

**2019 Mississippi State Baseball
Postgame Quotes
Mississippi State vs. Southern Miss
February 24, 2019**

Head Coach Chris Lemonis

Q: Big series win this weekend; how does it feel right now getting that one behind you?

CL: It feels good. We learned a lot about our team over the weekend. A lot more than we did the first weekend. Seeing some guys in some tough situations and seeing them fight a little bit in Friday night's game and today's game. They are a really good baseball team and competing with them makes you better and coming out on top makes you feel good. I felt like we learned a lot this week.

Q: Did you feel like you blew some opportunities in the third and fourth inning?

CL: And the fifth. We blew it in the third, fourth and fifth. That's what baseball does. I knew once we let those opportunities slip that it would have a really close game and we'd have to make play. We have to do a better job [with runners in scoring position], we are still learning as an offense. We had some big swings in those innings and we let them slip away. We have to do a better job of maximizing that and fighting to get the one run. Sometimes we are thinking about the big inning but just getting one out of those and extending those innings...[the score] could have been five to one if we just do a little bit and move the baseball.

Q: How big was it to be able to save Cole Gordon all the way to Sunday?

CL: That was a big piece of it. Coach Foxhall called in the eighth inning saying let's give it to him. He was going back out [for the 10th inning, too]. He's different from some guys, at the end of the game he can through multiple innings at times. The depth of our bullpen really helped us today. I thought our bullpen all weekend was really good.

Q: What has it been about Cole [Gordon] that gives you trust in him in late ball games?

CL: He's just been there and done it. He's a plus strike thrower. If they beat us there at the end they are going to hit a ball that's usually not going to [be hit], because he gave a freebie. He's a great leader and a guy we lean on.

Q: You weren't here last year to see how the season open, but how important was it for you this year to prove that you can get this team going early in the season?

CL: It carried over [from the postseason success] a little bit for those guys. For them to be able to go out there and win [this series] was huge for me. I'm the new guy. I wasn't there and wasn't a part of it. The biggest part for us is that we are growing and getting better. When you win games like we just won, I think it helps you down the road.

Q: You said you learned a lot about the team in this series, what specifically did you learn?

CL: The fight, we all look at Tanner Allen's swing, what big swing that was. But Jordan Westburg had really tough, hard-nose at bat. Those last two guys threw really good for us to keep fighting and moving. And the play at the end, just getting down the line [to reach on the error] and then watching [Westburg] score on the hit, it just shows you the tenacity he plays with. Our guys just wouldn't give in. I don't think we made an error today. They just played really good defense. Especially in the game, you feel that momentum of the game was going the other way late, but they just kept playing.

Q: Were you concerned on the foul tip that you might have to take Jordan [Westburg] out of the game?

CL: No, I wasn't taking him out. He was staying in there, he was alright. [The foul ball] just [hit] him in a tough spot.

Tanner Allen

Q: When you realized you hit it to that corner, did you realize it was over then?

TA: I just got done telling Westy [Jordan Westburg] that as soon as I hit first base I was thinking in my head, 'he better be running,' because I knew it was going to be close [at home]. As soon as I got to second and saw where he was, I knew he was going to score. It's a great feeling.

Q: Do you feel like you missed some opportunities early in the game leaving some guys in scoring position?

TA: No doubt. I think my third at bat, I struck out with two outs and bases loaded. It's really easy to get mad right there, but you just have to stay even-keeled. You are going to get another at bat to make a difference in the game and that's what happened.

Q: Tell us about the job the defense did to support the pitching today.

TA: Keegan [James] came out and he's not going to have his best stuff everyday but I still believe in that guy 100 percent and he'll be amazing next weekend, which is what I told him. Our defense is going to back up our great pitching staff. All of those [relievers] did a great job today. [Cole] Gordon came in in the eighth and ninth and got a few guys on and was able to work his way out of it. That was an outstanding job and gave us some momentum.

