

Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Tuesday, May 19, 2026

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

Missouri Tigers

Coach Kerrick Jackson

Mateo Serna

Kam Durnin

Postgame Press Conference



Missouri - 10, Ole Miss - 8

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by the Missouri Tigers represented by head coach Kerrick Jackson, along with shortstop Kam Durnin and catcher Mateo Serna.

KERRICK JACKSON: Just really proud of our guys. We've obviously had some ups and downs this year, played some really tight conference series, been able to win some conference series, lost some that were really, really close.

And just challenged our guys to come out today and play for one more day. Come out and play the best that we can play. Play with your hair on fire. We've got nothing to lose. Throw blows.

We talked about what our offensive plan needed to be going into this. We were able to execute that. We played good defense.

Obviously from a pitching standpoint, we kind of went back and forth a little bit -- and the pitching has been one of our strong suits all year -- but offensively we were able to many could back and answer the bell. I'm really proud of our guys and their fight.

Q. Mateo, what did it mean to just get out to the left side of the win column today and seeing key at-bats from your offense and how Pierre and Durnin just had quality at-bats the whole way?

MATEO SERNA: Yeah, it was awesome. Last year, we were here and it didn't go out how we wanted it to. So being able to have another day, another game on this beautiful field, it's awesome. We just played team baseball

today.

Q. Mateo, how much did you all talk about ABS coming into the tournament? And then what did you see on those pitches you ended up calling the other way?

MATEO SERNA: Yeah, we talked about it a little bit yesterday, kind of like how big it is, the size and when we're going to challenge it, specifically. It was just kind of just like working with the pitchers and working with the hitters to know the zone.

Q. It felt like your dugout really got into it when the reviews were coming in. What's that like for you? Did you get nervous, I guess, before the first one? I'm curious to hear more about it.

MATEO SERNA: It was fun, because when it came out in the media that we were going to have ABS we were making jokes about it until now. So it was pretty fun. Everyone was kind of waiting for the first challenge. It was pretty cool, to be honest.

Q. Kam, what did you see just from the offense generally today in terms of approach that allowed you to have the kind of success you had?

KAM DURNIN: We played really good team offense today. It felt like every time we had runners on base, we capitalized. The most important part, every time they scored, I feel like we answered back. When you do that, you've got a good shot to win.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach.

Q. To what extent did you expect Mateo to be that good at the ABS piece of it?

KERRICK JACKSON: Really good because he has a great understanding of the strike zone. One of the things, he had an oblique strain this spring, so he wasn't able to start the beginning of the season. So we had him umpire our scrimmages when we were inside, and just giving him



a different perspective on what umpires are looking at, giving him the perspective on what, from a batter's perspective -- hey, when you're in there now you get to see behind where those pitchers are starting because you don't have to worry about making a decision on swinging or not.

Even from a catching position, you're not worried about trying to steal the strike or frame it well or any of those types of things. I think that gave him a really good perspective. And he's always had a really good understanding of where the strike zone is.

Q. We visited last year, it was a disaster of a year, wasn't anybody's fault. But it's clear Missouri is a better baseball club this year. It's not just about the kids. I know it's about your staff sometimes, too. When you think about how far this program has come in the last 12 months, not done yet, but what are your thoughts about that?

KERRICK JACKSON: Tremendous strides. I've said from day one, we have to build it. And the build is never pretty. Nobody likes the build but the builder.

But when it's finished, everybody likes the finished product. And we're still in that space of building.

Obviously, like I said, we've had some good weekends this year and we've had some bad weekends this year. And unfortunately how people look at it from the result-driven goals, of what the record is, the record doesn't reflect it, but baseball people and people that have watched us for the last three years, just like you said, they know we're better, they know we're moving in the right direction and they know we're doing it with a Mateo Serna who has been in our program for three years; a Josh McDevitt, who has been in our program for three years; a Blaize Ward who, unfortunately, didn't get his recognition for being on the All-Freshman SEC Team, but one of the best freshmen hitters in our conference.

So we're building it with those types of guys. And it just takes time. But we're moving in the right direction. I love the direction that we're headed in. And good things are coming for us in the future.

Q. Mateo catching well today with McDevitt and Villareal and Skidmore, how do you feel he adjusted with the ABS? Also, to part on to the ABS, how do you feel that the coaches association evaluated with the ABS being in the SEC alongside other governing bodies like USA Baseball?

KERRICK JACKSON: I think when you talk about what Mateo was able to do, again, once you know what the

strike zone is, like, when you are getting an umpire, we study umpire reports, and some guys call a little bit wider, some guys call high, some guys -- you know what this is. You know what this zone is.

