

Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Thursday, May 22, 2025

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

Vanderbilt Commodores

Coach Tim Corbin

JD Thompson

RJ Austin

Postgame Press Conference



you mentioned the last time you played Oklahoma on Saturday. You guys are 2-0 against them since that meeting. How fulfilling is it to see that?

RJ AUSTIN: It's great to see at the end of the day no matter how it happens, we got together as a team and we knew what we had to do. We got on the same page as the coaches, same page as the pitchers and hitters. And at the end of the day we just knew we had to work together to go win.

We just keep the message the same -- just keep getting better and better every game, every day and treating those off days like days to get better because once we get in June, we've got to be really good to go out there and win.

Q. J.D., what was the key for your whole pitching staff tonight to rack up 17 strikeouts?

JD THOMPSON: Just keep doing like we do every single week. Just go out there fill up the zone. We understand we have some of the best stuff in the country. I have no problem at all handing the ball off to anybody in that bullpen. I have all the trust in the world with every single one of those guys.

We have elite stuff. You have to have that sort of confidence and trust as soon as you get on the mound. And right now they definitely do.

Q. RJ, how do you feel about your approaches today in your two at-bats just being a true catalyst to your offense with getting those runs across?

RJ AUSTIN: Just trying to be clear as possible. Just go up there and put a good swing on the ball, look for a good pitch. Try to not swing out the zone too much, and just go up there and free mind and be myself and go out there and have fun.

At the end of the day I'm competing against the pitcher one-on-one and that's what I had to do. Good thing that happened the way we wanted to.

Vanderbilt - 6, Oklahoma - 1

Q. What's the message to your teammates, now that you play Tennessee, to focus just on just baseball, not focusing on one of the best rivalries in college baseball?

JD THOMPSON: Going off the last time we played them, just keeping the emotions intact. We know what kind of game it's going to be. It's always going to be a good game with those guys. Just staying with ourselves and not trying to let certain situations get the best of us or let emotions kind of get too high.

I think we just playing the ball that we're playing, pitchers giving us innings and the hitters are banging like they are, I know we have a pretty good chance.

Q. J.D., you nearly doubled your strikeout total against Oklahoma from April. Just what was working for you tonight?

JD THOMPSON: I think the biggest thing for me going off that last outing I had against them was just get in the zone, don't give them free bases, set the tone early, just beating them early with fastball. The curveball was working well for me.

With that combo I knew I had a pretty good chance. Filling it up, I knew some got away from me, but I'm not scared to pitch in traffic. I know how to take care of it and I know I've got a great defense behind me to help me out. Biggest thing was just getting ahead with it and being able to execute and put away guys.

Q. RJ, I know there was the players-only meeting that



Q. Vanderbilt has a lot of success here in Hoover and it's a special tournament for the Vanderbilt boys. Talk about that and what it means to put on the pinstripes and play for Vanderbilt, especially in this building?

JD THOMPSON: I think for us it's just another opportunity to compete against really, really good teams. We don't take this tournament lightly. We're here to win this. We're not worried about what's happening next week. We're kind of just staying present with what's going on this week.

And we understand we have some good competition coming up so we're just trying to handle business and win some games now.

Q. RJ, you're on a six-game hitting streak. Do you think things are starting to click for you more offensively than they did earlier in the year?

RJ AUSTIN: For sure. Just going out there, have a better approach. Just doing what the coaches ask me to do, changing things approach-wise and just going up there and being myself.

I know I'm a player that wants to win, so I have to do what I have to do and that's get better. I just want to get better every day. That's really the only thing I'm focusing on right now.

Q. How do you just feel about your pitching staff and how Mac pretty much helped you guys out tonight behind the plate?

TIM CORBIN: Yeah, Mac stepped in well for us. Colin had some type of food poisoning before the game. So we tried to extend that amount of rest. And that game going into extra innings we thought we could buy some time. But Mac stepped in, took his place, did a nice job.

