

Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Tuesday, May 19, 2026

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

Ole Miss Rebels

Coach Mike Bianco

Hayden Federico

Postgame Press Conference



Now we just have a longer time for guys to heal up, pitchers to get their arms back right. And we'll be ready to go wherever we have to go.

Q. How do you prepare with a little bit more extended rest now?

HAYDEN FEDERICO: I just think it's the process every day. Coach Bianco talks about it. Whether that's in the weight room, in the batting cages or on the field, just fine tuning things. And I think it will be a great opportunity for us to get better and make a run.

Q. With ABS coming (indiscernible), what did you make of that? And is that something you're thinking about in the batter's box at all, or what was the thought there?

HAYDEN FEDERICO: I didn't think much about it, honestly. I mean, Missouri had a lot of ones go their way. That was a little frustrating, but the catcher did a great job of using it. And it's part of the game. It's the rule, and it is what it is.

Q. What's it like to play with guys like Decker and Fawley that can be key answers to you guys offensively and what that could roll into Regionals next week?

HAYDEN FEDERICO: It's awesome. We got Dom Decker from Murray State. He's a guy that didn't hit any homers last year. He's got 10 now. I mean, he's just one of the best teammates I've ever had.

And same for Fawley. Fawley got off to a really slow start this season. I mean he's picked up his batting average up, like, 80 points in the last three weeks. And he does his job every day behind the dish, and he deserves everything he's getting and they're huge pieces for us.

Q. A lot of regional presence or sorry veteran presence from years past, either returners or even Bissetta and Dom coming in. How does that help you

Missouri - 10, Ole Miss - 8

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Ole Miss head coach Mike Bianco and center fielder Hayden Federico.

MIKE BIANCO: Obviously, disappointing. It's never fun to lose, and certainly not fun to lose the first one.

But congratulations to Missouri. I thought they played great. I thought McDevitt pitched terrific on short rest. And we just didn't pitch good enough to win.

When you're in tournament play, you need to be better on the mound and I think (indiscernible). Although some balls, I think, carried uncharacteristically well to left, this certainly over the years has been a field that you have to throw strikes and you have to throw. You can't give people free base runners.

Not normal for us, but we walked seven. And, again, after Libbert, I thought Wil was good, but after that, I don't know if a reliever got through his outing without giving up a run, besides Kelly at the very end. It's just not good enough.

We had several opportunities. The offense gave us a shot to stay in the game, but we just weren't good enough on the mound today.

Q. What is your message to your teammates after a loss like this, to go into the regional next week and not -- drop an early egg and put yourself behind the 8-ball there?

HAYDEN FEDERICO: It's a blessing that we get to keep playing, and we put ourselves in a good position, whether that's hosting or as a 2 seed somewhere. And at the end of the day, this isn't the end of the world. It's not the end of the season.



guys prepare for Regionals with the experience and everything?

HAYDEN FEDERICO: I think we'll be ready. Guys that have been through the fire before and they want to be out there. They want to win. We've had multiple guys that have played in Omaha with, I'm pretty sure, Dom and Hunter.

And they know what it takes. And everybody wants to win. And we want to play as long as we can. We don't want to leave these seniors going out sad.

Q. The ABS factor, it's new. Now that you've kind of seen it in action, what's kind of your reaction. How do you think it worked?

MIKE BIANCO: I'm sure there's a lot of angst from the Southeastern Conference. I applaud them for trying to always be on the cutting edge of baseball. And to get it done and to get it running and to operate like it did in game one, I thought, was outstanding. I'm sure, like everything, there's some things that maybe they'll look back and can improve. I don't know what those are.

But I thought it's hard. I think, from the fans' standpoint or anybody watching a game to be disappointed in the way it operated, the way the umpires and everybody facilitated everything. I thought it went well.

Q. What was your message to the team after this one?

MIKE BIANCO: Obviously, it's frustrating. It's frustrating to lose, as I said earlier. It's frustrating to lose the first one.

We'll get over it. But the next time that we do this, you know, you're in postseason now. So although it's a single elimination -- you lose, you go home -- there will be a time you may get one Mulligan because it's double elimination, but you lose and it's over.

For some guys, their baseball lives will be over. They'll never play again. And certainly this team will never be put together again.

So the message is to understand the sense of urgency of every pitch, of every play. But even beyond that, in the game of everything that you do, from rest, to what you eat and what you put in your body, what you think about, all those things that affect the baseball game.

So it's subjective. Nobody knows exactly how much, but when you put your back against a wall, and this could be the finality, I think that sense of urgency rises.

So, yeah, we're disappointed. Obviously, nobody wants to come here and lose. But as Hayden said, now, instead of being miserable, we'll leave here in a couple of hours and we'll get back to Oxford and we'll start to prepare.

Some of that is practice. Some of that is in the weight room. Some of that is rest for pitchers. Some of that's live BPs for guys that haven't pitched. And prepare the best we can to be ready next week.

Q. I want to ask about your seniors. Your veteran leadership on this team, how much do you lean on them in this? And what does this next week and a half look like for you guys?

MIKE BIANCO: That's two totally different questions. So we'll take the first one.

The leadership is tremendous. I mean, I think the faces of the program in Elliott and Utermark, those two alone mean the world to the pitching staff and to the hitters, respectively.

But there's other guys throughout the team that pick each other up regardless, from Fawley to Reuter and other guys, Furniss, almost a forgotten one that just is the steady one, that just shows up every day and just does his job.

So they get it. They understand. So the leadership of any really good team, I think, when you look back -- and it's hard when you're in the middle of it and you're in the middle of the fight, you talk about those things more at the end, when it's all over. Or when it doesn't go well, usually it's because of a lack of leadership and some of those things. But we feel really good about those guys and the guys that are out front.

As far as the next 10 days or whatever that is, before that, like I said, it's going to be a variety of things. I mean, certainly there's practice involved, but sitting down with Coach Mangrum and trying to figure out what do we need to do with the guys that didn't throw. What's the best plan of attack?

I'm sure some of that will be rest. That's one of the reasons that Hunter didn't pitch today.

We tried really hard not to get to Hooks. Really, the goal was to only pitch him in the ninth with a lead. But we just felt in the eighth inning that the game is on the line and then he was hot and we made the error, and he comes in without the lead or even a tie game.

So some of that's rest. Some of that's live BPs. Some of that is practice. Some of that is healing. There's a lot of

different things to go on.

But it'll be very quick. It's not ten days, necessarily. It's get through this weekend and you know all of a sudden you find out on Monday morning where you're going and then it really feels rushed.

If you're going somewhere, if you're coming home, that is trying to find out all the information about the teams coming in. We'll do as much as we can until we get to Monday. We'll figure out where we are and who we're playing.

Q. You mentioned live at-bats and getting pitchers healthy. Where does Grayson Gibson kind of stand in that? How do you prepare him for next week?

MIKE BIANCO: If everything would have went as planned, he would have been ready to pitch on Thursday in some capacity. He's had a few live BPs, and he's done really well. Looks like he did prior to the injury and the layoff.

I think he's happy, Joel's happy, everybody was happy with where he is. If we just didn't stick around long enough. What does that look like? Is it more live BP? Is it more of inter squad. We obviously weren't preparing even on Tuesday afternoon to go back to Oxford.

Q. What did you think of Koenig? Really threw the ball in the strike zone and gave you all a chance to come back.

MIKE BIANCO: He does that. For a guy that has that much velocity and an array of pitches, he does throw the ball into the strike zone. He's always done that. I was just proud of him to eat up -- probably of all the guys out there, he may have done the best, but we're trying to squeeze as much out of him as possible. And I thought he was really good today.

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