For him to understand what the zone was, that's what allowed him to be 7-for-8 on his challenges today because he knew what the zone was. He didn't have to say, hey, the guy's calling the ball a little bit out today or he's calling it a little bit down. No, the zone is the zone, and so he was able to challenge in that zone and have success with that.

As far as the coaches association, again, this is an experimental year with this. And I'm sure you guys were just in here with Coach Bianco, and he does not hold back, so I'm sure he had some things to say about how he felt about it. And I think there's some things that we'll have to look at it and review and make sure that we put it in a position where it is effective.

But we're ironing out the kinks and we've got to understand that what we're ironing out the kinks. But I think it's something that will be beneficial for the game moving forward.

Q. Want to ask you about what a win like this means to your program. Now that you're heading in the right direction obviously you're not done here yet but what is that one win in the SEC Tournament for the first time since 2017 mean to you and your program and what you're building for the future.

KERRICK JACKSON: It means everything, right? As I told our guys, enjoy it, don't celebrate it. Like, we didn't come here to win one. So enjoy the win and understand that.

And, like you said, 2017, well, the one we won before that was 2015. And I was on that coaching staff.

And so understanding that now with 16 teams being able to be in this tournament -- and with it being a single elimination tournament, you put ourselves in a situation where we come into this thing next year with a little bit better record. And now we're sitting like some of these other teams.

We know we're in. Are we playing the host? What are we doing at that point? And so that's the benefit of having all 16 teams here, is if you're just on the outside looking in, you can come here, play your way into it, and you're playing quality competition.

So it's a great thing for our program to move in that direction. But, again, we're not here to just win one game. So enjoy the win but don't celebrate the win. And let's

come out tomorrow and get another one.

Q. Obviously you guys didn't play Mississippi State in the regular season. You played them last year in the regular season finale. I'm sure you've done a little pre-scouting about them. What are your thoughts about the Bulldogs and the match-up tomorrow?

KERRICK JACKSON: Quality program, just like everybody else in our league. And they started off hot. I mean, at the beginning of the year, they were rolling. And once they got into the conference play and started to face some competition, there was some back and forth with them, and they can swing the bat. They're going to pitch it well. They're going to play good defense.

Obviously, with us having Drew Dickinson on our staff, who was with that staff before, he's going to have a lot of insight, they will have insight on him. It's going to be an interesting chess match, because we know how they're going to go about it. And they know how we're going to go about it from a pitching and defensive standpoint or pitching standpoint, specifically.

So I'm looking forward to it. And again, our kids, I think they've proven that when we play good baseball, throw strikes, have quality at-bats, play good defense, we can play with anybody in the country. And so tomorrow that's all it is. And the beauty of the game is you're really not playing against them. You're playing against the game itself. So we just need to do what we need to do, how we need to do it, when it needs to be done.

Q. On the ABS question, clearly Mateo had a green light today. Was that the same way for your hitters, or did you guys kind of have the same conversations beforehand about situations and things like that when you really felt like they could take advantage?

KERRICK JACKSON: It was absolutely not the same for our hitters. So even when Pierre challenged there at the end, it was at the end, so I really didn't say too much. But I wanted to be like, hey, come on now, some of the stuff you swing at, I don't know, I'm not giving you free rein to be able to tell me what's a ball and a strike.

But, no, we talked to our hitters. I put up an actual little placard little board in the dugout of saying, hey, these are situations that we will challenge. These are when we want to challenge these situations. But more importantly, I will let you know before you go to the plate if, in your at-bat, you have the ability to challenge. So I think that was the best way to go about it.

Now what we did last weekend at Texas was to prepare

them for that and to give them some, I guess, insight on their own ability to challenge.

We told them last weekend, if you want to challenge, tap your thigh. And so we charted every pitch. When they tap their thigh, we asterisk that pitch. Then we went back and looked, and I think we were 0-for-5. So that just made my case for me like, nah, we're not going to give you free rein just to go out and make challenges.

Q. Eli Skidmore was fantastic. Just talk about what you saw from him today.

KERRICK JACKSON: Again, another one of those freshmen that you build with. He had a very turning point moment for him at Kentucky where we win that series, he's on the mound, he's struggling a little bit. I went out to him and I said, man, this is why you decided to come here. As a St. Louis kid, who's always loved Missouri, bleeds black and gold, this is your moment and this is why you're here.

And I reminded him of the same thing today. This is your moment. This is why you chose to come here to be in these types of situations, and he stepped up to the plate, figuratively, and got it done.

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