

Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Wednesday, May 21, 2025

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

Georgia Bulldogs

Wes Johnson

Henry Hunter

Postgame Press Conference



HENRY HUNTER: Yeah, really and truly, just late in the game, just trying to get the guys going, just trying to do something productive with two outs. That was the biggest thing. Yeah, just wanted to battle, got down to two strikes and just was trying to fight for the guys and get something going and just kind of ran into one.

Q. Kind of a big picture question: You guys are still sitting good for a national seed. This team was in the same situation last year. Can you compare the two years so far, how it's been, how it's gone compared to last year?

HENRY HUNTER: Absolutely. I think the biggest thing is, this team is a different team then last year and it's a new year. Last year was a great season, but I think our biggest focus is right now. Tonight is not the result we wanted to have happen and just got to go back and look in the mirror and get back to work this week and really just refocus, refocus and get back to what it takes for us to play our best ball down the stretch.

And I think that's the main focus here, and I don't think it's fair to compare this year's team and last year's team. We hope to just continue to play our best baseball down the stretch for sure.

Oklahoma 3, Georgia 2

WES JOHNSON: I thought we battled hard. I thought Witherspoon was -- as I said, he's probably the best right-hander we've seen all year. The difference in the game is, they didn't walk anybody, we walked three. One of those walks scored. There was a play in there, I get it, it looks like they, whatever, fine, earned run, but we make that play at second, the run doesn't score that inning. Then the walk ends up scoring, as well, later in the game.

When you go against a guy like Witherspoon, you can't make mistakes. You can't give them a chance to get up on you because then he can dial it in.

But tip your hat to him. I thought we battled well. We had some guys throw the ball okay. I thought Quinn was really good for four innings, and then he had some punch out outs. So, yeah, with that, we'll take questions.

Q. This is the second time you guys have faced Witherspoon. Obviously, he didn't pitch very well the last time. Did that game at all -- I mean, have y'all seen -- did y'all think you might face him a little bit better than y'all did today?

HENRY HUNTER: Absolutely. We obviously hoped we'd come out and stick him a little bit better than we did. You just got tip your cap. We got through a really good game, and any time you face somebody for the second time, you obviously want to come out and give a better effort than you did the first time, and obviously should have a little bit of an advantage, but he did a great job of just mixing us up, and just got to tip your cap to that guy.

Q. Henry, what did you see on that home run, that swing you had?

Q. Y'all stressed just the importance of belief all season long. How do you refocus on that goal after a loss like this?

HENRY HUNTER: Absolutely. You've got to refocus, you got to go home, look yourself in the mirror, you know, not point fingers, and believe in what the coaching staff is asking us to do, believe in the guys we have locker room, which we do. And I think the biggest question we have ourselves is, we say we want to do things, and it's just about just doing them. I think that's the biggest thing.

We obviously wanted to come here and perform and win some games here, and the same thing goes for from here on out. It's really just about doing it, and just believing that we can do it because we're really, really talented. But right now, it's all about results, especially down the stretch. It's



win or go home.

Q. Coach, when you're facing a guy that's as talented as Witherspoon, especially for a second time, is there a difference in approach that you take when facing him or do you make tweaks in the lineup versus looking for a certain pitch? How do you make adjustments in facing him a second time on a stage like this?

WES JOHNSON: I think the difference between tonight and the first time is he probably threw -- I haven't got the reports I look at postgame, but he's probably 70 percent off-speed tonight, a guy with a 98-mile-an-hour fastball and is throwing 70 percent off speed. You may go in, getting ready to be on your heater, but if he's going to flip the script on you that hard, it does -- and then land them, it's just challenging.

Q. You have your extension now signed to 2031. How do you feel about what you've led the program, making it far a few times to the super regionals and what you want to accomplish next week, and also how you felt what their relievers had with Bode and Crooks mixing into your offense?

WES JOHNSON: I'll work backwards. I thought Bode -- I mean, we're probably any other night, it's a tie ballgame. Wind is blowing in a little bit. He hits the ball 103 at the right launch. Their young man catches it at the track. I thought we got off some good swings.

