

**College World Series: Baton Rouge Regional
Friday, June 2 2017**

Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Matt Riser

Corey Gaconi

Taylor Schwaner

Drew Avans

Southeastern Louisiana - 12, Rice - 6

THE MODERATOR: On the podium, third baseman Taylor Schwaner, left fielder Drew Avans, starting pitcher Corey Gaconi, and head coach Matt Riser.

Matt, we'll ask you to get started with a few opening comments, please.

MATT RISER: Yeah, we talked about it a little bit coming into last night. This is the third time around. A little bit different than the past two years where we felt this was some type of accomplishment to get here. It's time to win one of these things. The only way to do that is get off on the right foot. I thought we did a good job of playing fast, playing hard, playing aggressive, putting pressure on their defense to force the errors there, and came up with some talented plays, some big defensive plays in the right moment, some big pitches in the right moment, some big hits in the big moment. When you do that part, you're going to win a lot of ball games.

THE MODERATOR: Let's go to Corey. You pitched 6 1/3 innings. Talk about your outing, please.

COREY GACONI: I just came out looking for strikes, kind of worked the zone, let my defense play behind me. I think, for the most part, I did a good job of that. It was a big inning with the bases loaded and only one run. I thought that was a big moment of the game. I just kept going out there and just giving it my all. Letting my defense play behind me was the biggest thing.

THE MODERATOR: Third baseman Taylor Schwaner, 3-for-5 with a home run. Talk about your night at the plate, please.

TAYLOR SCHWANER: I was trying to get in there and just put a barrel on the ball. I got into some good counts. I was able to take an aggressive swing and got one out and had a few extra base hits. Got things going with two outs. That was big for the team.

THE MODERATOR: Left fielder Drew Avans, likewise 2-for-5 with three-RBI night. Talk about your night at the plate.

DREW AVANS: I was just trying to get on time with the fastball and hit any mistake that came over the zone. Early, it wasn't what I wanted, then later in the game, just timely hits. I live for that.

THE MODERATOR: We'll do the same thing. Take questions for both coach and the student-athletes.

Q. Taylor, there was so much talk about what Rice did to you all last year and the way they embarrassed you all. Was tonight a little bit of redemption for you?

TAYLOR SCHWANER: For sure. When we saw that name pop up and saw we were playing them, it fired us up. Just want to get back out there and get that win. That's what we did. Keep that going tomorrow night against LSU.

Q. Coach, are you starting Mac (Sceroler) tomorrow on the mound?

MATT RISER: Yeah. We talked about it. Mac was set up to pitch against LSU. We got to put ourselves in that position, but Mac will definitely have the ball tomorrow night.

Q. I have a follow-up question. Mac, as people may not know, his uncle is Ben McDonald, who was an All-American pitcher at LSU. Do you feel there will be an extra bit of -- just an extra sense of energy coming from him tomorrow since he's playing LSU in a big time game, regional against LSU?

MATT RISER: Yeah, regardless of who his uncle is, honestly, the legend of his uncle lives here and will always live here. Regardless, it's a big game no matter what the situation is. Even if we weren't playing LSU, we talked about it. It's three wins from becoming one of the final 16. We got win number one. Now it's time to get win number two. What we talked about, again, in the middle of the season, each weekend as you keep going along deeper and deeper, the magnitude of each game is going to continue to grow. Our guys are enjoying that moment right now.

Q. Coach, LSU's kind of had your number the last couple years. Just how do you get mentally prepared going into a game like this where you haven't won against them in a while?

MATT RISER: It's been ten years. I'll tell you exactly the last time we beat them. It was a midweek game my first year as assistant coach and college coach. I think the biggest thing is ride the momentum through tonight. Don't let the energy tomorrow get too high or too low. Whether we come out and score five in the first inning or we come out and give up five the first inning or bang, bang, back and forth pitchers' duel in the seventh, we've just got to do a good job of working. I don't think we worry too much as an opponent. Obviously, any club we play is going to be talented and playing their best baseball. LSU didn't do that today. They're going to be looking to play their better ball game tomorrow. But they got a win when it counted.

Q. Guys, can you all talk about playing LSU earlier this season and maybe what you all learned, what you took away from that game? Does it really mean -- does that game mean anything at this point in the year?

TAYLOR SCHWANER: It was early on in the season. I mean, that was a big game for us, obviously, against LSU. We competed against them, and it got out of hand late. But I mean, it's a huge game tomorrow, obviously. Just hope to get on top early and carry that momentum for the day.

THE MODERATOR: Corey, you want to comment on that?

COREY GACONI: I would just say it was a good thing playing them earlier in the year, kind of getting a little familiar with them. I think any time you play a team second, third, fourth, fifth time, it's always better the more times you've played them. I think we know what they have. I mean we're going to see a different arm tomorrow. But I think if we come out and play our kind of game and jump on top early and just kind of ride the momentum, as we've been saying, I think we have a good chance.

