

**2019 Mississippi State Baseball
Postgame Quotes
Mississippi State vs. Little Rock
March 19, 2019**

Head Coach Chris Lemonis

Q: What'd you see during the first inning from Eric Cerantola?

CL: He just didn't command the zone. His stuff was good, but part of his process is that he's a super-talented, hardworking kid. He just has to command the zone better and has got to throw the breaking ball for a strike more. But he'll bounce back and [be there again] for us.

Q: What's it like seeing Josh Hatcher do so well tonight?

CL: It's huge. We talked about it in our dugout about how we need somebody else to get hot [at the plate]. I'll give him a lot of credit, because he had a bad spring training and he wasn't in the mix the first couple of weeks. He kept his head up, worked extremely hard, we started seeing him in [develop] in batting practice, and now you're starting to see it in between the lines. It's been nice because the game rewards you. Somebody who kept a good attitude about it. He could easily pout. He's really talented so it's not about his talent, it's about him getting out there and working harder and putting it together.

Q: Are you seeing that same attitude from Rowdey Jordan? Is he staying positive?

CL: He's been awesome. He's just been playing tough. He works hard, shows up, great teammate, great attitude, we just know that baseball can be really rough on you at times. It's a cruel sport and it's a great sport. I'm confident that he'll work out of it. He's just too talented and too good of a kid.

Q: Being down 4-0, does that give you the opportunity to tell your players that they have adversity to face?

CL: I'd rather not, but it is [good to face some adversity]. We did feel like we could come back. I didn't know it would be right there in the first inning, but we knew it would be a bullpen game for both teams. Now that you're in conference play and midweeks, it is about how you manage your [bullpen]. With us having two game this midweek, it makes it real tricky. We were hoping for a better start [at Samford], but we do have confidence in our offense, and I feel that we could score some runs.

Q: How big was Brandon Smith on saving some of the bullpen for tomorrow's game?

CL: It was huge. He got our game shirt tonight, because I felt like it was a turning point in the game. He had a really good breaking ball tonight, too, which he hadn't had until late. It was nice to see him throw that out there. I thought he pieced that game together for us and got us through those tight couple of innings in the middle part of the game.

Q: Who's the starting pitcher for tomorrow?

CL: "[Peyton] Plumlee will start tomorrow. We should have a pretty full bullpen, as well. So, we'll get up there and play. Hoping to get a really good start from Peyton [Plumlee].

Q: What do you see from Riley Self with converting him back and forth?

CL: A little bit of confidence. I think that down in Florida he pitched well, and I thought he was pretty good tonight, too. We need him. He's a veteran guy. He doesn't get shaken. He gets out there and competes. I think that as his arm gets in shape and maybe as it warms up, he'll keep improving.

Q: How do you keep the team locked in in between midweek games and conference games?

CL: It's hard. The positive for us tomorrow night is that we're heading to Samford and our team knows [how good they are]. They played them in a regional last year. They respect them and know that we're going in to play a really good opponent on the road. This group has a pretty good edge about wanting to play every day. It's fun to coach them because they show up and they're ready to go.

Josh Hatcher

Q: Where is your head right now?

JH: You know I'm in a good spot right now. I've just been waiting to get my turn. When I did I just wanted to give my team the best chance to win. I have been doing that and hopefully we can continue to do that.

Q: How did you attack their pitching tonight?

JH: We had a big weekend in Florida but that is behind us obviously. We just wanted to ride that momentum going into a big week. Today we just wanted to go out there and do what we do best, stick to our offensive approach and just win a game.

Q: What is the mindset after going down 4-0 early?

JH: We were really confident. We knew it was a long game. We still had nine full innings to play. We knew we were going to get the job done. We didn't have to get them all of them back right then and there. Like I said, we had nine full innings to play and we were just in a really good spot, still.

Q: Being such a busy midweek, coming off a big series, and going into a new series how focused do you have to be?

JH: You really have to stay focused. You have to do all of the little things right. You have to eat right, make sure you're sleeping, and get to class. You have to get that work in obviously. You just have to stay focused on and off the field. When you are on the field you have to focus on what you're doing, then and there, even though it's a long busy week. You just have to balance things out.

Q: What have you been doing to try and keep your swing loose?

