

Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Tuesday, May 20, 2025

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

Alabama Crimson Tide

Rob Vaughn

Tyler Fay

Justin Lebron

Postgame Press Conference



Q. Tyler, what was working for you today on the mound and how Brady executed also offensively with that home run in the eighth inning?

TYLER FAY: Yeah, I mean, everything was feeling pretty good. I went out in the first inning and I kind of just felt like I didn't have to think about where the ball was going. It was just really fluid, sliders working, infield behind me was working hard, they were making a lot of good plays. Everything was just feeling good today.

Q. Tyler, ever since being a starter, you've been efficient with the pitch counts, but over the last couple of weeks, have hit a wall in those fifth innings. That didn't happen today. What was different, and just how were you feeling, as this was the longest outing of your career up to this point?

TYLER FAY: Yeah, fifth inning has been pretty brutal for me all year. Yeah, the summer I just threw five innings every start. I really hadn't gone more than that. I think just having that confidence today and going out there in a tight game, had a lot of energy, a lot of juice, so I think that's really the biggest thing.

Q. Tyler, a start like this to begin the postseason, how does that build confidence for you and the rest of the team going deeper into the postseason?

TYLER FAY: Yeah, absolutely. I think attacking the zone and showing the rest of our staff kind of a game plan for how we need to do this. I think saving the bullpen is an awesome thing, especially at this tournament. You lose one and you go home. Keeping guys fresh is a big thing, and I think I did a pretty good job with that today.

Q. Justin, can you take us through that at-bat with the two-run hit that tied the game and then right after, you guys took the lead?

JUSTIN LEBRON: Yeah, he made some pretty good pitches. I knew I had to fight. And kind of all year, I've been put in that position to come up with a clutch hit, and recently, I've been struggling a little bit. So my biggest

Alabama 4, Missouri 1

ROB VAUGHN: I mean, obviously, you've got to credit Missouri's arms and how they threw the baseball today. I thought looking at their weekend last weekend, obviously you saw some tough scores for them, but you also see a Horn and Libbert not throw, so you knew what Tuesday was going to look like when you got here. They were as advertised. They put you on for free a little bit, but especially with Horn, man. It was 98 at the bottom of the zone, good breaking balls. They threw the ball well. They had some tough at-bats.

They just couldn't quite get the big hit, and the big reason for us for us is this big man right here. I thought Tyler Fay was absolutely outstanding today. That was the story of the day because we didn't have a lot going off Horn. Bronny gets a huge two-out hit to get us on the board. Kade follows it up with another one, but you don't get that unless you have Tyler Fay do what he did right there, which is go out and just pound the strike zone, execute pitches on short rest, and just what -- what an unbelievable year he's had up to this point, started in the pen, was kind of moved into the rotation on short rest at LSU and turned in an unbelievable start there.

And every time he touches the baseball, he gives us a chance to win, and I know our team is very comfortable playing behind him. He keeps getting better. He's a competitor, he's tough, he's all those things you look for out of a starting pitcher. Proud of how we executed today, proud of how we grinded that game out. It was a game of attrition. You're just fighting to get to the next day. And we got Tennessee tomorrow morning, so we'll get rested up and get ready to go for a good one tomorrow.

ASAP sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

thing going forward is aim small and push it to the next guy. My whole goal is just to get it to Kade Snell, our best hitter in the lineup at this point. So it kind of worked out well for us.

Q. Coach, they stranded 12 runners, nine of them over the last four innings. What can you say about your team's pitching in those big moments?

ROB VAUGHN: Yeah, they just executed in big spots. I thought that was really the difference in the game. Neither team just wore it out offensively. But man, they set up innings and we were fortunate, especially early there, that Bron comes up -- Bron and Kade just back-to-back hits and two outs hit, and that's just the hit that eluded Missouri.

And they set up some innings. They had some chances. I think the difference really in that whole thing is, they put us on, for free, a decent amount. So we had a few more cracks, whereas our guys did a pretty good job there executing pitches and not a whole lot for free. And then just executed big spots. It's old guys. It's guys that have been there, Matt Heiberger, Braylon Myers, Carson Ozmer, and then T-Fay was just outstanding. Love that kid and love how hard he's worked to get to that moment. That's what's really cool about it.

So just great job executing when it mattered, and we were fortunate to get two more big swings than they were, that's really the difference.

Q. Skip, how did it feel to see Brady Neal hit that home run in the eighth inning, and also Tyler made one mistake to Mateo earlier. How did you feel about your composure that Brady helped the pitching staff down the line and what lies ahead against Tennessee tomorrow against national champs?

ROB VAUGHN: Yeah, Brady has just been in big spots before. He's caught at this place a fair amount. He's played in Omaha. He's played in big spots, like the moment just doesn't get too big for him, and I think Brady had a tough start to the year. He'd be the first one to tell you offensively, just a really rough start, and frankly, kind of Plattner started catching a little bit more, and when Platt went down with a fractured hand, it kind of forced Brady back in there, and it's like he's had a new lease on life since then and he's played freer. He's just played a freer brand of baseball, and it's allowed him to get some big hits in some big spots. That was a huge swing for us.

You're up 3-1, you push that one through was big, but that extra one just felt huge in a spot right there, and then you look at kind of how the top of the ninth shook out, that other one ended up big.

So Brady impacts the game on both sides of the baseball. He's as good as a catch-and-throw guy as I've ever coached. He's come a long way with his defense behind the plate and has turned into just an elite defensive catcher.

I think how he can both sides of the baseball is he's just experienced. He's been there. And he's a special kid. I love that kid.

