



2019 NCAA Starkville Super Regional
Mississippi State Press Conference Quotes
Dudy Noble Field
Starkville, Mississippi
Sunday, June 9, 2019

Mississippi State Head Coach Chris Lemonis

Opening Statement

CL: "First of all, I want to congratulate Stanford on a great year. Just a great opponent and a classy program. I have known David [Esquer] for a while and to watch them go about their business and how they did it – especially last night with our situation. What a great program and a great year they had."

"An unbelievable night, I keep thinking that we have had our best night in our ballpark. It just keeps getting louder and louder. Our fans are unbelievable. Then, our ball club. It was a typical Mississippi State game, we just grinded it out. Some great plays by these guys up here [Jake Mangum, Peyton Plumlee and Dustin Skelton]. I thought we got a great start by Peyton [Plumlee]. After the first batter of the game, we were really good and had to get that out of your system. I think we had that two weeks in a row where he just pitched phenomenally. It is so fun to watch him come off the mound and for our fans support him all day long. Then, the ninth inning was pretty special to see our guys get congratulated as they finished up playing at The Dude."

Q: What makes the leadership throughout the team special?

CL: "This is a very player-driven program. Jake [Mangum] is an alpha, [so is] Ethan Small. We have a really talented group of sophomores too – [Jordan] Westburg and [Justin] Foscue. There is just so many leaders in this program where you play in some many environments at this level day in and day out. You kind of get used to it a little. They have had so much postseason experience. Today in our locker room, we talked about that they have been here and should be used to this – just go out and play our game. It is a neat dynamic in our program with so many older leaders and a great sophomore class that has shown a lot of leadership and production."

Q: Describe the ninth inning with Jake Magnum getting a hit and Elijah MacNamee hitting a home run in their final home at-bats.

CL: "It is awesome. Those type of players spend some much time with our fan base and our community. The community thinks the world of those guys. It is nice to see them go out that way. It was a little out of control all week. Jake was doing his hands all week. I do not know if he got a hit anytime he did that, but that is Jake."

"Elijah's week has been really hard. He is such an awesome kid, an awesome player but an even better kid. It was tough. The day after [the MLB draft] he showed up with a smile on his face and was pumping everyone else up. The game rewards that and that attitude. That home run was pretty fitting. I just wish he had not thrown the bat over the catcher's head. I went out and apologized to the umpire and their coach. There is so much emotion. I do not blame Elijah. He was excited. He was not trying to show anybody up."

Q: How has Peyton Plumlee improved and fought throughout the season?

CL: "I think he fought for so long just to get back in the mix. We got him back in the fall and he had not played in a whole year. He was not really good in the fall. He came out in the early season and was pretty good. Then, he struggled. He has kept fighting. The biggest thing with Peyton, like he said, is that he was not really great early. Then, he found it. He just did not give in, and he kept making pitches. That desire to get back and experience, it is huge for him because he did miss it."

Q: Was tonight a validation for Dustin Skelton?

CL: "When I took the job and was looking at the roster, I had so many people tell me who is going to catch and what are you going to do. Stanford's catcher [Maverick Handley] is an awesome player. I think he was the defense player in the PAC 12."

"I told Dustin after the game, 'You were the best catcher on the field tonight.' He was phenomenal. He works really hard. Our catching coach Kyle Cheesebrough does a great job. Some great players get better just a little bit every day. That is kind of what he has done over his career. He has had big hits the last two nights plus the way he handles our pitching staff. He has such a great demeanor. From our pitching coach to our pitching staff to him, it is like having a coach out there between the lines."

Q: What has the last year been like for you?

CL: "I think the team has delivered. It has been a crazy year for sure. We have a good team and a good staff of coaches. They have done a phenomenal job. We had an older group that has done some things. We had some question marks. I was super proud watching Jared Liebelt tonight. I had tears in my eyes watching Cole Gordon who we had to talk into coming back. It has been a crazy year. We are not done yet. This group is really player-driven. They have goals. They are still motivated from last year to get back and play the best they can in Omaha."

Q: Have you ever seen anything like the fans and atmosphere the last two nights?

CL: "Nothing, I cannot talk to my coaches because it is so loud. The fans are so into it and so knowledgeable about the game. I told [Director of Athletics] John [Cohen] after the game what an unbelievable place to play. I was never here at the old ballpark, but this new one is special. The character it brings, the crowd, the noise and the atmosphere. Every team that has come to play is so complementary after they leave. It is a rowdy environment, but it is a classy environment. We have baseball fans here. They live and die baseball. That is a special, special group."