

# 2026 Men's College World Series

Saturday, June 13, 2026

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

Oklahoma Sooners

Coach Skip Johnson

Deiten LaChance

Cord Rager

Postgame Press Conference



Oklahoma - 9, Alabama - 0

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Oklahoma Sooners coach Skip Johnson and student-athletes Deiten LaChance and Cord Rager.

SKIP JOHNSON: I think from the get-go we took the momentum in the game. Alabama's a really good baseball team, and we took the momentum in the game and sustained the momentum. And that was really big.

And we stayed in the process -- Cord did a great job of staying in the process. Our defense was really good. Our at-bats, wasn't chasing pitches that we've chased before. Getting good at-bats and sustained some rallies. And LaChance hits a big home run to separate the game. It made it a little bit better. Your breaking ball and your changeup, your fastball command get better when you have a lead like that.

And LJ came in, I think the double play, whatever inning it was, first and second, was really big. I think that was a big momentum changer that kept it in our dugout.

And really proud of these kids for staying in the process. Really one pitch at a time. That's what they did. That's what we talk about. That's what we preach. And I'm really proud of them for doing that and staying in the routines.

**Q. Cord, the Alabama batters complimented your control throughout the game. Could you just talk about your approach and really what was your mindset when pitching to that lineup?**

CORD RAGER: Just get the lead-off guy out. I watched the other games. I saw guys were kind of letting the

environment get the best of them. I just tried to stay calm, get strike one, get lead-off outs. And that's the process for me.

**Q. Cord, Skip talked a lot about being comfortable out there. How comfortable were you? Did you know you had really good stuff today going in? And the fifth inning, the double play with Deiten, how did that settle everything back in?**

CORD RAGER: I just tried to tell myself, it's like any other game. And I just worked the process. And everything else just kind of fades away. So I had tunnel focus.

The double play that Deiten made and all the plays the defense made are always helpful and always just take a little stress out of throwing.

**Q. Deiten, talk about your day starting with rolling the ankle right at the very beginning and then playing through it all day, hitting the homer, limping around the bases, just kind of all of it for you?**

DEITEN LACHANCE: Well, I tripped at second early in the game. My ankle is fine. I'm 100 percent. I'll be fine to keep playing. There's no problem right there.

He gave me a good pitch and I hit it out. Took my time around the base. There's no timer around there. That's what it is. I'm an aggressive hitter. If you give me something to hit, I'm going to hit it out or at least hit it hard. It was awesome. At least we won today. I'm just trying to help the team win.

**Q. Going off that, I know it was your parents', one of their first times to watch you play in person. I think your mom's first time to watch you play this season in person. How special was that moment to get to play on this stage and do what you did today with them in attendance?**

DEITEN LACHANCE: No, I mean, I just said hi to my mom right there. I haven't seen her since Christmas. She hasn't seen me play for a while now. I mean, it's special for them to be there. I really wanted them to be there since the



regional. Well, I'm glad that they're here the most important moment of my career right here, and I can live that with them. It's awesome.

**Q. Cord, were you surprised at all by your command of both the fastball and the off-speed stuff? I think you had a couple of strikeouts to end the inning, both were down and in on the right-handed hitters. I wanted to ask you about that.**

CORD RAGER: Yeah, location's always something you work on. I've always been good with location. And knowing I had my curveball today, which my curveball was on today. And to get those hitters out without having to change really -- it was the back foot curve, it worked well for me today. And I could rely on it, and I had the location with it. I just had good feel with it today.

**Q. Their coach, Rob Vaughn, said that you not pitching the regular-season series kind of messed up or affected the scouting report on you and they didn't know how to combat the angles and being close -- he said you being 6'6" you're so close to the plate when you let go. Just what did do that for you confidence-wise? I mean them not having a scouting report on you.**

CORD RAGER: I mean, I'm definitely not the same pitcher I was. So it's definitely good that they probably saw the old me, the guy who was still learning during the SEC play. And throughout SEC play you learn so much and especially as a freshman, I've just really learned so much, especially going into the postseason.

