

Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Saturday, May 24, 2025

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

Vanderbilt Commodores

Tim Corbin

Cody Bowker

Riley Nelson

Postgame Press Conference



Q. What's it like to have a guy like Colin behind the plate and how he's helped the pitching staff since the fall?

CODY BOWKER: We're all just comfortable with each other. No matter who's behind the plate, we're comfortable. No matter who's playing first base, second base, whatever. I'm comfortable pitching, and I'm comfortable that they're going to make plays behind me, especially even Brodie today, Brodie and Colin got together and made that awesome play at home plate. So that stuff is just so calming to have something like that behind you.

Q. Riley, with Rustan leading it off, what kind of presence is he for the rest of the lineup with the type of at-bats he puts together every time?

RILEY NELSON: It's unreal. He's a special kid. If he gets on, he's stealing second or third. If he gets on like to lead off a game, it's like we're for sure scoring. He's awesome having him at the lead-off spot. He works at counts great. For him to be a young kid, to run the bases like he does, it's pretty awesome to see. It's great to have him at the lead-off spot.

Q. Riley, you guys scored 10 runs off 13 singles. What does that say about this offense, and have you ever been a part of something like that?

RILEY NELSON: For sure. We don't try to do too much at the plate. We try to stick to our approach using the whole field. We pride ourselves on not trying to swing for the fences because at this park and parks going forward, that's not going to work, so that's kind of what we stuck to.

Q. Obviously such a great game today. What was the difference in the mindset and energy today compared to yesterday that you want to transfer over to the championship tomorrow?

CODY BOWKER: I think we're just going one game at a time. Every game, we're bringing energy into the dugout, whether it's -- we had to wake up at 6:00 this morning, and

Vanderbilt 10, Tennessee 0

TIM CORBIN: Well, we played well. Obviously, it was pretty complete in terms of pitching, defense and offense, hit the ball back up the middle, on a day where the field was going to play large. Cody, obviously, got us off to a good start. Once he got through the first two hitters, he really settled in. His fastball was crisp. It looked like it was spinning well, at least from our vantage point, and used good attack on the hitters. Connor came in and gave us three good innings, as well, played good outfield defense. But we were just able to get on base and move and played a good game, take care of the baseball.

Q. Cody, you opened up with two walks and then six straight strikeouts. Can you talk us through the first inning and just your mindset the rest of the way?

CODY BOWKER: To be honest, I was trying to be too perfect. I wanted to be perfect. I wanted to just do everything I possibly could, and my mindset flipped when Barczi came out to me like, wait a second, I'm doing it for all the guys behind me and I don't have to be perfect. I have an amazing defense behind me, I'm going to let them work. They just happened to be strikeouts, but my mindset flipped to just attacking guys and letting the defense work.

Q. How satisfying is it to defeat your in-state rival in a run rule SEC tournament game?

RILEY NELSON: It's awesome. We don't like those guys, they don't like us. I think it's the best rivalry in college baseball right now. If you're a young kid getting recruited by both of these schools, I think you know which school you should choose.



we just brought the energy no matter what. I think that's what we're looking to do going into both offensively and defense, is just keep the energy high, keep having fun, and it's been a blast.

Q. Riley, the results have been better recently than they were at the beginning of the year. Do you guys feel like everything is clicking at this point?

RILEY NELSON: Yeah, it's a lot of trust in one another. We have confidence in what we do every pitch. We feel like we're the best team out there and trust in each other throughout the whole field.

Q. Cody, obviously, last week you kind of piggy backed with Connor Fenell. How has that arrangements worked for you and how do you like having him to come in behind you?

CODY BOWKER: It's awesome. Again, it just has to go to trust. No matter who it is coming out of the bullpen, I know when he takes the ball from me that I trust the guy that's coming in after me. So whoever it is, happened to be Fennell a few times, but he's been amazing. Whoever it is, I'm confident in, and all of us are confident in, so it's a good feeling for sure.

Q. Tim, how good has it been to see the offensive approach at the SEC tournament? Obviously, it was a lot of homers this week and now this week it's more small ball but just being able to win in different ways offensively.

TIM CORBIN: I think the biggest concern for me personally and just watching it, I didn't see anything to them, was just getting into game rhythm because it was five games in between the last game we played, so at no point in time did we do that during the course of the season. So really it was getting into a game and kind of settling in. I think it took us a few innings the other day, but today was a nice feeling in terms of their approaches, their at-bats, using the middle part of the field. The ball wasn't going to leave.

They hit a couple balls hard, certainly Kilen did, that would have been out on a normal day. So we knew the ball ceiling height had to be low and we had to use the gaps when we could so we could move.

Q. Tim, the results the last few weeks have certainly improved. I know sometimes the whys are elusive. Why do you feel like your team is getting better results right now?

TIM CORBIN: Just finding themselves. I think sometimes

teams take a while to find their identity, and as I was saying the other day, there's no magic pill or magic dust to any of this. I think they've had a good focus of just getting better, and really, that's what it's been from the middle of the year. The results have been consistent, and that's all that matters.

