

Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Saturday, May 27, 2023

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

Vanderbilt Commodores

Tim Corbin

JD Thompson

Enrique Bradfield Jr.

Postgame Press Conference



Vanderbilt 11, Florida 6

TIM CORBIN: Well, it was a good response by the boys. Very happy for them. I thought they played with a good emotional level from start to finish. It was tough baseball. Giving the ball to a young kid that hasn't started a game, and then starting in the tournament against Florida, we talked about it last night, and before Brownny and I could speak to who potentially was going to pitch, he said, I know who you're going to choose, and he circled the name, and it was J.D., and I said yes, and I said, the reason being is because of the heartbeat. You know what you're going to get. You trust the fibers of the kid. He's tough.

It's very tough to stop that team. Very difficult. They've got some big-league hitters that are standing on the field there. He gave us five innings, got us midway. We played very good defense.

Guy to my right made some special catches again today, and we were able to finish it out because even with the margin the way it was, we knew that that game wasn't over and it was a long way to go. Just happy for the boys.

Q. JD, how did you feel today, and how did it feel for you to be making your first career start?

JD THOMPSON: I can't even describe the adrenaline rush that first inning. I'll probably never get that again. Props to those guys. They're a very, very good team, and for me to go out there as my first start, I mean, yeah, it wasn't pretty, but we won. That's all that matters.

We get another day to play, and I'm happy for these guys. 'Rique making plays all throughout the game, it's unbelievable. Like no worries whenever a ball is hit off the

bat at all, and props from 1 to 9, just banging the ball all day. It was unbelievable.

Q. Enrique, you faced Cags two weeks ago, was a much different result today. Could you go into how today was different?

ENRIQUE BRADFIELD JR: We were able to just really get our swings off early and just put people on base. That was the change from two weeks ago. Just being able to go out there and really establish a tone from the beginning of the game, move the ball around, some good things happened for us, so that was probably the biggest difference.

Q. JD, you mentioned the adrenaline rush early on in that start. How did you kind of experience -- once that started to wear off and you settled into the game a little bit, take me through a little bit how that felt once that kind of initial adrenaline wore off for you?

JD THOMPSON: Yeah, I feel like I've been all throughout my life keeping my composure very well in high-stakes games. I've been doing it since high school, so this was nothing different. It's just baseball. It's just a game. Going out there and doing what I do and getting a successful outing, it felt really good.

But just kind of bundling it all up and taking it out on the hitters instead of letting my emotions show even after a few big hits, kind of keeping my cool and getting back on the mound.

Q. Enrique, after you guys hit a skid a little bit a few weeks ago, what has it meant for you guys to have last week against Arkansas and this week kind of getting back into a groove right before the regionals?

ENRIQUE BRADFIELD JR: It's been a lot of fun. I think we're in a tough spot. The second half of our SEC season didn't go as we planned, and it happens in this sport. This sport can be cruel at times.

It was just kind of refocusing, hanging together, making sure we were still connecting with each other. That's the biggest part about this group is that we all love to be



around each other. Whether we're doing something baseball related or not, we're always hanging around each other, so it was just continuing that and knowing that we're going to be able to weather the storm and play some good baseball going forward.

Q. Tim, how do you approach your pitching decisions in a situation like this where you don't have too many available arms and you're just trying to advance to the next game?

TIM CORBIN: I think it's just trying to properly evaluate what you have health-wise from a pitching standpoint. Certainly tomorrow is important for our group in a lot of different ways. But I think we all understand, too, that there's something in front of us beyond that, and I don't want to minimize the importance of tomorrow. We all know that. But we want to do it, and we want to do it in the best interest of the kids and the team.

I think we will have enough arms to figure out playing nine innings, but all hands on deck. Everyone is going to have to help. Might be short doses, but that's what they'll do, and that's what they'll be willing to do.

Q. For JD, who pitched better than ultimately the numbers will show, how do you anticipate that kind of will help him moving forward, and at the risk of putting you on the spot, are there examples in your career of guys who have made a start like this as a young pitcher and that's kind of catapulted them, whether it was that postseason or into future years?

TIM CORBIN: Yeah, I think you build confidence because of experiences. He had an experience early in the year where he saved us really. We were facing Evansville. The game went into extra innings, and he went in and pitched three innings and held them down in a very tight ballgame. We ended up winning.

I think the recall of everyone was how composed he was during that moment. That was his first outing ever.

But if you know the kid and you know his background, you can see why he operates that way. I would suspect that he knows he's got a lot to work on, but at the same time, you saw fastball velocity. He was able to stuff the fastball at certain times today. He landed the breaking ball occasionally, and the breaking ball is a good pitch for him. That's really kind of the focal point of why we began to recruit him at such a young age.

But he's also got the ability to decelerate the ball with a changeup, too, so I think you will see him -- you will, because he's a hard working, he'll continue to grow, but it's

going to be good for him moving forward.

Q. What has it meant to get so many good strong outings and multi-inning outings, too, out of so many different pitchers, knowing that you might be a little shorthanded going into the regional, knowing you might have those options?

TIM CORBIN: It's just great for the kids. Anytime a kid can get on the field and participate and do something positive for his team, that's a gift. That doesn't happen to everyone.

When you're playing in this environment, and you know, you just drive a bus into this facility and you see all the RVs and you see all the people and you start to understand how important this is and the fact that you can be in the middle of it and compete in it and be in this arena is just a gift for these kids that's going to help them moving forward. It's going to help them next week; it's going to help them beyond.

We sit back and evaluate these kids, and you see it from a different perspective, but these kids end up playing, and it helps them -- it just gives them great experiences that will help and shape them the rest of their life.

Q. Really the performance of all the freshmen here in Hoover, whether it's Chris Maldonado, RJ Austin, JD Thompson and David Horn, what has this experience meant for them for someone who doesn't have any postseason experience like this?

TIM CORBIN: Same. It's just good experiences. It's getting on the field and being able to compete, and those guys have handled themselves well.

I think if you're a freshman in this league, whether it's Kurland or Maldonado, you have to have a level of maturity about you. You do not step on the field in the SEC and play for a team, particularly now, whether this continues or not, but you've got 24-, 25-year-old kids on the field. It is an old league for sure.

If you're 18 and you're playing and you're playing reasonably well, you're mature. You're skilled, but you're mature mentally, otherwise it doesn't happen.

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