And now I'm kind of finding the good mixture and I'm able to keep guys off balance. And I'm not getting ambushed anymore. And always working the process.

**Q. Cord, what is a torn -- or a tender lat, is it just your lats? And how much healthier are you now than you were in the year because it obviously affects you as a pitcher? And Deiten, I want you to clarify, how did you trip at second base? It had to hurt because you were limping pretty good there for a while.**

CORD RAGER: So I had a strain in my lat way back, I forgot when it was, but it was like after Texas, after we played Texas. And, yeah, I just strained it. Went too hard in the weight room that week. Went out to throw a bullpen, felt some discomfort.

And I worked hard for two weeks getting back healthy with our trainer, Brandon Lee. And ever since that Mizzou game, it's been fine. I haven't worried about my lat anymore. I'd say I'm 100 percent healthy and everything

feels good.

DEITEN LACHANCE: There was a single into center. I should have probably took third on it. I kind of went easy until I arrived at second, I was, I should probably take third. I went to take a step a little fast. I had a bad step on the bag. I was fine after that. It's like a bruise, a little bit. I'm good to go. I scored after that. So everything's fine.

**Q. Cord, you mentioned learning during SEC play. What have you learned that's allowed your last couple of starts to be the best of the season?**

CORD RAGER: Just being able to mix my pitches better. Don't fall into rhythms and patterns is kind of what I've learned a lot, because I used to just go up there and throw heaters and not mix anything up. And I would get -- I got ambushed by some teams, those good teams that can really hit.

I just mixed it up, tried to blend up the pitches and make sure to execute spots instead of just trying to throw it as hard as I can, wherever it goes, it goes.

Having more intent, more conviction, and kind of just having more feel for the hitters and what they're trying to do at the plate. That's pretty much it right there.

**Q. Deiten, curious for you, when the offense is clicking the way it is, 11 hits, nine-plus runs, what's it say about this team's potential of how far and how dangerous you can be as a put-together offense?**

DEITEN LACHANCE: Yeah, we came a long way. We're really playing like we want to play as long as we can together. So I think that just changes the way we attack the game. And all the guys in the box, if you're a head coach on the other time you've got to be scared of nine guys. I mean, everybody can do everything.

And after that, you have Cord on the mound. I mean if he was healthy all year, I mean, those awards would have went to one guy, and it would have been a no doubt about it, those freshman year. I mean when he's on mound, you definitely have the chance to win, no matter who you face. I mean you can put the Yankees in front of me, I don't mind.

SKIP JOHNSON: Easy. (Laughter).

DEITEN LACHANCE: I mean, it's fun. You can watch the game. Cord was just attacking them. They had no chance. It was awesome.

**Q. On Thursday, we talked about Deiten Lachance and**



**his impact on the offense. Couple moments from him in this game, obviously the home run. But at second base, the injury there, in pure baseball moments, of course now he's got to run the bases and ends up scoring in that first inning and a couple times in this game, what did you think out of your catcher today?**

SKIP JOHNSON: Well, he's a baseball player. Sometimes you don't feel good, you play. Sometimes it's raining, you play. Sometimes it's hot, you play. Baseball players play baseball. And he's a baseball player. Whatever the adversity is, he loves to play baseball. He doesn't have a bad day.

I'm telling you, he might go 0-for-5 and strike out five times, the very next day he's going to be smiling, laughing. He's a baseball player that's an energy-giver. And he's really fun to be around. I'm really blessed to be around him. I'm telling you that right now.

**Q. Would you beat the Yankees now?**

SKIP JOHNSON: No. It's good that he says that. He's got a lot of confidence now. I can tell you that the pitcher will get in the box with the Yankees. He's not going to be afraid of them. They probably beat him. But he'll throw it in there. I promise you that.