You look, I thought we did good against Crook. Hits Branch, McCarthy hits the ball 100 right there at the end, it's a ground ball, but you're hitting a ball 100 miles an hour, you're getting barrel to it.

It's the difference in it's our game. Sometimes it's an eyelash.

As far as the extension in the program, I mean, anytime you get stuff like that, it just means you've got a lot of good people around you. You've got a lot of great support. As I've told people, President Moorehead and our athletic director, Josh Brooks, are phenomenal. Not only are they great for the University of Georgia, they do a phenomenal job for our athletic department.

And then the people that they put in place around you to give you a chance for success. We just need to continue to build on it and keep trying to find ways to win ballgames.

Q. What's the biggest difference between last year and this year, what advantage you think this year's team may have?

WES JOHNSON: The biggest difference is we can pitch a little better. We're going to have to figure out the offense piece. You go look, yeah, you can give -- Witherspoon has been really good against us twice, like really good. But good teams find a way to grind it out and get off some better swings than we did. We're going to have to figure that piece out, and that's your -- last year, you're running Condon and Collins up there, and it doesn't matter who's pitching. It's reversed. Those two guys are on base. They can hit anybody in the country and do damage.

We've got to figure out the offensive piece. What did we give up tonight, 8 hits, struck out 10, walked 3. This team has the lowest -- obviously, I look at a lot of different numbers. This team has the lowest chase rate in our league. Has the lowest swing-and-miss rate in our league, so if you just strike him out 10 times, you had to do something. With that being said, I feel good with our pitching. We've got to get runs across the plate against quality arms, which has obviously held us down this year.

Q. Zach Harris, another really good outing out of him, strikes out two. What have you seen from him just to be able to go take that closer role and run with it?

WES JOHNSON: Yeah, it takes a special person to do that. Zach was a high school quarterback, was actually recruited to play football as a quarterback. He's kind of got that big-moment, under-the-lights thing. It really gets him going.

We did some different things with Zach, but when we finally put him back there, it was like, okay, he's got the makeup, he's got the mentality. There's a lot of boxes you have to check to be a closer. You have to be able to control the running game. You've got to throw multiple pitches for a strike. You've got to be able to field your position. He checks all those boxes.

Q. Robby Burnett, how close is he? Do you think he'll be back for regionals, and on your contract extension, having that completed now before you guys played again today and heading to regionals, how important is that part of it?

WES JOHNSON: Yeah, it's good to get that kind of stuff out of the way. I don't like distractions. Not that anybody does, but we live in a damn world of distractions, that are full of distractions. That was nice to get it out of the way. Now you don't have to put up with the chatter. We'll just leave it at that.

Robby, once again, if this was a regional game, Robby probably would have played, but hamstrings are so unique in the aspect that another tweak and he's out, he misses



regionals next week. That's just us trying to be smart for next week.

Q. This is the second game back for Ryan Zaborowski; what have you seen from him since missing all that time?

WES JOHNSON: I thought he had some good at-bats tonight against a guy who's going to be a first-rounder. Got a hit his first at-bat. I thought he looked really good, I guess that would have been Saturday against A&M. I thought he got off some really good swings once again against a couple of really good pitchers, and you look at today gets a hit.

I know he punched there, but that was a good pitch, man, that kid threw to him. I think his timing is there.

I think we're ready to get Zabo back up in the middle of the order. When guys are coming back off injuries and stuff and haven't seen a ton of pitches or have a ton of ABs, I've always said it's not fair to really throw them right there in that 3, 4 spot, which is where he needs to live. You move him down there, let him get comfortable, let him get in the game, do some things of that nature. So I think Zabo is ready now.

Q. Where is he at with his arm?

WES JOHNSON: Yeah, we're not even going to push it. I'll just DH him. I'd have to get with our trainers. I know they're rehabbing it daily. I've told everybody let's make sure the bat is ready to go.

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