But it's not games in a row. It's nothing like that. It's just playing better baseball than the opponent. It's as simple as that. But I think the guys have been very intentional on the days in between the games, and that matters. Once you get to this point right here, I think a lot of times you think, okay, you're in the postseason. Well, you know what, we've been in the postseason a long time at Vanderbilt and the teams that have really been able to finish this off are the teams that still see more depth ahead of them. They see that they can get better. That's really all we've tried to do during the course of this season, as well.

Q. In a season like this, what would it mean to win the SEC?

TIM CORBIN: It's an accomplishment. It's a goal. But it's just one goal. It's a mark that you get to.

Obviously, we have more baseball ahead of us, but I think anytime you can put yourself in this situation -- you look at this place; they're spending money. You guys are here. We're on TV. They celebrate these kids. I mean, it's only right to get in here and play as hard as you possibly can. You've got nothing to lose, right? You've got nothing to lose. Win, lose, draw, doesn't matter. Just put your best self on the field and do what we can and the results will speak for it.

Q. What does it mean to have a guy like RJ Austin that can have that veteran presence for you guys and also try to accomplish a conference tournament win since 2023 that he helped you guys win, also?

TIM CORBIN: Well, he's been in our program for three years, and he's been a big part of our program for three years. It's pretty obvious to me that the kid loves to compete. He's very settled in. We get to spend some with those guys in the locker room, which I never get to do. And it's a unique feeling to be in there with your boys and just watch them.

But whether it's Riley or Bowker, they all get themselves ready, but they're very to themselves before they get into a game, but RJ is very deliberate about what he does.

The thing I like about him most is he's been able to contain his emotions in a better way this year internally. You see that he's the first guy out of the dugout chest bumping



someone who hits a home run, and that's been in his worst moments, too. It's not like, okay, I didn't get a hit, so I'm not going to celebrate. He's always the first.

He plays for one reason: To win. And he plays for his team. And I love that about him.

Q. Coach, can you talk about your decision to bring in Fennell today, and as a result of that, who's going to be the starter tomorrow?

TIM CORBIN: Yeah, we brought in Fennell because they've been piggybacking together. We knew that next week we weren't playing next week, but we knew that Fennell needed some time. The score didn't matter. At the point that he came in, it was 7-0. That's a dangerous team on the other side. We knew that. We understand that. It was just about winning a ballgame. We felt like Cody had reached his spot, Fennell was going to come in at that point.

The fact that the game went seven was fine for Vanderbilt, but at the same time we're looking at nine innings that we have to cover, so we're looking beyond Fennell, as well.

Q. For Coach or Cody, this pitching staff is only allowed six hits this entire tournament so far in these two games. What has been working so well for these guys?

TIM CORBIN: Yeah, strikes. Strikes for the most part. Now, we did give away some free bases the other night, but I just think the ability to get the big strike out -- the strikeouts have been a big deal for our pitching staff over the course of the year but certainly in this tournament, as well. I think we've played pretty good defense behind our pitchers, as well. Rose, the other day, Barczi the other day, as catchers. And then the outfield defense has been a little bit tricky, and always is here because you've got to cover a lot of ground, but the wind blowing in today made it difficult in left field for the outfielders, but it's just that. It's just getting the ball to the plate, getting the big outs, and playing good defense.

Q. You mentioned the strikeouts; how extraordinary is it against those lineups, 28 punch-outs in two games?

TIM CORBIN: Yes, I mean, I don't take that for granted. You've got two teams -- the one we played today, even I feel like they're an Omaha team from a pitching standpoint and a hitting team, as well. They had to come through the back ends of this tournament, which is very difficult to do. It's a lot of games, a lot of baseball.

But yeah, as far as an offense that we faced yesterday or

the day before yesterday and today, yeah, they're good offenses. Not necessarily looking at strikeouts as being a deal, but it became a deal just because of how the pitchers were throwing.

Q. You've spoken a lot about identity over the last few weeks. How much confidence does it give a team when they find that, and do you see that in this game?

TIM CORBIN: Yeah, I mean, it's easy to say this after a win, but I think the biggest piece of the team, and Riley mentioned it, and I think it's important, it's trust. Trust is not easy to come by. But when you have guys that are reliant on one another, it's like, okay, I didn't pick them up, but I know he's going to pick them up. But really believe that. That's a difference maker.

I think the team has really, really grown together.

I think as a parent, you always hope your kids grow together, and as a coach, you always hope that that's the case during the course of the season. There's no better feeling than giving them the keys to the car and letting them drive, knowing that they'll drive safely but aggressively enough to where they'll get to their destination, and that's all I care about.

RILEY NELSON: I think to piggy off that, we all love each other, genuinely love each other. We'd do anything for each other. Throughout the players and coaching staff, I love Cody, I love Corbs. I think that's also a reason why we've gotten to where we're at right now.

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