

# Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Saturday, May 25, 2024

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

## Vanderbilt Commodores

### Tim Corbin

### Alan Espinal

#### Postgame Press Conference



I think there's been some pretty good energy amongst the group. They're a good bunch of guys to coach and I really enjoy it and I hope it lasts a while.

THE MODERATOR: Take questions for Alan, please.

**Q. What have you seen out of the offense just the whole time that you've been here in Hoover and how do you think that's been -- do you think it's taken a step forward from the last couple weeks of the season?**

ALAN ESPINAL: Yeah, I think it's been a kick start. We've come out of really tough situations and just balled down and do what we do. This is something that we haven't done in a while. We've been struggling, we've been trying to figure it out. But like Coach said, this is a spot where we feel confident and we just trusted our process and just kept kicking and kicking and now we're in a really confident spot, strong spot, where the guys are feeling good.

**Q. Obviously you're one of the veterans on this team and you're working with a lot of pitchers who are freshmen who have never pitched in the postseason before. What is it like guiding through -- those pitchers through some of these big moments here?**

ALAN ESPINAL: It's like looking in the mirror, in a sense, just deep breaths and just taking everything in and slowing it down. That's the nature of the game. When the game speeds up on you, that's when you start making your mental mistakes. So just telling the kids, just slow down and take it one pitch at a time, one breath at a time, and that's basically what I've been doing.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thanks for your time. We'll take questions for Coach.

**Q. Being able to get Ethan McElvain back, what did you see from his return and did you get what you wanted out of his outing?**

TIM CORBIN: Got a zero in the one inning. He got to throw 18 pitches, so that was good. It was first and second, no outs, and he got out of it. So, yeah, positive.

Tennessee - 6, Vanderbilt - 4

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from Coach and then take questions for the player.

TIM CORBIN: Just a tough one, a tough one to lose. We put ourselves in harm's way, though, throughout the game, which was unfortunate. It probably could have been more by them, but at the same time, we pitched well enough to contain them to those six runs. Four of those five kids are freshmen, so it's a great experience. I look at it from a positive. Got McElvain back out there again, Seiber pitched well, Guth. You know, with the exception of getting himself in trouble, I know he feels bad about the 0-2 pitch, which if you're a young kid and you leave the ball up to a guy who is already got 27 knocks, then he can do that damage and probably learned a tough lesson right there. But I guess better here than next week.

Then Kranzler did a nice job getting Christian Moore out and then kind of containing that inning for the most part. But we were just in a tough situation. Offensively, I thought our at-bats were pretty good. We drove the ball to the other side of the field, middle part of the field. They made some really good outfield plays, three diving catches, some balls, three of 'em hit against the fence. Just not enough.

But you know what? Personally, and these kids should feel this way too, I'm leaving this tournament very confident about our group right now. It stinks that you can't play tomorrow and I get that, but at the same time, a week ago when we were standing in the middle of the field when Kentucky was celebrating like it was a damn presidential inauguration, the fireworks were going off and -- you know, I thought, whoa, this is a low point, and it was, but the next morning we got up, and the kids did a good job of regrouping themselves, themselves. They did it. They got themselves going to win that game. I think since that point,

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I think just getting him back out there again was good for Ethan, and to throw the ball the way he did, it's been a long time, so I was happy for him and I'm happy for our team moving forward.

**Q. What is the decision-making process of putting Jayden Davis in the game and how good was it to see him back too?**

TIM CORBIN: Not much of a decision. He's been working up to that point and I told him this morning at breakfast that if a situation came up, that I wouldn't flinch, as long as he doesn't, I won't and put him in the game, drew a walk. Good for him. That's one at-bat that he needed going into next week. So I'm happy to see him back and the kids were too.

**Q. What has been his process like of recovering from that injury?**

TIM CORBIN: You know, just getting on the field, taking swings off of a tee and then elevating to an arm and then elevating to a machine and now, today, and then, what, facing Bob Gibson out there throwing a hundred. I mean, welcome back.

**Q. You know this league as well as anybody. How would you assess the health of the league going into the regional? I mean, every year it seems like the SEC's the conference to beat, but based on what you've seen this year, how would you say you expect the conference to perform in the NCAA tournament?**

TIM CORBIN: I think they will all handle themselves well. I say that because -- I don't know the rest of the country real well, so it would be unfair of me to speak. But I think what these kids do -- whether it's Tennessee or LSU or any of these kids, they play in hot-temperature situations. I mean, there's a lot on their shoulders on a weekly basis, and it's very important to the people around 'em, which kind of creates that little bubble of pressure that -- or you can call it whatever you want, bubble of heat that occurs around them.

I would suspect, if they play up to their abilities, I would say that you're going to see a favorable amount of teams in Omaha again. There's been a lot of great players in this league for a long period of time and as good or better, but in totality, the league is just very strong from 1 to 9. You look at this Tennessee lineup and any one of those kids can do damage, from 1 to 9, and even us, you know, we get down to Bulger, who is hitting 8th, and that's a proven hitter who has hit in the league for four years. Calvin Hewett's had a great tournament, great last couple of

weeks. But to answer your question, yeah, I can see them doing well.

**Q. Reference to Marcus Phillips there. What kind of weapon is that for Tennessee as he's come along late in the season?**

TIM CORBIN: Tony knows him better than I do, but that's a really good arm. I mean, that's a guy that, if you look up in two or three years, you're going to see him on TV, probably out of a bullpen. It's really, really hard stuff. It seems to me like there's not a lot of effort to what he does and he's wild enough to keep you honest in the batters box. You're not sitting in there. You're not comfortable.

But I thought we got off some good swings there at the end, and I was hoping that we could break him, but credit him, he was tough down the stretch and they rode him, they needed to. I mean, 42 pitches deep, I mean, he did a good job for them.

**Q. With Zander Sechrist, y'all were able to barrel him up a couple times a couple weeks ago and he was able to bounce back in his regard today. What was different about him? What did you see different about him compared to when you were able to see him in Nashville?**

TIM CORBIN: I thought he did a nice job with the right-handed hitters of backdooring them with the breaking ball and changing speeds. It felt like we had a hard time with him just because he was around the strike zone, we weren't getting to the barrel. He just did a good job competing. I mean, he let them play defense, he didn't hurt himself. I think he maybe walked one hitter, but never really put himself in jeopardy, and we didn't do enough with him. I think we got the four hits and that was it.

Credit him, though. I mean, I'm not going to say we broke down. He made us break down. There's resistance to why you don't get off your swings and he was that resistance.

**Q. Obviously there's a lot of freshmen who have been playing major roles on this team. What does it mean to make a deep run here and kind of get them a little bit of a postseason experience before the regional?**

TIM CORBIN: Good for them. Especially in this tournament, I think just to get inside this tournament and play well. I think a lot of times, and I've seen this a long period of time, you can manage their nerves for them, they have to experience that. Even the bus ride over, for them to see a police escort, yeah, we talk about it, but then when it happens you go, Whoa, this is a big deal. Then you pull up and see all the campers and you see the notoriety that

goes along with this tournament, that's certainly part of it. To contain your adrenaline and your emotions and play the game is a big part of it. So this tournament does a good job of that. I will say this, I can't thank the SEC and Hoover enough for putting this on. I mean, this, it's a thrill to be here. I never will take this for granted, nor will our kids. I mean, it's such a big deal. The effort that everyone goes to make these kids feel special, it doesn't get lost on us, I'll tell you that. Our kids recognize it, and we recognize the brand of baseball and it makes you better, so we're very appreciative to be here.

**Q. Phillips came in the 7th, explosive start to his outing, but then you guys made a rally out of it. What kind of adjustments did you make there late?**

TIM CORBIN: I just think we got ready a little bit earlier and we probably condensed our swings. I thought we punched the ball, we didn't over swing. I think early we weren't getting ready and he was 99 to 100 that first inning and he kind of carved us up a little bit. But to your point, I think the 8th and 9th inning were better at-bats for us and we were a click away from breaking it open, but we didn't. So, favor to him.

**Q. Christian Moore is a triple crown winner for a reason, it's not fun being on the other end of it. But that home run that he had, how did that capulate the talent that he is across the SEC this season?**

TIM CORBIN: Yeah, he's a really good player. I mean, that was a tough pitch. It's a 0-2 pitch that got left up, and not to him. I mean, he's damaged people 27 times and a whole lot more than that. It's a future major leaguer. But it kind of encapsulates what kind of talent is inside this league. You look at him at the top, and then you got Will Clark hitting second, for all intents and purposes. I mean, I've seen Will Clark, so it's like -- Blake Burke is -- I'd take Blake Burke over a lot of hitters out there. I think that kid sees the strike zone, he contains his emotions, he's just a really, really good hitter. But got to face those two guys right off the bat, so that's a tough stretch. But Amick, he's no slouch either, he's really good. So, anyway, we held 'em down though, you know, actually, I'm looking at this thing, held 'em down for the most part, especially with the amount of runners that were on base. So, but, you know, credit them. We'll go home to Nashville and get ready for next week.

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