**Q. I was wondering if you sprinkled some Augie Garrido Zen dust on these guys the last month?**

SKIP JOHNSON: No, it's, I mean, Coach taught me a lot about a lot of things. He taught me about one pitch at a time. That's kind of what I wanted to do when I became a head coach is kind of take what he did and his one pitch at a time. He taught me a lot. And Coach Harmon did too.

So I think the biggest thing for me is you kind of stay out of their way. I can remember the first time I came to Omaha in 2009, our bus was probably the most intimidating thing in the world to get in. All of a sudden Coach Garrido had music playing and everything. And I thought, wow, this is pretty crazy.

I remember him saying we're going to execute the game better, we're going to take our walks, we're going to get our bunts down, we're going to throw first-pitch strikes. And we win the first game in Omaha on a walk-off walk against Southern Miss.

So it's the team that becomes comfortable fastest. And these guys can maintain being comfortable and staying in the details of the game because the game is a tough game to play. And if they can just stay within the details of the game of executing the game -- I thought Cord was

outstanding. The first at-bat with J-Walk was incredible. And it got us going a little bit. And it kind of got us going a little bit.

And the two strikes and two-out hitting was huge. The hit Dasan got, I think over the second baseman, was big, too, to separate the game even more, not to try to make it perfect on the mound.

**Q. This team seems to be playing with a lot of fire and a lot of passion and they're also very calm and cool and collected. Can you speak a little bit about that? And LJ has been great on the mound for you out of the bullpen.**

SKIP JOHNSON: Yeah, early in the year, we started him. And I think he got tired. And we started throwing him out of the bullpen and, I think it bounced back. Then his calm and passion, I think they play with passion. We talk about playing with an edge and playing with passion. I think that's really a big thing in baseball.

That's what I love about college baseball, and the spirit of it from different schools. I mean, I've never been to a basketball game, March Madness game, but our conference is like a football atmosphere in a baseball arena. And I think that's the thing, you play with passion. We talk about pitching with passion.

I knew Cord was done when he exhausted a lot of energy, when he punched the guy out. I was, like, ooh, I'm not running him back out there. I've been on both sides where I ran the guy back out there and they give up five.

So I'm really proud of him. He's a freshman. He just taught you how he grew up in the SEC. And a lot of things happen like that.

The last freshman I saw win a baseball game here was Taylor Jungmann, and he beat LSU in the national championship game. So freshmen don't get to pitch in this league very often. And we're really proud to have three or four of them that are really good.

**Q. You mentioned a minute ago about J-Walk's at-bat to start the game. You've called him a table setter before. He got on base a handful of times again today. Just what he's doing for you at the top of the lineup right now, getting on in front of all those guys, 2, 3, 4, that have been so hot?**

SKIP JOHNSON: Yeah, I think we tried it in the middle of the year, moving him to the 9 hole. He was scuffling a little bit. But he's always thought he's a lead-off hitter. That charisma comes out as a lead-off hitter.

He's got a great eye at the plate. You might look at his numbers and go, hey, man, this guy has struck out this many times. But I'm telling you, he's hard to strike out as intrasquad. He understands the strike zone. He understands the moments.

When he gets going -- I mean, how about the play the left fielder made down the left field line. That was incredible. I mean, he smoked that ball. And it just shows you how good they are, too. You know.

And so I think that's the biggest difference. Is we put him back there. Me and Reggie talked about it about a month ago. Kind of when we started, like, let's get back to our original lineup that we played the first weekend in Omaha or in Globe Life, where we played really good.

It's really kind of taken fire. And those guys are really selfless. The dugout, what I'm really happy about as much as anything. It's not the players. It's the dugout, the guys that are not getting a play that are in the game keeping those guys going. That's a hard job to do in a selfish world. I'm really proud of them for that.

**Q. Cord's obviously pitched in the Lawrence super regional and Atlanta regional and now Omaha. Talk about just his maturity on the mound pitching in three very hostile environments in postseason play.**

SKIP JOHNSON: I mean, he's a tough kid. He's got grit. He comes from a small town around Corsicana, Texas, where I coached in junior college. And he works extremely hard. He came in as a pitcher and a hitter. And he made the decision -- he came in, called me over Christmas and said, hey, I think I'm going to put the bat down.

