

# Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Saturday, May 27, 2023

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

## Florida Gators

## Coach Kevin O'Sullivan

## Wyatt Langford

## BT Riopelle

### Postgame Press Conference



That's really all you can ask for going into the postseason is confidence. We have all the confidence in the world in ourselves. Obviously today, to piggy-back on what Sully said, we didn't play our best brand of baseball in the first inning and that really was a detriment to us in the entire game.

So hats off to Vandy. It's really hard to beat a team five times in two weeks, let alone an entire season, especially the program that Tim Corbin has built at Vanderbilt and the brand of baseball they play. Hats off to them, but looking back on what we did this week, it's just confidence to take into next weekend.

WYATT LANGFORD: Just to piggy-back on that, the number of comeback wins we've had this year is kind of just a testament to what we believe in as a team and what we know we can do going into the postseason.

**Q. For either of you guys, how important is it to come out to Hoover and get the reps that you're able to get and just stay kind of ready as you get ready for postseason play?**

WYATT LANGFORD: Yeah, it's very important. This tournament is an awesome tournament to come and play in, and the environment is awesome. Just coming out here and just playing and having fun and getting ready for the postseason.

BT RIOPELLE: For me, everybody kind of looks at it as reps to get next week, the postseason, or whatever week it is after this.

As much as we do think about that, we also want to come here and win. We came here to try to win. We came to try to dominate our opponent on every pitch, every play, every game. That what we were trying to do. We weren't trying to just get reps.

Now, it kind of turned into that at the end to get some guys some innings and some guys some ABs and stuff like that, but that wasn't our overall goal coming in here. Our goal was to win and win another championship for this program, and we fell short of that.

Vanderbilt 11, Florida 6

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: Well, Vanderbilt obviously played really well and jumped out to a comfortable lead there. I think they scored 10 runs over the first three innings, and we uncharacteristically made three errors today, made some other mistakes that kind of put us in a tough spot early.

But offensively we battled throughout the game. We always felt like we had a chance to get back into it, and I think that's one of the biggest things we'll take away from just this week is we have an identity now offensively, which we've had the entire year, but I think everybody has seen it, that we feel like we can come back, regardless of the deficit that we're in.

Relief pitching wise, we gave up one run over the next five innings, so we got a lot of guys some work. We had a chance to get Luke behind the plate.

So all in all, it was a really good week for us. Obviously today we're a little disappointed, but we've got bigger and better things ahead of us, and looking forward to next weekend.

**Q. BT, where do you feel the team is right now as you get ready for the NCAA Tournament offensively and pitching-wise?**

BT RIOPELLE: Yeah, I think we're awesome. We're a very tight-knit group to start out with. We have a bunch of guys on our team that have unbelievable confidence in themselves and the teammates that they have around them.



**Q. BT, what did you see from Cags today, having caught him the last three weeks? What did you observe in his outing today?**

BT RIOPELLE: He just wasn't as collected as he's been in his prior starts where he's had a lot of success. But all we can do is just flush it. I know he's a mentally strong kid. He'll do that, and he'll be ready for next weekend.

**Q. Cags' outing today, what did you think of him and the importance of being able to get guys pitch counts and to be able to get innings in this week?**

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: Yeah, I think if you go back, I think the second at-bat of the game, Diaz, he really grinded out that at-bat and drew a walk. I think that kind of set the tone for their offense.

You know, they just played better than we did today. Obviously Cags has had some really good starts leading up to today, and bottom line he will flush it and we'll get ready for next weekend.

But we had a chance to catch Luke today, so he had an opportunity. We had a chance to throw a bunch of pitchers to hopefully get their confidence a little bit for next weekend and moving forward.

And we're healthy. We didn't have any injuries this weekend or this week. From that standpoint that's always a thing you worry about late in the year, that somebody gets banged up or whatever, so yeah, we'll go home and regroup and get ready for next weekend.

**Q. Obviously you want to win, but do you feel like you guys accomplished a lot this week being able to get your three starters ready for regionals, and then also get some guys in the bullpen that maybe haven't pitched in a while, some innings?**

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: Yeah, there's a lot of talk about this tournament. I can assure you that we came in here to hopefully play on Sunday and have a chance to win the tournament. I think as a competitor and the program that -- the competitive spirit, you never take the field without wanting to win. So obviously, yeah, we are disappointed.

But at the same time, I think in 2017 we were in the semis, and I think Arkansas beat us 16-0 on the same day. It's one of those things that we've got to regroup, and the biggest message is we just can't have those types of innings pitching-wise or defensively moving forward. We're going to have to make sure that we play a little bit cleaner, obviously.

But all in all, we've had very exciting games, and the Alabama game was one that I'll never forget as far as how we came back, and then obviously the game against Vandy with BT and what he was able to do offensively.

There's a lot more positives than negatives, but like I said, proud of our group, but we've got obviously the regionals coming up, and we'll see how the draw goes.

**Q. Offensively you guys have been so good. Did you think they struggled a little bit, and then you were able to kind of get some hits and string together some hits and some more offense today?**

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: Yeah, there was some big pitches. It's just amazing to me, the bullpens in this league. Every guy is coming in throwing 93, 94, 95; there's no let-up. It was only our third game, obviously, but some of these teams are going four, five games into it, and you're like, the bullpen -- everybody has got good starting pitching, but the thing that has impressed me the most, I think, especially second half of the year, is the depth of bullpens in our league.

Everybody has got it. Everybody has got velocity and pitch ability in the middle, late games. From that standpoint, we saw some really good pitching this week, which should help us moving forward.

**Q. We've obviously seen the top four guys from this bullpen perform really well this weekend, but to be able to get five innings of really good relief today from guys we don't typically see, how important was that heading into next week to be able to have that bullpen depth beyond those top four players?**

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: Yeah, we had every intention of going into today not to use Abner or Slater. Neely was obviously going to be done for the weekend.

But yeah, we feel good about our bullpen, and like I said, I thought that Tyler came in and did a nice job, Purnell came in and almost got the double play and did his thing, and Chris Arroyo hadn't pitched in a while, he came in and did his job. I thought Fisher Jameson at the end was really good, too.

Yeah, from that standpoint you're going to have to have other guys step up for sure, and even if it's just a couple outs here and there, or an inning here, they're all important.

Yeah, we had some -- like I said, getting Luke behind the plate was important and getting BT off his legs and having Luke catch a game out here, or at least seven innings, six

innings, whatever it was.

Yeah, there was a lot of positives today in spite of the score.

**Q. Is that even more important that if you get into a situation where Brandon Neely needs to be a fourth starter in a regional, to have guys like Fisher and Nesbitt kind of have that performance, just even more momentum or their confidence?**

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: Yeah, I think that was one of the goals we had set, that we would hope to stretch out Neely, and we did that. If we ever get in a situation post-season that we need to extend him for three, four innings, we certainly could do that at this point.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.

