

Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Sunday, May 29, 2022

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

Florida Gators

Kevin O'Sullivan

BT Riopelle

Wyatt Langford

Postgame Press Conference



Tennessee 8, Florida 5

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: Well, first of all, congratulate Tennessee. They've had a remarkable season. They're the No. 1 team in the country for a reason. Obviously today was a tough one for us. I thought we battled the entire week. We were one hitter away from getting the tying run to the plate. I thought Carsten threw the ball great today. We got to that one inning where we had bases loaded and got the 0-2 count and just left one ball out over the plate but he was really good.

I thought our pitching the entire week was outstanding. I thought we swung the bats great. I like where we are right now as a team, and I'm looking forward to playing next weekend.

Q. For both of you, despite the loss today, what has this week as a whole set you up for going into NCAAAs next weekend?

BT RIOPELLE: Set us up for success. I think we played our best baseball this week except for the first two games we didn't swing it too well. I think the biggest thing to take away from this week is the fact that we had so many guys that didn't really have a lot of positive contribution to the season, I guess on the field. But they got their chance today and the last couple days, and they really made the most of their opportunities, and really excited about them moving forward, too. Just a lot more guys that we can add to the pot to put together a run at this thing.

WYATT LANGFORD: Yeah, it's great to see some guys like Timmy and Finnvoid get their opportunity and take advantage of that, knowing we can use them coming up in the Playoffs.

Q. Wyatt, tell us about the ball that Gilbert hit in the fifth. Did it get a little boost from the breeze? Describe that for us.

WYATT LANGFORD: Yes, Gilbert's a really good hitter. He just hit it really hard at me. I didn't get the best read on it and the wind was also pushing out there a little bit. So I just didn't get a good read on it.

Q. Wyatt, you continued with another great offensive weekend overall. What do you think went into the last couple weeks for you? You move up to the lead-off spot, you basically catch fire. Can you describe that for us?

WYATT LANGFORD: Yeah, I mean, I don't know what to say really. I didn't change anything that I was doing. I guess I'm getting more good pitches to hit now than I was in the 4 hole.

Q. What went into the decision to start Carsten Finnvoid today, and what did you see from his outing this afternoon?

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: You know, I mean, he's a different look, and obviously you run across pitchers like him, you don't see guys like him a lot. I thought he pitched great. I thought he pitched to both sides of the plate with his fastball. His changeup he used against right-handers and left-handers. He stole some strikes early in the count with his breaking ball. And he battled. He had a runner at third with nobody out and got two pop-ups to the infield, and made an awful lot of big pitches when he needed to. He did exactly what he needed to do to give us a chance to win today.

Q. It didn't necessarily end the way you might have wanted it to, but you guys really made a statement here. Got some big wins and positioned yourself nicely for next week. What would you say is the overall evaluation of your team's performance?

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: Well, we played seven games in six days, and they battled. We were one hitter away to get the

tying run to the plate at the end. We lost on Wednesday, we come back, and we start winning some ballgames. Won a double-header yesterday. We got Mac some work behind the plate, gives us an opportunity to get some more depth behind the plate moving forward. Offensively we were really good the entire week. I think the first couple games we ran across some really good pitchers, and I think we learned some lessons about making some adjustments. And then pitching-wise to get this deep in the tournament, you need a couple guys to step up and perform at a level that you may not have seen the entire year with like Fic yesterday and Timmy and Fish and obviously Carsten today.

It was a really good week for our team, really good week, and we should be ready to go for next weekend.

Q. Do you feel like the way you guys have been playing that this is a team that should be a top-16 seed, that it should be hosting a regional?

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: Well, I mean, that's for the committee to decide, but I do like the way we're playing. Do I think we're one of the top 16 teams in the country? Absolutely. But that's something we can't control.

But I like our team. I really like our team. I think we're playing our best baseball. We have been for a while now.

I think a run like this in the tournament should certainly help us moving forward.

Q. What does this next week look like for you guys? What's the plan for you guys?

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: Yeah, it's funny you asked that because I've talked to Chuck quite a bit about this, but the plan was to practice tomorrow, but obviously things have changed because we've played so many games.

We'll get together as a team tomorrow. Hopefully maybe have a meal for them, watch the selection show at noon, and then just go about our business and see what happens and where we're playing, if we're playing at home or if we've got to go on the road.

Then have a really good practice on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday and get ready to play.

Q. You've kind of already touched on this, but just using all the young guys in the bullpen like you have this week and kind of showing them, like you said, having some of the best performances of their career, how does that build the confidence of the depth of the pitching going into postseason play next weekend?

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: You'd have to ask them individually, but from my standpoint, I mean, they handled the big stage this weekend, and it's been a process. It's not easy to play or pitch in this league as a freshman, and I think the landscape of college baseball is obviously different now with COVID and guys getting extra -- a fifth year and in some cases a sixth year. So when you're 18 years old, 19 years old and you're facing lineups that are 22, 23 years old, it can be challenging at times.

But we've weathered the storm. We've gotten better. It's just -- for lack of a better term, it's been a process, but I'm really pleased with how they were able to figure this thing out, and like I said, it should give us some more depth moving forward.

Q. I know in this era there's a lot of hitters out there where you can kind of shift things and you know where they might be going with the ball. Gilbert looks like a guy who kind of hits the ball all over the place for Tennessee, hits lefties, hits righties, left, center, right field. When you're scouting a guy like that, how do you try to find something that you can attack?

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: Well, I mean, I thought Carsten made some really good pitches his first at-bat, and then we had a decision to make. We walked back, bases loaded, but to Carsten's credit, he got to an 0-2 count. Ball is a couple more inches down, a couple more inches out, I don't know, but I do think he was on swing mode.

I had an opportunity to work with him this summer with the USA team. He's a good player. He's kind of like a catalyst for them, and obviously he put two swings on the ball today that obviously helped their team.

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