Outside of that, I mean, the pitching staff, they've just been consistent all year. They really have. They've done a nice job from the time that we started to right now. There hasn't been a lot of dips in what they've done.

To JD's point, regardless of who you put out there, they've been very consistent in filling up the strike zone and attacking hitters.

Q. How much does it help you when RJ Austin is doing what he's done the last couple of weeks?

TIM CORBIN: He needs to. He's a good player. But, yeah, I mean, I think him and the rest of the group, they've all been consistent here over the last month and a half. But RJ is a very competitive young man. And this time of

year, you always feel like he's going to play well. He had a nice game tonight.

Q. How have you seen this team kind of mold into its own offensively and start to play towards its identity the way it has the last couple of weeks?

TIM CORBIN: Just time. Ari is right in front of me and I can remember telling her a couple months ago that in time this offense will start to grow. We had a lot of young players with not a lot of college at-bats. It's an old league, especially in the SEC.

So guys like Rigdon and Johnston and Holcomb, even Mancini, we just had some younger guys that have developed along the way. And their identity as an offense is starting to grow.

I think we certainly have run more towards the end of the season. We've used the backside of the ball field well from both sides, done a better job with two strikes. I think the approaches have been cleaner. And done a nice job of separating balls and strikes at the plate. That part has been good.

Q. This group looks so bought in. They're playing with so much joy. How much fun is it to coach this group?

TIM CORBIN: It's fun to coach winning baseball. So if we're winning, it's fun. But I think for them, they've just grown as the season has gone on.

You bring up a meeting, but it's not just one meeting. It's just a cluster of days. It's time. Everyone wants to write up a story line and that magic moment. There's no magic moments. It's just getting out there every day and staying very intentional with what you're doing and not taking your foot off the brake.

Those days outside of the games matter. Tuesdays matter. Nonconference baseball matters. Everything matters. And our season is a sprint. It can go 65, 67, maybe 70 games if you're fortunate.

But if you're going to get everything out of your group that you can, then what you're doing right now at this moment matters the most. That's what we've tried to talk about. The tournament is -- so much money and there's so much pomp and circumstance with this and we're very grateful to be involved in this tournament. It will always be high on our list, but it's a goal, like everything else. Once you get beyond it, then there's another goal beyond that. But we really want to play well here.



Q. I want to ask you about your culture. When you see the black and gold out there on a baseball diamond, especially in this month, the success and everything, but can you talk about the culture of your program? I've watched it develop over the years. But what does that mean to you now that you've built this program into what it is?

TIM CORBIN: It's taken time. It's 23 years. It's turning around a cruise ship, not a jet ski. It takes a lot of time and effort. There were some lean years in there, and we were winning, but we did a lot with less early and then we just started to build some momentum.

2004 was probably the year that did that; got more yeses from a recruiting standpoint. And as time went on, you just try to create the right environment every single year. Culture is over time. Culture is not one of those things that's developed in one or two years. It's a cluster of time and it's a lot of people that throw a lot of energy into it; coaches, players.

But we're just very fortunate that we've been this consistent over time. We don't take anything for granted. And the time allotment to put together the team together this year is just as much as it was going back to 2003. There's no difference.

You as the coach and staff member, if you take your foot off the brake or gas, then you're going to feel it. It's going to back up on you. You can't do that. It's fun, but it demands a lot of time and energy and sacrifice.

Q. JD had a few runners on with one out in the fourth inning but got out of it. Is that something that maybe he couldn't do a year or two ago, or is he more equipped to do now that he's an older guy?

TIM CORBIN: I think he's more equipped. He's been in those situations before. Some of them are self-induced.

The fourth inning, they were a hit away from changing that scoreboard really quick, both in the fourth inning and eighth inning. It could have gone either way. We were fortunate. Sawyer pitched out of that one.

But your question, JD has done a nice job of doing that. He got himself in that hole and he got himself out of it, which is good. He created it so he needed to clean it up, and he did. But he's done more of that this year than years past.

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