q. Derek, you've been sitting here, a lot of people asking questions about Kade and his performance tonight. I would like your opinion on it. But specifically for you as well, a big hit against West Virginia with a very good left-hander out of the Big 12 in Griffin Kirn. And today against Zach Root, two huge hits against lefties. Throughout your freshman year you've been great. Can you describe these big postseason moments against left-handed pitchers you've had lately?

DEREK CUIEL: Yeah, Kade's been great. Super happy for him. He's a great teammate. I look up to him a lot. We played when we were younger. He's always been dominant on the mound. He used to swing the stick pretty good too.

I'm super happy for him. He's been great. He just does what he does. It's just business as usual. So I'm just super happy for him. He competes his butt off and I'm proud of him.

To answer your second question, just been working in the cage. Baseball is a game of failure. Just trying to my best to stay there on the lefties. And chief and I got to work keeping my shoulder in there and trying to stay on balls. And just having fun and learning from my mistakes and just getting better every day. That's what baseball's about.

Q. Derek, just the patience needed. You knew that Arkansas had some good arms, they're going to run good arms at you. Gaeckle, you've seen him before. But just the idea to stay with it and continue to battle and go with it the other way?

DEREK CUIEL: Yeah, trusting myself with two strikes, whether that's taking or swinging. I know, with my hand-eye coordination, I could be able to battle in any count. So I'm never defeated in the box, even when I go down 0-2 on two pretty ugly swings, probably my two ugliest swings of the year.

But just having confidence and sticking to my approach and knowing that he was going to go back to that pitch, staying on it.

Q. The idea that you could likely see them again -- the way this thing sets up, the way college baseball is playing this year you might see Arkansas again -- what did you learn tonight about this team that maybe you didn't know?

KADE ANDERSON: Like I said, we treated every game like a playoff. We'll be ready to go. We've faced them four times. I like the results of what we had.

Just continuing to go out there and battle. And we're not, like Coach Johnson says all the time, we're not playing Arkansas, we're playing the game. When you take that kind of note at it, it's just another game. And I think that playoff mindset has really helped us a lot.

Q. How do you explain striking out 16 times and still what do you have to do to overcome that and win a game?

JAY JOHNSON: I've seen it before here. If there's a pitching staff that is capable of doing that to our team it's the one we just faced. And Zach Root is an All-American. Gabe Gaeckle is one of the best pitchers in the country. Gibler is a lefty specialist and Foutch throws 100 miles an hour. That's that. And proud of my team for fighting our way to win.

Q. Is it a matter of taking advantage of every opportunity you might have there?

JAY JOHNSON: I thought we did a good job of that tonight. Again, when you're facing those caliber arms, you're not going to get a ton, maybe like you would playing in SEC ballparks where the home runs a real thing with every pitch of the game.

I thought we did an excellent job of that, setting the table -- walk by Luis, walk boy Derek, drag bunt single by Danny, really good at-bat by Chris, really good at-bat by Michael, really good at-bat by Josh.

Coached enough games here knowing that playing with a lead is really important. I was happy our team was able to

do that tonight.

And then Gabe made it tough on us. Like I said, he's one of the best pitchers in the country. Electric arm.

We got ourselves in position, great base running play by Steven. Just a little bit of bobble in the outfield to get to second base right there.

And my man over here was born to hit. And he stayed on the ball and did what he does.

Q. Do you feel like winning this first game is more important this year than ever?

JAY JOHNSON: I said this the other day. A lot's made of it, especially when you're playing such a great team. I didn't feel like it was a death sentence. They call it a double-elimination tournament for a reason.

We have great pitching depth as does our opponent, as does UCLA, as Murray State, as does Arizona, as does Coastal Carolina, as does Oregon State, as does Louisville. That's the only way you get here, survive the regional format and the super regional and the season.

We were just focused on the game tonight. And we had a plan either way. Whether we're playing at 1:00 or 6:00 on Monday, we were going to have a plan for tomorrow and be ready to go.

So I think anytime you make it more, you're taking your focus off of execution, and that's not what we do.

Q. To go with Casan in the ninth inning there, what was your thought process given that he could be a guy that could help you guys out as a starter later in the tournament?