DREW AVANS: Of course it means something. It's a regional. I'm trying to win it all. I want it. Our horse Mac is going tomorrow. I think he's the best pitcher in the country, if you ask me. So we're going to ride him.

MATT RISER: Drew does a little better hitting the baseball than he does public speaking.

THE MODERATOR: What about it? You want to make a comment?

MATT RISER: He's good. No comment.

Q. Coach Mainieri said he's going to start Alex Lange, obviously, on Saturday. What kind of challenges does he present to your lineup? Speak a little bit about Lange.

MATT RISER: Yeah, obviously, he's a horse, man. He's one of the best in the country. When he gets that breaking ball going, obviously, with the command of the fastball, it's really good. So you got to grind through some at bats. There's some tough pitches we're going to have to fight off and

foul off. We're going to get some pitches to hit and some different counts, and we just have to do a good job making sure we take advantage of those when we do get them. A guy of that caliber doesn't make a ton of mistakes when he's on, and I imagine tomorrow, with what's on the line, our guy will be on, and so will he.

Q. Do you guys kind of relish the underdog role? Or coming in here and trying to unseat LSU?

MATT RISER: Yeah, I mean, I think the biggest thing, and probably the best comment I could make for that has kind of been the conversation we've had all week. I got a lot of congratulatory texts saying nice job, go get them in regional. Real simple way to put it, kind of how I opened up the statement here. It's our third time being here. It's not an accomplishment being here anymore. One day little brother grows up and becomes a man. That's what happens. To us this weekend is for us to grow up a little bit and for little brother grow up to be a man.

Q. Coach, do you feel like your team is battle tested a bit? Your RPI is through the roof this year and your strength of schedule, you played LSU before. You guys have had a lot of strong opponents. Do you feel very battle tested and ready for this?

MATT RISER: No doubt. That's why we set the schedule the way we did. Obviously, we reaped the benefits from an RPI standpoint but also from a preparation standpoint, to make sure you're ready for this moment. Tomorrow, you're two wins from being in the final 16, one win away from being in the championship game of this thing. So there's no doubt it's played a big part in what we've done. The mindset of these guys, just the mentality, this is what they've always kind of strived for. So maybe some of those letdown moments we've had in the season, when we got swept by Houston Baptist or lost 2 of 3 in Corpus Christi, maybe the focus got a little bit off track there. But we know this time of year everybody is going to be a stud. It's going to be a Rice or an LSU. Those guys have done a good job of getting up for that moment all year long.

Q. Now that it's become a common occurrence for you to be in this regional, what was your message to the team this week, and what's going to be your message to the team tomorrow before the game?

MATT RISER: The biggest thing we've got to do is kind of simplify this thing. We're not trying to get to 40 wins. We're not trying to get to 39 wins or 38 wins. We're playing this like a normal weekend set. If you win three, you win a regional championship, and you're in the final 16. The way we treat weekends, if you want to be a championship ball club, you've got to sweep. The only way to sweep is win on Friday, take care of Game 1. We've done that tonight. Now the only way to sweep is take care of tomorrow. Then when we get to Sunday, just go from there

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THE MODERATOR: Get Coach Graham to give us an opening comment.

WAYNE GRAHAM: You saw it. It was ugly. We feel like we could come back. We've come back before a lot. Earlier in the year, we had games like that, and I think they know that we can come back. We'll do everything we can to get ready to play.

THE MODERATOR: Left fielder Dayne Wunderlich, 3-for-4 with two RBIs, a home run which tied the score, I believe, in the fifth inning. Is that correct? Yes, two-run homer. Maybe talk about that at-bat.

DAYNE WUNDERLICH: Well, I got down in the count pretty early. My mindset was to keep the rally going. Just try to put the ball in play and keep the rally going. And try to get the walk or another base hit. I got it to 2-2, I believe. I saw a curveball up and got lucky with that.

THE MODERATOR: Because we're late, we'll take questions for both player and coach.

Q. Wayne, you guys had like seven errors on defense. You're not going to win many games with that kind of defensive effort. Was it the ball -- or just the guys kind of losing focus on some of those balls?

WAYNE GRAHAM: I think it's just one of those games where everything that could go wrong defensively did go wrong. (Pitcher) Matt Canterino threw a ball into the back of the runner, and we had a play where, I think, the ball got lost in the sun on a pick-off play, I think. And some people that can play very good defense just didn't do it today.

I told them to go home, look in the mirror, and figure it out and get ready to play tomorrow. Fortunately, we get to play tomorrow.

Q. Coach, pitching plans for tomorrow? Do you have a starter?

WAYNE GRAHAM: Yeah, (Zach) Esquivel will pitch tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Any other questions? Okay, guys. I know it's been a long day. Thank you very much. Appreciate it.