And Kacy Clemens did that. Cade Cavalli did that. Cade Horton actually played in Omaha and then did it. I mean, there's been several. I can't think of other guys, but I really can't right now. And those guys understand that.

And it's kind of a funny story. When he came in, he was 80, I watched him pitch in the Connie Mack World Series. And he was really calm there. His slot was a little bit high. And Coach Butler, our recruiting coordinator says, hey, Skip, you think he can move his slide a little bit.

So I did some drills with him. Moved him over to first base, and did some things to -- really, he was better late in the fall than he was today. I'm telling you the guy was really good for two-inning stints. You just got through watching him throw, what, seven innings today and didn't walk anybody and was pounding the strike zone. And he kept them off balance and made some really good pitches when

he had to make it.

**Q. Did you have a feeling that he would have that type of day after his warm-up today? And just how important was it for him to go out on the mound with a 2-0 lead after Gambill's double in the first?**

SKIP JOHNSON: I wasn't around him. I knew what kind of kid he is. I knew he'd work hard, do it right, do what it takes to be ready to pitch. I wasn't worried about that. I didn't even ask Bonneau when he came in from the bullpen because we have to go to the card.

One of the hardest things I've ever had to learn in my life is not to be in the bullpen with a starting pitcher. I'm a pitching coach, and I have to go to the card. Like, I want to have this guy, if I can tell him something to fix him or whatever. But it's hard to -- I have to forget about it and preoccupy my mind on something else.

So every once in a while I'll ask Bonneau, what's he got. But I mean, he's a tough kid. And didn't matter to me how he pitched. I'm telling you right now. I knew he was going to give you effort. And that's all you can ask out of them. Today it was special. And that was fun to watch, believe me.

**Q. What do you do during that time?**

SKIP JOHNSON: Drink a cup of coffee, take a dip of snuff, talk to a Butler, or talk to somebody else. Just get preoccupied in my mind with something else outside of the guy warming up.

**Q. You said you messed a little bit with Cord's arm slot. What were you looking to accomplish with that if you don't mind telling us a little more about it?**

SKIP JOHNSON: Yeah, he had a higher slot. Just take his hand away from his head a little bit to free him up a little bit. Because you can watch him play first base, when he takes a ground ball and throws to second base, you're, like, wow, just try to get him in that slot a little bit and create that angle that I guess Rob was talking about in the press conference, to create the angle.

The thing that he has is deception of length of 7-foot, 7'1", 7'2" extension. That's what he's got. He reminds me of a kid that I really wanted -- we recruited so hard out of, I don't know what town it is, but he's in the Big Leagues with the Boston Red Sox with Bennett, the kid from -- Tolle. He's not as thick as Tolle but he's big like that. He has that same kind of extension like Tolle and Jake Bennett had when we had Jake Bennett.

**Q. I was in Nashville when you guys played Vanderbilt, and Deiten Lachance had not had a home run yet. He hit one, and he just had the biggest smile on his face when he crossed home plate, like, finally. Did you sense something from him once that first home run came that kind of figured some things out?**

SKIP JOHNSON: He played for my son in junior college, so I knew what type of kid he was coming in, what type of player he was. And I talked to my son every day and he's like -- my son's at Dallas Baptist now; he's the recruiting coordinator there -- Dad, once he hits one, he's going to hit a bunch. And sure enough, that's why he's a good coach. He hit a bunch. (Laughter).

I mean, that ball today was like a 2-iron. I saw that same home run last year when they were in the regional championship in a tie game, he hit the same pitch to win the game out. It was pretty cool.

But he's a special kid. He really is. And I'm really blessed to get to coach guys like that. I really am. That's what I'm in college baseball for. It ain't the wins. It ain't the losses, it's to build relationships with these young men, period.

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