JAY JOHNSON: I think you're playing one of the best teams in America. You're at the top of the order. Davalan, a huge year; Aloy, did he win the Golden Spikes; did they announce that yet? He's up for it. Maxwell is hitting in the 3 hole, had a huge homer against, I think, Tennessee.

I just liked the strike-zone pressure that he presents. I like the match-up really good. And what did he throw? He threw 13 pitches, so I like his efficiency there.

Q. Just kind of explain Derek Curiel's at-bats. They were amazing at-bats even in a night where strikeouts were coming to you all. Explain Derek's time at the plate.

JAY JOHNSON: I think the first at-bat might have been

one of the most under-noticed, most important at-bats in the game, where he fell down 0-2 to Zach Root, and fought his way back to walk, to put a runner in scoring position for the first time. That was huge.

He was able to draw a walk in the second at-bat. And to stay on Gibler, he's nasty -- if I remember correctly, he hadn't had a ton of innings by the time they came to us, which was the second-to-last week of the season. And we were, like, man, who is this guy?

As he said, he's deceptive. It's a tough breaking ball that he throws. He got him with the one, strike one and got him to chase it. But he stayed on it and just got it elevated enough and stayed through it for a two-out, what we call golden -- two-out hits are golden with runners in scoring position. Great at-bat.

But I'm not surprised. Like I said, he was born to hit. His disposition, his demeanor is made for hitting with runners on base, made for playing in games like the College World Series. He'll probably play in the major league World Series someday because he's got that "it factor" character.

Q. DVH said he thought the last time they played you guys that Kade struck out more batters against them in that game, but he thought they made harder contact. They didn't make hard contact today. What did you see in his stuff tonight versus when you faced those guys on the 9th of May?

JAY JOHNSON: I think I would point more to him. He's got tremendous stuff. It's four pitches for strikes. He's never boxed into having to throw a certain way, which as a hitting coach makes it tough to plan against him because he can always pivot. He's got a plan for any type of hitter, left, right, power, good bat-to-ball type guys, I thought he just executed. He's such a tremendous competitor. I mean, he got us a win in a super regional game and got us through the seventh inning and was just, for lack of a better word, irritated at his performance. Those guys are special.

They don't come along very often. When you put that four-pitch mix with that type of competitive fire, feel for what he needed to do, like he said, live in the classroom, he's right back to it. Coach Yeskie and him did a great job of making sure he was ready for today.

Q. Forgive me if you've been asked this, just walked in. Were you surprised that Dave pulled Zach so soon in the game? And I guess the second part of that is how much was your guys' offensive execution from top of the first to top of the second, how much did you feel that sort of played into that?

JAY JOHNSON: Yeah, I think he's one of the best pitchers in the country. I know he was First Team All-SEC. I'm sure he was an All-American. I mean, we tried to get him. He's really good.

You're talking about coaching against one of the best coaches in the history of college baseball. He knows his players. Maybe he saw something he didn't like and he brought in a guy that's really, really good in Gabe. So that's what they decided to do.

As far as what we did from the first to the second, it's just about settling in here. I don't know how many people were there tonight. It's like 25,000. Awesome crowd. We tried to prepare them for that. But I'm sure we're the visiting team. We're going up to the plate first against one of the best pitchers in the country with everything else going on.

I think it took us an inning, four at-bats, to kind of settle into the game.

Q. You talk about LSU, going back to playing their brand of baseball. How did you see that all come together and really just click tonight in that second inning and on?

JAY JOHNSON: The word I would use is "maturity." Luis has been excellent in this postseason. I mean, one of the unsung heroes, MVPs of this thing, to do the job he's done behind the plate, take the mature caliber at-bats that he does and did right there. And like I said, Derek, going 0-2 to a walk right there. Danny laying down the drag. Chris, I think it was strike one, and then he stayed on the ball and drove it to the outfield. Michael didn't move his feet right there and a breaking ball hit him. Josh is in there for a reason. It's always this time of year, you know what you're going to get, and did exactly what we asked him to do.

I thought it was great. It was just enough. And that's okay. It's here. We focus on how we play and how we win probably more than any team in the country. We don't just sell out to that. But when you're playing this opponent, this arena, just finding a way to get it done, I'm proud of the team, and they'll have to reset and get ready to do it against another really good team.

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