

Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Sunday, May 25, 2025

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

Ole Miss Rebels

Mike Bianco

Hunter Elliott

Finals Postgame Press Conference



already knew. I mean, we've known we're really good for a long time.

What I guess maybe I've learned is that we're playing really good baseball right now, and that's a positive this time of year because this is when you want to be playing your best baseball.

Q. After two good outings for Rabe and Hooks. You've been in there with them all year, how have you seen them evolve later in the season?

HUNTER ELLIOTT: Those two guys are really special talents. I think they just shined on a big stage today. Hooks was phenomenal. He was kind of himself, and did what he has done all year for us: Filled up the zone, get tons of weak contact.

And then Rabe he has as about as much talent as anybody on this team. And I think today was a big step for him. I think he was able to slow the game down in a really big spot and give us quality outs that we're going to need in the postseason.

Q. You're a Mississippi kid. What would it mean to you to host the regional? It seems that's where this is trending for you guys?

HUNTER ELLIOTT: It would mean a lot. I've never played postseason baseball in Oxford. I've heard it's truly special. It would be one of the best environments in college baseball next weekend.

But, yeah, just me being from Mississippi I grew up going to a ton of games, going to some really cool postseason games. It would mean the world for me to play in one.

Q. I'm sure a little disappointed with today's result. In looking at your body of work this week in Hoover as a whole, how much better, not better but how do you feel about your team's performance here and now heading into the postseason?

MIKE BIANCO: I said it a little bit in the opening

Ole Miss - 2, Vanderbilt - 3

MIKE BIANCO: We've been here since Wednesday and played in four really, really good college baseball games. First three we ended up on the right side of the board. This one we didn't. So I thought both teams played their hearts out for a trophy, the best in the league in the country. Unfortunately, we came up a little short.

Certainly I'm really proud of our guys, not just for today but the way we played this week, and really in the last few weeks and really have played some good baseball and we feel we're in a good spot heading into next week. Leaving here without that trophy leaves a little bitter taste in your mouth.

Q. We've heard all year about how "shower well" the team's mantra just applies to big wins but how does it apply in your mind in today's loss and getting ready for the NCAA tournament?

HUNTER ELLIOTT: Yeah, no doubt, I think that's why it's such a good motto. For us it's always meant shower well after big wins, but even more important after big losses, because baseball is a game you've got to come right back and play pretty soon. We don't get a whole week off every time.

So I think we have a really good veteran group. Will be able to rally the troops, shower well, and get some good practice in this week.

Q. Hunter, what have you learned about this team over this last week and even going back to the Auburn series?

HUNTER ELLIOTT: I don't know that I've learned a ton. I think other people are kind of starting to see what we

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statement, but echo what I think Hunter said, we've liked our team all year long. We liked our team at the very beginning and it's a team that's played a really consistent year. Not a lot of ups and downs. I've said it throughout the week, similar questions.

This is a team that there's been certain games that we haven't played well and certain weekends we haven't played well, but the team hasn't been swept all year. We've been pretty consistent, and we've had a bad game or bad weekend, this team has responded.

So I say all of that because this was a confident group coming in here. But when you're on this stage and you're playing these teams day in, day out, and I think that's one of the cool things about this tournament that's probably not talked about a lot. It's just the publicity, the media that's here, the importance that's put on this stage and you look over to the course of the week and watch how guys pitch in this environment, hit in this environment, this really prepares you. There's no other league through the ten-week gauntlet and then of course this weekend or week here in Hoover that prepares you more for postseason.

So I know we're disappointed in the outcome today, but we also really did club the No. 1 RPI team in the country I was told prior to the game. So I'm sure they kept that standing with the win today, and we just came up a little bit short.

But feel really good about our club. We'll get over this. We'll shower well and we'll be ready for next weekend.

Q. Take me through the decision for Walker today. What did you like about him?

MIKE BIANCO: All the guys pitched great, first two freshmen and then the sophomore Calhoun. Outstanding.

We really leaned on the bullpen this week because we needed to win games, and obviously we know all the questions and all of that. We know what's in front of us, but the best thing you can do is win your games. So we tried really hard to win that game and doing so you had Spence out there three times. McCausland that got hot and pitched twice for us. Morris gave us some length and did all that.

So today was going to be one of those days where guys we like and guys we trust, but maybe not the headliner names and it started with Hooks. We liked the left-hander against the Vanderbilt team. He pitched well in the game they beat us up.

We won two out of three in Oxford but got beat up on that

Game 3 and he was the only one that really pitched well that day. So we're hopeful he can find a little bit of that magic today. And he did.

Johnston, tournament MVP and a really good player in his own right, got a fastball and got it out to left, but really beyond that, he was terrific. But I thought Rabe, as Hunter said, and Calhoun were terrific as well.

Q. Having been through it now, what are your initial impressions on this new 16-team single elimination format?

MIKE BIANCO: It was kind of a split vote, I think, for the coaches. We've always had the best tournament in the country because of Hoover, because of the importance of all the things I've mentioned just a few minutes ago.

I was a little nervous about it, to be honest with you, but the crowds were great. The teams that have had the best years, the top four seeds and then the next four seeds, were rewarded for that, and they should in our league because it's such a gauntlet to get through those ten weeks. I would think it was a huge success.

It's one where it's a little more digestible. I think that's what people liked. You've got all 16 teams here. I think it was '19 that we played on Tuesday and made it to Sunday; that's a long week, and you spend a lot of pitchers and you worry about that.

So this may be the happy sweet spot, if you will. But I thought it was an overall success.

Q. What went into the decision to pinch-hit Collin in the seventh inning? Was it just a match-up based for you?

MIKE BIANCO: Yeah, he might be our best bat against left-handed pitching in our lineup. The splits, going into this weekend he hits .400. That's not a secret to the opponent. But it's one of the bullets, I think, that you keep in your holster and try to use, and we felt with just three innings remaining and really seven outs left, with a runner in scoring position, I probably wouldn't have done it if there wasn't a runner in scoring position, to pull the shortstop. Got confidence in Randle that he can handle it just as well.

So tried to get another run on the board.

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