

# Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Friday, May 27, 2022

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

**Kentucky Wildcats**

**Coach Nick Mingione**

**Tyler Guilfoil**

**Devin Burkes**

Postgame Press Conference

Kentucky 10, Vanderbilt 2

**NICK MINGIONE:** Extremely proud of my team. I've been saying it all year how much I love them and how much I trust them. Resilient group. Real toughness. Matt just told me we have six top-6 RPI wins in the last 13 games, so we've picked a good time to be playing our best baseball of the year.

Couldn't be more proud of these two guys on the set, but really our team in general. When you think about the amount of sleep we got, I don't know about them, but I'm starving, so I know they've got to be.

But yeah, just a resiliency and a toughness and fight says a lot about their character as men.

**Q. For both of you, you guys keep winning. You've had your backs against the wall in three games this past week and you've always managed to come back. What is it about this team that makes you so resilient?**

**TYLER GUILFOIL:** Well, plain and simple, we just don't really want to go home. We just love being here, love playing with each other. It's just a great brotherhood, and we just don't want to stop playing with each other. We're going to keep on doing what we're doing and hopefully we can do it for another month.

**DEVIN BURKES:** I'm going to say it as simple as possible. We're peaking at the right time. We're just playing our best baseball the last month or so. Just trying to keep going.

**Q. Tyler, you're playing in arguably the best baseball conference in America; have you had a chance -- I**



know you're in the middle of a fight for your life, but have you had a chance to savor that moment and kind of process that you're playing with all these great players?

**TYLER GUILFOIL:** Yeah, I usually take a chance -- when I first get up to the mound when I come into the game, I take a chance to look around and see my surroundings, soak it in a bit. That helps me from a performance standpoint, but it also helps me to soak in the moment and really enjoy it.

**DEVIN BURKES:** Yeah, like he said, you've just got to savor the moment. He's been throwing great for us all year. All our pitchers have been coming through, so shout goes out to him.

**Q. Devin, huge night last night, we didn't get a chance to talk to you, but can you talk about that experience last night?**

**DEVIN BURKES:** I just played baseball, man. I just play hard and just have fun. I think a lot of people just forget to have fun. It's a game; just have fun. Stuff might not always go your way, but you've just got to have fun.

**Q. I've heard through the rumor mill that you are one of the most positive guys on the team, that you probably are as positive as Coach Mingione here. Would you agree with that statement? Give me an example of your positivity.**

**DEVIN BURKES:** I think it's everybody. We all just kind of like feed off each other. Everybody calls me the energy magnet or whatever, but I just kind of be myself and then everybody feeds off each other. It kind of just keeps passing along.

**Q. Tyler, how does playing alongside somebody like Devin help you, and how can that inspire the team to continue to win here in the postseason?**

**TYLER GUILFOIL:** Well, he's obviously a great guy to throw to because if I get any type of out of whack when I'm pitching, he comes out there and his positive attitude really helps me hone back in. But also I'm just really trying to get

**ASAP** sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

back into the dugout in order for my guys to put up runs, and obviously we showed that we could do that today.

**Q. Speaking of support, defensively you guys have been great. I know in previous games you've had a couple spectacular plays. As a pitcher, how confident does that make you knowing that all your guys have your back defensively?**

TYLER GUILFOIL: It's extremely helpful knowing that if I make a guy put a ball in play that it's 99 percent of the time going to be made. I mean, Ryan Ritter, Danny Harris, Chase Estep, all guys that have made plays, great plays, all year long, and you've also got Jake Plastiak over there scooping it when they don't make a great throw.

**Q. How far can this team go?**

DEVIN BURKES: As far as we feel like it. I feel like there's -- I feel like our worst enemy is just ourselves. Like when we're off, like you've got to fight it and get back into it. I feel like our worst enemy is ourselves. We've already proved that we can beat the No. 1 team in the country, so I feel like we just need to keep going on a positive note.

**Q. You guys had so much up and down this season, the inconsistency. From a fan and media perspective it's been a little bit maddening. How do you account for that and even with all the ups and downs, what do you think you're the most proud of?**

DEVIN BURKES: Just keep playing hard. We just haven't given up all year. We just come back and we fight every time. Every time, come back and fight. That's what we like. That's what Coach Mingione preaches to us, just never give up, no matter what the deficit is. Just play hard; you never know what will happen.

TYLER GUILFOIL: Yeah, his message to us before the game was to pass the baton, meaning give it your all and then give it to the next guy. So I think I'm most proud of just us emptying the tank every time we go out there and the next guy stepping up when they need to.