JH: You know I have just been sticking to my offensive approach that I have. A really big thing is the mental aspect of it, staying locked in and staying bought in to what we teach here and what Coach [Gautreau] has taught us. That is a really big part of what is working for me right now, just being bought in.

Q: Anything specific that goes with bring bought in?

JH: I mean not really. We all have an approach that we stick to. Not everybody is the same. What works for me is different than what works for somebody else. We have just been working on that, staying mentally focused and not straying away from it.

Q: Was there anything you think the team improved on from Florida and what can you continue to improve on?

JH: I think we are playing really good as a ball club right now. Obviously, that was a big weekend in Florida, big game today. One thing I think we need to do is continue to stay locked in and play our baseball no matter who we play.

Jake Mangum

Q: Is it becoming routine to get down and then take care of business?

JM: It is a tough week. We are bouncing back from a big series win at Florida. Having two mid-week games, then Auburn coming in town for the first big SEC weekend at home, it's a trap game. I know Little Rock played Ole Miss well this year, they have played some teams well but these midweek games are tough. It is their big game. It's their highlighted game on the schedule. For us, we have Auburn coming in, we just beat Florida. It's a lot to take into. Eric [Cerantola], he's a freshman. He is going to get better. He's got real stuff. He's got first round type stuff on the mound. Once he figures out how to be a pitcher he's going to be the real deal here. I can't wait for that to happen, hopefully it's soon. You spot them four runs in the first, in a midweek game, it's easy to get into a trap mindset. That's when you have to think, don't away at bats. Don't play catch. Just take a deep breath and have some quality at bats and everything will kind of fall into place. And we did that tonight. We had a lot of runs and a lot of base hits. They threw a real arm. He was 91 to 96. Everybody they threw were 90 area and off speed pitches. I am really proud of our offense for that.

Q: How much do you think about chasing the hit record?

JM: We live in the day and age where anything that happens you're going to hear about it. It is almost impossible for you to not hear about it. I just know what if I can control what I can control everything will play itself out. At the end of the day I just have to go up there and have a good at-bat.

Q: What would it mean to you to have the most hits in the history of MSU baseball?

JM: It would mean a lot. There have been so many good players that have played here over the 129 years of Bulldog Baseball. There have been some amazing baseball players come through here. Just to have that honor would be unbelievable. If it happens, it happens, if it doesn't, it doesn't. All I know is we have to play Samford tomorrow on the road.

Q: How do you prepare the newcomers for midweek games when they weekend are such big games?

JM: Most of the guys out there are trying to win a job. It is 15-4 in the eighth inning, Luke Hancock has an at-bat. I didn't think he went, he check-swung, he didn't go. I'll say that but he called it a strike. I think back to my freshman year, Alcorn State. I saw a video of my first-ever hit last week. It made me think about that. I was 0-for-9 at that point. I was 0-for-9 as a freshman, had an opening night start, went 0-for-4 and got benched. I was on the bench, I was pinch-hitting here and there. You think about that and these guys are trying to get theirs. Every at-bat matters. Bryce Brock had two innings late. That means a lot to him no matter what the score is. Everything matters, even late in games.

Q: What does it mean to get a guy like Josh Hatcher going?

JM: I have told Hatcher all year to stay ready. Stay ready, when you get your opportunity you got to run with it. He's done that. I have to tip my hat to Josh Hatcher. Over the past year how much he has matured as a baseball player is what I'm happiest about. It's not the fact that he is hitting .500 or .600 right now, whatever it is. I'm happy with how he has handled adversity this year. Last year he would not have handled this start well, not playing much. This year he comes in here and he's been the best teammate. He has kept his head up and he gets his opportunity and he is running with it. When you see that from a guy who wouldn't have done that last year it shows you that this program does mature kids. It gets you older, mentally, not just physically. Just from a mental aspect, Hatcher has grown up so much over the past year. It has been awesome.

Q: Are there any moments that stick out to you?

JM: [It's] just guys always having his back. Whenever he wasn't playing it wasn't like he was hoping this guy would get out. He was truly hoping every guy on our team hit 1.000. When you see that in the guys you are competing against you know you have this real tight group. He has waited his turn. He been getting these opportunities and he's going to keep running with it.