

Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Thursday, May 27, 2021

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

Arkansas Razorbacks

Dave Van Horn

Postgame Press Conference



Arkansas 6, Vanderbilt 4

Q. If you could, just open it up with a brief statement.

DAVE VAN HORN: It was a good ball game. Both starters didn't have it tonight. To speak on Wicklander, he just seemed -- he couldn't locate his fastball like normal. He was behind in the count a lot, and he couldn't land his curve ball. He didn't have good stuff. He fought it a little bit. He gave us 3 2/3, and we just felt it was time to get him. It was just too wild.

We hung in there. Costeiu gave us an inning and a third. That was what we wanted him to do. Monke was wild tonight. They didn't hit him, but we had to take him out because he didn't throw the ball over the plate. We wanted Kevin to go two innings, eighth and ninth. We had to make the move. Kevin was outstanding. I think he got three outs on six pitches, when he came in. Just outstanding job there, and really could have got three outs on four pitches if we turn the double play.

Got some big hits. We fought, and we fought off some pitches and battles, and we got their starters' pitch count up. Just found a way to get a win tonight against a really good team.

Q. You had to move some guys around to different position. Bates, a young guy in there, gets a hit off Rocker, big hit. Just wondering what you thought of your revamped lineup defensively and also on offense.

DAVE VAN HORN: Offensively, I'll start with that. Ethan Bates had a great night for us. Gets a big hit first drive off Rocker, cuts the lead in half. I think his second at bat he walked, and then -- I don't know. I think that's where he went from first to third on a base hit. I just thought he did a tremendous job in there. Sometime in the game he did that. He had a sac fly, drove in another run. He just had a super game for us. He made one or two plays in the

outfield.

On the defensive end, we put Wallace at third base, and he didn't get a ground ball, but he made a nice tag on the steal attempt by Bradfield. That was just -- that was a great throw but really good tag. I think it slowed down that first inning a little bit.

We had a bad break there where we lost the ball in that high sky. It was really hard to see that time of night. The ball got up there and disappeared. Sure enough, it gave them another at bat, and they promptly singled and scored two runs. A lot of times when you give a good team such as Vandy an extra out in an inning, they're going to score, and that's what they did.

Overall, we played solid defense. We turned two double plays, should have been three. But Kevin Kopps came in and finished off the game for us.

Q. Goodheart seems like he has a mature approach dealing with a tough stretch, and he really came through tonight. What do you think how he's dealt with all that? He gets hit in the head, and he comes back -- he got an RBI out of it, and then he comes back and has that big hit.

DAVE VAN HORN: Yeah, it was big time. He got robbed by the second baseman, made a great play on him, had the shift and picked the short hop. Matt had some good at bats. He easily could have had a couple more hits. Obviously, he got hit in the head. It was a little scary from the side. It was with bases loaded, tried to go fastball in on him, and it got away and ended up driving in a run there. Just glad he didn't get hurt. We need him. We've got to get him going, and hopefully his confidence is up.

Q. What did you think about your approach against Rocker tonight? Did you go at it as you had planned and as you had hoped?

DAVE VAN HORN: Our plan is to try to keep him in the zone, lay out the high fastball. And that hard curve ball he has kind of has downward action, and it's hard to do, but our guys did it a few times. It led to them getting ahead in



the count. Probably led to a hit here and there and also led to some walks so we got his pitch count up. That's what we needed to do. It was a super job by the hitters. We knew we weren't going to get a lot of hits off these guys. They have such good arms. But you got to work the counts and little bit and you got to come up with a couple big hits, and that's what we did.

Q. Wicklander had a good third inning. Looked like the fourth inning might be pretty quick too. What happened in the fourth inning?

DAVE VAN HORN: He got two quick outs and then a walk, a single up the middle, and then like a four-pitch walk. And then he went -- I don't know. We got him after that. I just -- I don't know. I don't know why he didn't have his command tonight.