**Q. Nick, after the first game and the weather and there were rumors of single elimination, how happy were you to see the sunshine and know that you have an opportunity now to keep playing, keep winning, and maybe get to Sunday and win this thing?**

NICK MINGIONE: You know, I think I was thrilled. I mean, I couldn't have been happier. I said this the other day, I just feel like Herb and our league has just done everything that they possibly can to get the games in. This is the time of year where the weather comes and goes, and there's

nothing you can do about it.

What we can do about it is make sure the field is ready. Our grounds crew has been unbelievable. We can make sure that we don't put our student-athletes in harm or jeopardy, and we did not do that, just to get games in.

I just feel like we just made all the right decisions. When you just sit there and you look, we didn't get guys hot and then have these delays. I told Herb, it's just a total team effort; I know that. But I just feel like we have done everything right as a conference to try to get the games in, and it's worked out to where we're obviously still playing, and it looks like sunshine.

**Q. As a coach you always have to strike that fine balance between giving the team a sense of urgency versus keeping them relaxed and not wilt under the pressure. You seem to be pushing all the right buttons. What's the secret with this team?**

NICK MINGIONE: I don't know what buttons I pushed. I just trust them. Like I've said that over and over. They just keep doing it. They want to play. They want to play. Man, I want them to keep playing.

When you have a team that has high trust and low maintenance -- really I've tried to stay out of the way, just make sure their mentality is right. That's really all I've spent my time doing is just to make sure that their mindset is right to go into battle.

Each day is different. Sometimes as a coach you try to say the same thing about 100 different ways. I've learned that a little bit in parenting, too.

But yeah, I've just really appreciated their effort and their grit and fight. They're just a fun group to be around. Like I can't explain it. I can't explain it. They've been high trust, low maintenance, and I'm just glad to be on the journey with them.

**Q. How much of that do you think is due to their maturity level? Baseball has changed. You're not coaching 18-year-olds all down the line right now. How much of a difference has that made? I assume it would be easier for you.**

NICK MINGIONE: Yeah, you know, it also just -- having brought in 22- and 23-year-olds, they've been doing some things one way. I said that the other day on the set with Adam Fogle, he's been doing his deal one way for five years and now it's his sixth year. And as a coach trying to find that fine balance of giving him freedom and when they struggle and they're not right, how do they react, how do

you go about them? Because I think you know this, everybody is different, and you can't treat everybody the same.

That's been a neat process to go through just to watch them, and I think if you go through everybody on our team, every single one of them has been through ups and downs. But just to watch them overcome that and just to play our best at the very end, it's been really fun. It's been really fun.

Their maturity has made it easy. I can tell you this, every time I put my head down at night, I sleep good, because I trust our players, and that's a comforting feeling as a coach.

**Q. What's the plan between now and the next game? Take us through what the next 24 hours are going to be like. Do you have a starter in mind already, and who's going to go?**

NICK MINGIONE: You know, Corbs texted me, it was like after 9:00 this morning, he's like, Nick, you got a starter yet? I was like, thanks for your patience.

I don't know. I wish I had a different answer. But I'll get together with Coach and see who we've got. I know this, there's a bunch of guys that want to throw. We'll just keep having guys do exactly what Tyler and Devo talked about, just keep passing the baton. We've got to get them some food and they need to get some rest.

I felt like the second I closed my eyes, I was waking up this morning, and I know they felt the same way. We got back around 1:50 and by the time we got them food, it's after 2:00. So that 9:30 wake-up call came early. We've got to get them fed and got to get them some rest. I know this about our guys, they're going to fight for Kentucky.

**Q. Tim was very complimentary of your team. He was disappointed in his loss. One thing I've noticed in sitting through these press conferences is all you baseball coaches are very supportive and complimentary of each other. You might not see that on the football side of things. I was just wondering what are your thoughts on that, and how would you characterize the relationship between baseball coaches in the Southeastern Conference?**

NICK MINGIONE: I would say it's probably -- each relationship with each coach is different, like any other relationship. But Tim Corbin, he's been really good to me. He's been really good to me.

From the time I was a volunteer coach here the first time,

he treated me like a head coach. That says a lot about his character. So I was a volunteer coach here the first time, but he treated me like a head coach. Always knew my name, just treated me good.

Then last year we had an experience that we went through like losing a player, and I called him, and he helped me get through that. That was really hard. It was the hardest thing I've been through as a coach, to lose a player, and I called on him because he did that.

I get emotional from that standpoint because this league is hard, but he and I have been through something that not a lot of people have. I'll just tell you this, he was there for me, and that meant a lot.

Outside of that, what we do for a living is really hard. This is the greatest league in America, and it's not forgiving. Anytime you get a chance to keep playing, you want to keep doing it. But I will say this: Every relationship with every coach is different. They're all not the same.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports