

# Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Tuesday, May 21, 2024

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

**Vanderbilt Commodores**

**Coach Tim Corbin**

**Bryce Cunningham**

**Calvin Hewett**

Postgame Press Conference



Vanderbilt 6, Florida 3

TIM CORBIN: Story of the game obviously was on the mound. It was Bryce. He wanted the baseball, and certainly pitched really well. Got us deep into the game, seventh inning, which was important, always in a tournament setting.

But certainly after pitching this past weekend and the quick turnaround and throwing 75 pitches, he sold out for us, threw a lot of strikes, kept them off base for the most part, and really did a nice job.

Offensively we did enough. We were efficient in spots. Certainly Cal, again, had a good game. He had a great weekend and followed up with a really good day today.

We'll take that one and move forward.

**Q. Bryce, after last weekend's start didn't go the way you wanted, how much was this an opportunity to get back out there quickly and flush that?**

BRYCE CUNNINGHAM: Definitely, yeah. I think last week motivated me and just pushed me to do my best in this one.

**Q. Bryce, tight strike zone early, but you felt like you navigated your fastball and your slider well was the outlook from the stands. What was the key to being in the zone as much as you were?**

BRYCE CUNNINGHAM: I think my changeup was probably my best pitch. It set up everything else for me and just helped me move forward efficiently.

**Q. Calvin, if you can just take us through that homer. How did it feel coming off your bat just as you saw it flying over the dugout?**

CALVIN HEWETT: Yeah, it felt really good, but when I get to two strikes, we talk about a lot trying to put the ball in play, and that one just happened to go out. So it certainly felt good.

**Q. Calvin, you guys as a team have talked about complementary baseball throughout the year. How big of a lift was what Bryce did for you guys?**

CALVIN HEWETT: Bryce's outing today was great. We really needed a good start out of Bryce. Like Coach said, Bryce wanted the ball, and he backed it up, got us into the sixth inning, and that took care of everything for us.

**Q. For either of you, obviously this is sort of a new spot for you guys, needing to win games to get into the NCAA Tournament. Does that shift your mindset at all here in Hoover, kind of maybe making it more of a must-win type atmosphere?**

BRYCE CUNNINGHAM: No, I don't think so. I think we approach every game the same and just attack our opponent the same.

**Q. What does this win do for your team as far as the NCAA Tournament resume and as far as your team's psyche heading into postseason play?**

TIM CORBIN: Well, I just think it's all about this tournament. We just want to play well in it. It's been a very special tournament to us for over 20 years, and we've always enjoyed being down here and just playing good baseball.

I think that was the focus. We didn't make too much of the must-win situation. We just didn't want to go there. The guys know. But it's more about playing good baseball and getting off on the right foot.

The first games are always difficult. They can be very tricky, especially with pitching. But we got a good start,



and it was a good win for the kids.

**Q. You mentioned it being a special tournament for you guys. This is a question that probably can't be answered in a short snippet, but a thought on why that is for your program and why your team more so than others seemed to thrive in this tournament?**

TIM CORBIN: It was the goal in 2003 because Vanderbilt had not been in such a long period of time, so we just made that the goal, and we got it done on the very last day against a Tennessee team.

Since that time it's carried such momentum inside the team. The next year we played in the championship game, that was a big deal for us in 2004 and building a program.

But I can't ever remember a year where getting on that bus and just feeling the energy of getting down here -- this conference puts a lot of time and effort into it, and the fact that, as I tell the kids, too, you drive through the park and you see all those campers and it just shows you the amount of people that care and spend a lot of money to be here. That's meaningful.

It's meaningful for us to get down here and leave it all on the field.

**Q. It's obviously fairly uncommon for you guys to come here in Hoover and put a weekend starter on the mound in the first game. Was there any hesitation in having Bryce pitch on two days of short rest, and what went into your decision to give him the ball today?**

TIM CORBIN: Him. He was the decision-maker. I think you get to a certain point where your kids kind of dictate what's going to happen, literally. Physically they have to be able to do it, but Bryce texted Brownny the other night and told him that he wanted the baseball, so he got the baseball.

But I also think that we didn't have a ton of options. If we were going to pitch that game, we probably would have had to split it up amongst a lot of people, and some youthful people, too, which is not a bad thing, but you certainly want an older guy in the environment just to get us off to a good start.

**Q. When you mentioned Bryce wanting the ball here, how much does his confidence heading into a game like this give you confidence in him in a big spot like that?**

TIM CORBIN: I've always had confidence in Bryce. He's worked very hard to get to where he is. I felt bad about the

Kentucky outing because it was un-Bryce-like. But that's what makes this one better, just because he responded. He responded in a way that, okay, I'm not putting words in his mouth, but it was almost like, okay, I didn't help my team last week, I'm going to help them this week, and he did.

It was a big game for us. Obviously any game we win here dignifies what we've done over the course of the year. So it was an important game for Vanderbilt.

**Q. You're facing Tennessee again tomorrow, and obviously having just played them less than two weeks ago, what goes into facing the same team on such a short turnaround like that?**

TIM CORBIN: You know, first, we've got to solve their bats. That's a very strong team. Tony has got a lot of talent over there. They hit. They make you work, and they certainly can pitch and play defense, too. We're going to have to slow them down, and we're going to have to figure out who can help us do that.

**Q. What's gone into Calvin's late-season power surge, and how important was that catch he made in the ninth tonight?**

TIM CORBIN: You know, Calvin has always had some ability to drive the ball to the pull side. When I see those balls leave the yard, they're not really surprises. I guess the surprise might be the fact that he hasn't done it up to this point.

But you know what, kids catch fire, find their game at certain points during the course of a season. He's always been such a good defender, and he's such a good base runner, too. It's just good to have him have success.

He got on base ten times this past weekend against Kentucky. And then he found his way on base, hit a ball hard today that got caught. I'm just happy for him that he's having good at-bats and experiencing that type of success in front of his parents who came down from New Hampshire to see him. That's always a cool thing, too.

**Q. You wore the helmet stickers today for Asher Sullivan. How did that all come together?**

TIM CORBIN: You know, it's just something that we thought about and we put together as quickly as we possibly could. Obviously it's such small change. But it just shows kind of a response to the family, what they will continue to go through during this time.

That's just a very tragic situation that I still can't -- no one



can wrap their mind around it, but yet that family is just glued to what we do from a baseball standpoint. As difficult as it was when Asher passed away, they were watching the game the entire time as he was going through that.

And I just -- I talked to the kids about that, and I said: That's passion. I mean, you think about, that's real passion for a family just to be absorbed in what you're doing while they're going through that. I can't get over it.

It's a small thing that we're doing. We'll continue to do it, and hopefully we can get Declan down here at some point, too, because he's a special young man, too, who's already been through his own deal, and now losing his brother, we'd like to help him out.

**Q. I'm just curious through the whole process, what have you learned about who Asher was and what was important to him, what kind of kid he was?**

TIM CORBIN: Well, he's been around our program before. Just from what I've seen of him and known of him, happy, smiley, much like you would think a 10-year-old child would be.

Declan I've had more experience with because I visited the hospital when he had leukemia. Just for this family to go through all of this, I think it checks your belief system sometimes on really -- is it really fair. But there's nothing fair in life. That's the way it is.

I love both boys. I do. Just again, just couldn't get over the fact that such an innocent thing turned into something like that. That will always be mind-numbing and hard to wrap your mind around it.

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