Q. Coach, I know you talked about it a little bit in your opening statement about Tyler Fay and his transition from the bullpen to the starting rotation at the midway point through the season. But I wanted to ask a little more detail about you've seen from his development, growth and mindset through that process from starting off shaky to coming out and being able to do what he did today?

ROB VAUGHN: Yeah, guys hear me say this over time. Sometimes, you've just overcome the coaching. I've told them that a thousand times, and I think a big part is getting Tyler Fay in the right role. His stuff just plays better there. We've tried him in the bullpen for a year and a half or a year and a quarter. We really tried him in the pen, and it wasn't that he was bad, but these guys going to get balls put in play. It's a sinker, it's contact, it's weak contact, and when you're doing that with the bases loaded or bringing him into a jam, it's just a little different.

He executes and gets a sinker, but it squeaks through the infield. All of a sudden, the mental game that this sport is thinks, man, I stink. I failed. I didn't do my job. When in reality, you did, it just didn't work.

But in a starting role, you just have a little bit more room for error there, and you have a little bit more, we want the ball put in play. He said it, it saves the bullpen.

I've just been really proud of how he's operated through this thing because I'm sure he wanted to start at the beginning of the year, and we kind of went a different route and he's never complained. He's never felt bad for himself. He's just continued to show up in whatever role we've asked him to fill and done the best he can. I feel like we've finally got him in a row that is going to allow him to continue having success. And man, with him Quick and Zane, it gives you three guys that makes you feel really good about giving you good starts and giving your team a chance to win, which is what it's all about.

Q. What is the pitching plan for tomorrow and how do you maybe -- what do you want to see out of them, especially knowing there's more days of the



tournament after that?

ROB VAUGHN: Yeah, we're going to go talk about it. We've talked about a lot of different scenarios. We don't know exactly who we're going to go with to start. I know Riley Quick is knocking on our door, trying to get into that starting role tomorrow. So we'll try to make the smartest decision we can. We've got a really good Tennessee team here that is comfortable playing in the postseason, that's done that. We know how dangerous that lineup can be.

At this time of year, it's all hands on deck. We were able to get Braylon Myers out of the game before 30 pitches to kind of, hopefully, roll him back soon. He's been so good out of there for us. So it'll be all hands on deck tomorrow. We'll go take a shower, go eat some lunch, talk about what we think the best matchup for the Vols is tomorrow.

Q. Coach, you talked about it yesterday before you guys came down here. When Tyler does something like he did today, it really opens up what you're able to do on the mound. Just what's your reaction to that and how much more flexibility that the stable has now?

ROB VAUGHN: Yeah, I remember when we were talking about who we wanted to start today, and T-Fay didn't throw a whole lot of pitches down in Florida. He was kind of like today, was really efficient. We got him out kinda early so he didn't throw a ton of pitches down there. Mo was joking, last time we threw him on short rest he was pretty darned good, which was at LSU.

Yeah, so I think we didn't know quite what we were going to have today. We were hoping that he could help us get out of the gate. That's what we really wanted. I think the starting pitcher sets the tone for the day, and if you get balls, if you get guys getting lit up all over the place, you can set the tone for a messy game, especially a 9:30 game.

We knew T-Fay would give us a good start. We were hoping he could come out and give us three or four clean, and then you look up after six clean, one run, couldn't ask for more out of him. It just gives you a chance.

Like, you have to empty the bullpen today. That could be a tough one tomorrow. But it gives you a chance tomorrow to set some things up and to try to match some things up and see what you can do.

Q. I'm sure you can empathize with how Missouri has fought it all year. When you've had teams that have been fighting it like that, what kind of coaching challenge is that, and what does it say about their

team, they go and sweep A&M late, they come here and play well, and all that?

ROB VAUGHN: Yeah, when we played them at our place, some of those arms were starting to come back. Pimental being out all year, that's a blow for anybody. I feel like they've had so many guys -- unfortunately, that's the nature of this game is -- is you lose guys. Florida has been as banged up as anybody in the country. Kevin O'Sullivan has just done an incredible job in navigating that team and what they're doing right now. Injuries just make it tough. It just puts you up against it a little bit.

Then you kind of get that bug where you're struggling and you're scuffling, and you can't quite be on the right side, but you look at a ton of their games, there's some gaudy scores in there when they got messy, but there's a lot of games there in those middle innings that are one- or two-run games, and they just blown open in tough things. So it forces guys into different scenarios, it forces guys that maybe aren't ready.

But at times, it can help you for the future, too. It's not fun to navigate. Kerrick is as good as it gets in this game. Unbelievable human, works his tail off, unbelievable ambassador for this game, and just a dear friend of mine. Kerrick and I have known each other for a long time. You empathize for him because it's a helpless feeling when you've got so many guys down.

But man, his team, and I said this when they came to Tuscaloosa, his team don't quit. Those kids are not going to quit. They're going to show up and they're going to punch the card with what they've got, and they gave us every ounce of what we wanted today. They scratched, they clawed. Horn is, my goodness, I was hoping Drinkwitz was going to call and tell him, hey, let's take it easy on that guy, we might need him for Saturdays in the fall. But he was electric.

The only question on him was: Is he going to throw enough strikes? And man, it was out of the gate it was strike one, strike two, the breaking ball was good, fastball was really sinking on him. Then Libbert, really good stuff.

It's a tough situation to be in. I think Kerrick handled it with class. He never stopped coaching his guys. He never stopped fighting, scratching and clawing, and that's why Kerrick Jackson is who he is, special human, special coach and a really good friend of mine.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.