That's the way it works. You never know what you're going to get. He's been so good for us and consistent. Better now than next week. Hopefully get that out of his system and bounce back and have a great outing next weekend.

Q. Just how big to get the day off tomorrow, not only for this tournament, but even next week?

DAVE VAN HORN: It's great to get tomorrow off. Our plan right now is probably around 12:00 tomorrow we'll take the team over to Samford and give them some option to take some swings in the batting cage, and then we're going to lift weights. Take an hour and a half maybe and let them just get ready for Saturday's game physically and mentally.

Q. Do you go with Bolden on Saturday then?

DAVE VAN HORN: That would be -- I haven't talked to coach about it, but I'm sure Bolden will pitch.

Q. And if it goes to Sunday, is that TBA, or do you have anybody in mind?

DAVE VAN HORN: I think it would definitely be TBA, but we'll do what we can to win on Saturday. If we get to Sunday, anything it happen. It will probably be a little bit of everybody if we're fortunate enough to play again on Sunday.

Q. I don't think any of us were really sure how much we were going to see Kopps in this tournament. What led into the decision to letting him get into the game tonight, and obviously had the quick seventh, but going all three innings?

DAVE VAN HORN: The decision to put him in the game, we were planning on pitching him in this tournament. It's

kind of the formula we've been using. So we put him in the game. We were hoping that we could get another inning out of Caden Monke, but obviously he couldn't find the strike zone.

So with two balls on a batter, we brought Kevin in, and he did a great job. He got nine outs and threw, I don't know, 27, 30 pitches in there. You might not see him any more in a tournament, you might see him for an inning. I don't know. We'll see.

Q. The TV cameras caught you saying to Goodheart see the ball up. I think he had swung at a pitch in the dirt on the pitch before, and it was the next pitch he hit. Your confidence in having him in the leadoff spot despite what he had been going through.

DAVE VAN HORN: Matt usually makes pitchers work a little bit, so I like hitting him up there. He also has some power. He hadn't hit one in a while. He has 12, 13 home runs, and I can't remember the last time he hit one. I feel like he can drive in some runs with the guys in the tail of the order. He's a good fit because he'll take a walk. He's not up there trying to unload. When he does swing, we want him to swing and let it go. If he strikes out, he strikes out.

It was good to see Matt go to the plate with a little more confidence tonight. That was a beautiful swing when he hit that ball opposite field over the left fielder's head and drove in a couple of runs and gave us our first lead of the night.

Q. And then I had a question about just the overall confidence and where you all are. I think you're 8-2 against teams in the top five when you played them.

DAVE VAN HORN: I don't know, we just play. We have enough pitching to keep us in games. We usually don't make too many mistakes in the field where we give up a real big inning, and then we fight you at the plate a little bit and put together an inning or two. That's been the formula. That's been kind of the demeanor of this team. They just keep playing. They play hard.

Q. You guys have been playing these ranked teams all year. I think I figured out you're 18-4 against other teams in the coaches poll, which seems kind of ridiculous in a good way. What do you think about that? There seems like a little extra buildup because you guys hadn't played Vandy, Rocker was pitching against Wicklander. Do you feel like you guys got a little more pumped up for this one?

DAVE VAN HORN: They've been excited to play Vanderbilt. They've been so good over the last ten years,

and just having two big-time starters and guys that are going to be really good drafts, yeah. I mean, I think that the guys were a little extra hyped up because we hadn't played them in the ten-week season. I don't know. What was the other part of that question?

Q. I looked up the coaches poll. I'm not good at math, but I think I got this right. I think you're 18-4 against other teams in the top 25. That's pretty good.

DAVE VAN HORN: Yeah, I don't think that our guys get really -- we don't look at that stuff too much or talk about it. Hey, we're playing a ranked team or make a big deal about it. So I don't think they make a big deal about it. They just show up and play whoever we're playing. That's kind of been their mindset really since the beginning of the season.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports