

Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Wednesday, May 21, 2025

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

Oklahoma Sooners

Skip Johnson

Kyson Witherspoon

Postgame Press Conference



Oklahoma 3, Georgia 2

SKIP JOHNSON: I mean, it was a tough game. Similar to Omaha, where you have to wait for the other teams to get done playing. Spent a lot of time in the locker room.

But they kept focused -- they kept their focus, and I thought that was really huge. Kyson was extremely good tonight. Dylan with one pitch at a time, defense played outstanding.

Jackson came up with some big hits. Horton, our first baseman, went down. He's DHing right now, and Horton got some big hits in some big moments. I think he had two RBIs, and it was good to -- Kyson went out there just like he always does and takes the mound and takes the ball. I asked him yesterday, he's on five full days' rest, and I said, what do you think about it, and he said, I want the ball. That's just hats off to him and what he's about.

He works extremely hard, and it's really fun to watch. It's a blessing to be around these young men because they keep believing in themselves. It's always fun.

Q. Kyson, what was working for you today with Carmichael behind the dish and you being projected eighth overall in Atlanta the next few weeks, what do you want to accomplish besides what you showed off today and possibly in regionals next week?

KYSON WITHERSPOON: Yeah, so I think the fastball was working pretty good, slider, cutter, curveball, most everything, to be honest. Really trying to stick ahead, and me and Easton, I've thrown to him all season, getting to know each other really good. And throughout the coming months, I think just really trying to become better throughout my experience, whatever team I come to, try to make the best of it, use all the resources I can to get better.

Q. Kyson, Georgia's coach said he figured you threw about 70 percent off-speed pitches. Does that sound about right to you? Was that the plan going in or is that what felt good?

KYSON WITHERSPOON: I think I just threw whatever was working. Kind of blanked, but whatever percentage it was, they didn't hit it, so...

Q. Jaxon, how much confidence do you have when you take the field when Kyson is on the mound?

JAXON WILLITS: I think we have about as much confidence as you can have in any pitcher in America. In my opinion, we're playing behind the best pitcher in the country and we get to go do that every week, so it's a blessing, and it's fun to go do.

Q. Jaxon, what was it like to see a guy like Horton step up today and having a sac fly at the top of a fourth and also driving in the last run at the top of the sixth? He's just been a big component to your offense.

JAXON WILLITS: Yeah, when Dayton went down, we struggled for a little bit and then Mason stepped in. Mason Hamlin kind of picked us up for a little bit, and then Horton picked us up tonight and in the Texas series, and Skip always talks about just picking each other up. And when you're down, you got to pick that next guy up. So I feel like we're doing a pretty good job of that, and they just keep going out there and having good at-bats for us.

Q. For both players, what was your impression of the crowd, the atmosphere, et cetera?

KYSON WITHERSPOON: It was awesome. It was more than I ever could have expected, just playing in front of that many people, playing on such a beautiful field, really a dream come true.

JAXON WILLITS: Yeah, it was fun. I try not to look up there as I'm playing. I try to focus on the game and just winning one pitch, but it's hard not to, and about the seventh or eighth inning, I looked up there and said, man,



that's a lot of people starting to fill up.

Q. Skip, I'll ask you the same question I just asked your guys. What was your impression of the crowd and the atmosphere tonight?

SKIP JOHNSON: Well, I've always said it's like Omaha. It's like -- everything they do around here is a lot like Omaha, getting ready, going to an alternate field, taking batting practice, police escort to the field, all those little bitty things is a lot like Omaha, and it prepares you for the next step that you're going to take. When you get to Omaha, you've already experienced it as a team.

Q. Two consecutive wins now in the SEC tournament. Losing two out of three to Texas, how do you feel about your adjustments tomorrow going up against Vanderbilt's offense?

SKIP JOHNSON: It's taking one pitch at a time. You can't dwell on the past. You've got to move forward. They really have been playing the game one pitch at a time, and we've been scratching around and really playing a lot better defense than we've played in the last two weeks, and that's a good sign moving forward. We got beat against Texas, and we didn't play very good defense.

I told them at the end of the season it was over. Our season is over. Now we're moving forward, we're 0-0, and I kind of got on to them a little bit about being complacent and just having a sense of urgency and expecting the ball to get hit all the time, and I guess they took it to heart. It was huge; the double play tonight was really big in the sixth or seventh. I don't know which one it was, but it was huge.

He kind of kept his pitch count down. And for Kevin's question, you're asking that -- Wes said they threw like 70 percent off speed. Well, they're ambushing fastballs. They're ambushing a lot of pitches. He's trying to keep those guys off balance. That's the job of a pitcher, is to try to keep those guys off balance. You can't just get up there and go, hey, man, there's a fastball coming, hit it. I think that's the biggest thing about pitching. It's called pitching. It's not called throwing. I think that's huge for Kyson, and it shows you his ability to go out there. The guy throws, I think on his 90th or 100th pitch or 101st pitch, touched 98.

For a young man to do that, you just don't see that. It just shows you his aptitude. It shows you his work ethic, all the things that you describe a big-time pitcher, he's one of them.

Q. Was it an easy decision to send him back out in the eighth?

SKIP JOHNSON: He made that decision. He'll tell you when he's sore. He'll tell you when he's tired. We've had that. I've thrown a lot of bullpens with him. I thought he got gassed in about the sixth there and he kind of got a second wind. He landed a couple pitches, and they were over aggressive on a couple pitches, which has helped him keep his pitch count going into that inning, and I asked him, I said, do you feel good, he said, I've got 90, I'm going to give you everything I've got.

That was really awesome to watch him do it. Even hats off to Hunter, he had a 3-2 changeup out. Might have been in the natural zone, but at least he challenged him and threw it over the plate.

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