

College World Series

Wednesday, June 19, 2019

Omaha, Nebraska



Chris Lemonis

Jake Mangum

Keegan James

Mississippi State Bulldogs

Vanderbilt - 6, Mississippi State - 3

CHRIS LEMONIS: Tough game. You've got to give credit to Vanderbilt. I thought Kumar Rocker was really good to start and Tyler Brown was really good to finish.

We didn't manage the fifth. The fifth is what gets us a little bit. But you've got to credit their players and Stephen Scott, he hit a couple balls that changed the game.

Q. Jake, you've seen a lot of talented young pitchers in your career. What's your assessment of Kumar Rocker for Vandy?

JAKE MANGUM: He was able to command two pitches for strikes. He's got a fastball that's mid-90s and a 12-6 slider that works. He was able to keep us off balance. He pitched really, really well. He's a freshman. That speaks volumes of his last two starts. The future is really bright for him.

He's a really talented kid, and he's going to have a great career at Vanderbilt.

Q. Keegan, entered in a similar spot to Cole the other night, they had the lead, and you had to hold things down. How did you feel like you handled that situation, and what it was like and the chance to do it on the big stage?

KEEGAN JAMES: I've been in that situation before last year at Vanderbilt. When Coach calls your name, you've got to be ready. I've been putting in a lot of work the past couple weeks. Had a really good feel for all three of my pitches for the majority of the game today, and I just was confident. That's all it was.

Q. Jake, what about Kumar's slider makes it just so difficult to -- he generates a lot of swing and miss off of it, but it's unconventional.

JAKE MANGUM: I only saw it once, and that was -- so it's tough for me to tell you about it because the one I saw I swung and hit the first. But from what I saw from the dugout, it really looked like it just was on the same plane as his fastball, and when you've got two pitches

that can move completely different ways at completely different miles per hour, if it comes out of the hand the same way, it's going to be tough to keep your balance and stay behind the ball.

And give him credit, he threw it where he wanted to, and he'll do well.

Q. Jake, you guys have been in a similar situation, regionals and super regionals. You had to win three or four games in a row in a few days. How prepared do you feel like you are for a potential stretch like that?

JAKE MANGUM: I mean, that was a tough one to swallow, but it is what it is, and we've got to go home tonight and turn the page quick. We've got a really good team tomorrow that we've got to play against, and it's going to be another great college baseball game in Omaha. Got to be ready to go.

Q. Chris, Stephen Scott has had a really big year for those guys. As a coach, what do you see from him on film, and what did you see from him today with those two homers?

CHRIS LEMONIS: Their whole lineup has had a really good year, so as you look at them, I was looking at it last night, and you've got double-digit home runs there late in their lineup with a couple guys. And I thought we pitched him good at times and we left some balls over the plate, and for a good hitter, man, he took advantage of it and crushed them. He didn't miss them and took advantage of our -- the pitches that we threw.

Q. Coach, do you expect to see JT Ginn tomorrow?

CHRIS LEMONIS: Yeah, JT will be starting tomorrow night.

Q. We hear a lot about Kumar's slider and how well it's been working lately. Is that just a pretty good pitch for a freshman, or is that an elite pitch?

CHRIS LEMONIS: I think it's an elite pitch because what he does, he throws you one for a strike, and then he throws you that one that's right on the knees and ends up being -- and his slider is a little bit more down than it is side, so it's kind of going under a lot of barrels, and then when you throw 95 on top of it, it just -- you're having to commit to something pretty early with him, and that's what makes it tough.

I thought he just had a lot of poise for a freshman. Really good job today.

Q. Keegan had a couple of tough outings, and he's been kind of up and down this year. What did you see from him differently today and maybe the last couple of times he's been out that's kind of settled things down for him and allowed him to come in and eat up some innings and get some outs?

CHRIS LEMONIS: He's just commanding the zone. Like he told you, he had three pitches for strikes, and when he does that, he's always been really good. He just lost the strike zone a little bit at times. When you have a regional or super regional, you don't have midweek games in the conference tournament, so he's kind of been that guy that we've thrown in the midweeks in terms of we threw against each other, and he's been dominating our hitters the last two weeks in between the regional and super regional. We had games where we went Liebelt, Gordon, and that was pretty much it, so he's been sitting over there. I had a good feeling he'd pitch well today.

Q. How did you feel Peyton pitched under the circumstances there after his first two NCAA tournament showings?

CHRIS LEMONIS: You know, I thought he was great. We kind of hurt him a little bit in the first because we don't catch a ball, he pitches out of it. He pitches out of the inning in the third where we get to first and second, and that's what concerned me in the fifth is there's an old coaching rule, there's three jams, you're not getting out of the third one. I go out to get him then, but I thought he was pretty good. He pitched with good stuff. It was just a really good lineup that can put pressure on you with the home run or the runners, but I was proud of Peyton.

Q. Chris, in the fifth inning there with the bases loaded, Tanner Allen throws to second. Would you have preferred for him to try to go home and get the double play there?

CHRIS LEMONIS: That's tough. Yeah, probably, in hindsight. But when you're in the moment, Tanner thought he had that double play. He's played great first base for us all year. We always say that ball can take you either way. I just think it was kind of a squib, so I think that's the piece that got him a little bit.

Q. I know you probably want it under different circumstances and obviously there's a challenge in facing Louisville tomorrow itself, but have you thought about maybe how neat it is that Omaha is going to set you up with Dan and that team?

CHRIS LEMONIS: Yeah, it's a -- we always say if we're going to play each other, we're not scheduling each other, I can tell you that, but if we play each other, we'd

want it to be Omaha. We were just hoping we were in different brackets and in the last games. Obviously one of us will go home, but one of us will get to keep playing.

But the reality is it's Mississippi State against Louisville, and Dan nor I get to swing a bat or hopefully him not steal a base or anything like that. It'll come down to the kids.

Q. Obviously you'd rather get to Friday today, but as far as the pitching is concerned, do you feel pretty good about what you've got left? Keegan got you three innings today. Do you feel good about what you have left?

CHRIS LEMONIS: I do. You take it day by day and assess it. That's all we can do in our world. JT is fresh, and we've got -- we didn't use Cole, we didn't use Liebelt, Colby threw a hitter, Trysten threw five pitches. So we have some guys available, and some other guys there on the bench. It was nice to see Eric Cerantola get out there and get a hitter there, so we'd have him available, too.