Q: How big was it for you guys to win this series?

TA: You know what happened last year, you know that they swept us. So, when they beat us Friday night we thought, 'man, we need to get them two in a row now'. We came out Saturday night and swung the bat really well and swung it well today. It's a lot of momentum going into this week, two midweek games and we're going on the road this weekend, so we have a lot of momentum going right now.

Q: Does winning a tight one, having to come in clutch, prepare you for the season ahead?

TA: It feels like last season all over again. We were always playing tight games at the end, but it shaped us for later down the road. We're going to have tight games [in SEC play] and we're going to have to step up and have some big plays. That helped us a lot with this weekend.

Q: To have the start [to the season] you had last weekend and playing the hero today, how do you explain this start you're off to?

TA: It's an unbelievable blessing. I came out and worked so hard in the fall and during spring training, so to come out and have a great start is a true blessing. I'm very thankful for it and I couldn't do it without the Lord Almighty, my dad, my mom, my whole family, my teammates and all the coaches. All the time we have invested into this is, it's just a true blessing.

Q: How do you think your game has grown since Omaha to now?

TA: I feel like last year, I was a freshman in big moments. I would get so sped up. It was funny, when I was on deck and Westy [Jordan Westburg] got on base, my heart didn't even jump out of my chest. I was just breathing and relaxing because I had a chance to make a difference in the outcome of our game. Win or lose, I was just focused on executing and passing the bat back to 'big-hit Mac' [Elijah MacNamee]. I figured if we could get the bat back to him, he could do something. I was able to get the [bat] head out and get a hit and score the winning run.

Jordan Westburg

Q: How was the leg feeling when you were running the bases?

JW: I didn't feel it when I was running the bases. It hurt in the box, but when you have adrenaline pumping, you don't feel that stuff.

Q: Were you just doing whatever you could to get on base?

JW: Yeah, you get two strikes on you and you go in to your [make contact] approach. We talk about that so much and we buy into this culture. It's just about not giving up, so I was going to put that ball into play and hustle my tail off no matter what happened.

Q: When you rounded second and started heading towards third, what were you feeling?

JW: I saw Coach Cheesebrough waving me around while jumping around and I saw the way they were acting in the dugout. I didn't know if there was going to be a play or not, but I knew I had gotten a good jump and I just tried to score and get that winning run in.

Q: Talk about the defense you all played behind multiple pitchers today

JW: Our pitchers did an excellent job first and foremost. We don't get to play defense if they don't do their jobs. So, with them pitching, our job is just to make every play we possibly can and I feel like everybody on the field did that this weekend.

Q: How huge was it to finish off this series?

JW: Huge. Everybody knows how big this series is. Everyone knows that Southern Miss is a really, really good ball team. For us to finish that off with [a win] Sunday is awesome.

Q: What's it like in the dugout when you get back in and realize it is over with?

JW: Awesome. It's a great feeling. It's always fun to walk somebody off, especially a rival and a good ball club.

Q: Do you feel like the rivalry has grown here since you began at Mississippi State?

JW: No doubt, us going through what we went through last year and getting swept [at Southern Miss]. All the hype coming into this series is something that we look forward to and we know it's going to be a dog fight.

Q: What's it like starting this season off on a positive note opposed to what happened last year?

JW: It just takes some weight off of your shoulders. You allow yourself to go out and have fun every day at practice. There's no pressure, you play loose and relaxed and it's just fun. It's fun when you're winning because we don't like to lose, but losing is part of the game and we know it's going to come eventually.

Q: After a huge weekend and a series like this, how do the veterans tell the guys not to back off just because there is a mid-week game coming up?

JW: We saw that last year. We lost a lot of games in the middle of the week last year that we shouldn't have lost. We're going to have to drill into everyone, our starting pitcher, our starting line up or whoever it may be that just because it is a mid-week game, that doesn't mean you can back off. These are must win games for us.