

# Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Saturday, May 29, 2021

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

## Ole Miss Rebels

## Mike Bianco

### Postgame Press Conference



Arkansas - 3, Mississippi - 2

MIKE BIANCO: Just one of those games where offense runs were at a premium today, I think for both teams. Wind was blowing in pretty strong from left field, knocked some balls down. I thought both staffs pitched really well. So it came down to a homer by them in the first by Smith, and then a chance where I think it was a walk, a fielder's choice, and then a base hit to left that ends up scoring the winning run.

So just one of those days where we had a couple opportunities where, if we would have hit one in the gap, maybe it would have been different, but credit them. They're so good and pitched it really well, played really good defense.

Just proud of our guys. We had a good week here. It's disappointing to end, but I thought we learned a little more about ourselves, and I think we got a little bit better, especially on the mound. So that was good.

**Q. You mentioned that you were pleased with what you saw on the mound. This whole week you guys only allowed, I think it's 13 runs in five games. We've mentioned all week how impressive the pitching staff's been, but what impressed you the most about this group as a whole and also today?**

MIKE BIANCO: I think a couple things stand out. One, what Hayden said is exactly right. We preach all the time, sometimes the biggest difference between a good pitcher and a great pitcher or a good pitcher and an average pitcher is the guys that are better are able to make pitches and get off the field, and our guys were able to do that this week more times than not.

The other thing is I thought we really attacked the strike zone. I thought we had a little more attitude to us on the mound, and I think we were more aggressive in the count

early in at bats that helped us a lot. We're going to need that next week, obviously.

**Q. Could you talk a little bit about Jacob Gonzalez. I know we've talked about it on some other talks, but can you talk a little bit about Jacob and his contribution to the team. He had a really great week at the plate this week.**

MIKE BIANCO: We talked about it all year long, and he's been sensational. He's been sensational from day one. I want to say he started every game. I could be mistaken, but I think he started every game at shortstop. I don't know if that's ever happened since I've been here. And then for him to swing it offensively, to bat third in our lineup. He had a sensational week. I don't think it surprises anybody. He's done that all year long on the biggest stages in our league. But he's been sensational.

**Q. Jacob was telling us about how he felt like the energy was a little bit different, a little bit higher this week. How do you go about carrying that over from Hoover into regionals next week?**

MIKE BIANCO: That was one of the goals we talked about. Postseason is a little different. I think I talked about it yesterday in the press conference, and I think these guys enjoyed this experience. Not just, hey, coming to the hotel and getting to play some good teams, but enjoyed the competition, enjoyed the moments, and to have success postseason, I think you've got to be loose, you've got to be free, and you've got to play with a lot of confidence. You've got to have a competitive spirit.

So, again, challenged the guys at the beginning of the week to bring that type of energy and that type of vibe and swagger to the field every day, and I think they did.

**Q. Is that energy a thing you've kind of seen common to teams that have succeeded of yours in regionals?**

MIKE BIANCO: Yeah, and it's not just the energy. It's, I think, from a fan standpoint, you can see it and the guys moving around, but it's really more of a vibe in the dugout. It's more of a belief in one another that guys are going to



succeed at the plate and on the mound and in the field. It's a confidence. I think that confidence, that belief, as my old mentor used to say, is transferable from one dugout to the other. It makes the other team realize that, hey, we're in trouble today. This team's really good, and they really believe they're going to win. So, yeah, I think it's very important.

**Q. You said you learned some things about your team this week. I assume pitching was part of that, but what else did you learn?**

MIKE BIANCO: Certainly, I think it starts with pitching. We needed to be better on the mound. We needed from the starting standpoint, McDaniel and Diamond were terrific. Not necessarily from the starting, although he started this week and pitched great yesterday, Tyler Myers, and that will be a huge piece of the bullpen. Brandon Johnson, I believe, had three appearances this week and pitched well in all of them. Jack Dougherty, I thought was dominant in the Vandy game.

So we're going to need that. That's one of the things I think that we've lacked, consistency in that bullpen throughout the year, and that will bode well for us next week. I thought offensively I heard somebody -- it was you, parish, I think. You asked the question about after the first day, but part of that comes from facing Little and Leiter, the No. 2 and No. 3 starters from a very good pitching staff at the University of Georgia, and I thought Bolden pitched really well today at the very beginning.

And you play in a bigger park that's not really conducive to as much offense as maybe some of the parks in our league. So when you wrap all that up -- I thought Jacob swung it well. I think Chatagnier is starting to swing it better. Team, I thought, had a good week. Kevin Graham had a really good week, I thought, offensively. I think we're playing well and excited about next week.

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