

Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Tuesday, May 19, 2026

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

Kentucky Wildcats

Coach Nick Mingione

Jaxon Jelkin

Tyler Bell

Postgame Press Conference



Vanderbilt - 8, Kentucky - 5

NICK MINGIONE: Love the start we got off to. Give our guys a lot of credit to jump off to a good lead. And then tip your cap to Vanderbilt. They had some good swings. They put some good balls in play, barely were out of reach for, I think, three of them. And they put the balls in play.

We didn't necessarily make the pitch or the play and that's the difference in the game. Credit to them.

And loved our team's fight right there to the very end. That's what we do. We keep games close and we stay in the game. Credit to them. They did a good job.

Q. Jaxon, I know you had a mound visit. It looked like the trainer came out there. Were you hurt at all? What was going on there?

JAXON JELKIN: I felt a little bit of discomfort in my ankle. I think I just needed it to pop or something. Then it felt good after.

Q. Tyler, Fennell works at such a fast pace. What's it like trying to bat against him?

TYLER BELL: Really just controlling the clock. This is my third time now facing him after last year and earlier this season. And last year I was a little bit caught off guard by it. And this year going in I was, like, I'm just going to control it and not let him play the game. I'm going to play the game for him.

Q. Tyler, heading into this regional play, what's the message to your team after a disappointing loss to that really good Vanderbilt team, what's the message

to the rest of the guys?

TYLER BELL: Just stay consistent, keep grinding and be ready for whatever is next.

Q. Jelkin, what does it mean to have a catcher like Jenkins just be in full command from the fall, and what maybe could lie ahead if you guys live another week?

JAXON JELKIN: Yeah, he's a competitor. Anytime you get to throw to a guy like that it makes your life easier. Just having him in our dugout and part of our team, to compete as hard as we can is really, really good.

Q. Could you tell us about what you thought about Vanderbilt's lineup and what makes them dynamic?

JAXON JELKIN: They have a lot of good bats. You've got to be on top of mixing speeds and locations with those guys. And they showed they could put the ball in play when they need to. And I just didn't execute enough pitches today, and that was the story of the game.

Q. Why do you feel like this is an NCAA Tournament team that you have at Lexington?

NICK MINGIONE: We beat the best teams. If you look at our resumé. In order to be considered one of the best teams, you have to beat them. There's all kinds of numbers. I can spit them out. I felt like I did that during the broadcast.

But you've got to not only be good in your league, which we've done. I thought Mark did an unbelievable job. I wanted to make sure that I said that on air and did that publicly. What Mark did, where he tiered our teams, there's only seven teams in our league that have literally a .500 or inning record against the best teams in our league, so we've done that. We've beaten them.

Did you guys watch the no-hitter last night? J.T. Ginn. Did you guys watch that? Okay. So I'm going to set the stage.

J.T. Ginn -- I committed him, I'm proud of that -- he goes into the ninth inning with a no-hitter. Adam Frazier -- who I



saw his picture on the wall in the locker room; I sent it to him; he's all fired up -- Adam Frazier leads off with a single. Next batter hits a bomb. He gets the loss. He went from having a no-hitter, six pitches later, he gets beat.

And my point is, all wins and losses are not created equal. They're not. So you go, man, he lost, that was a terrible outing. What happened? He had a no-hitter. And six pitches later he's walking off the field way loss.

Baseball has a way to just punch you in the gut. And all wins and losses are not created equally. That's why I appreciate the DSR. We have an awesome score there. You look at our RPI, we're in great shape there. You look at our KPI. We're in great shape there.

I say all that because we're five plays away from 18 SEC wins. Five wins -- we have five one-run losses against deciding series -- five. We had five one-run losses. We're right there. We're 5-4 against the number one projected seeds in the country.

We have the 10th most wins against the top 30 RPI countries in the country -- 10. We're tied for 10th. Like, we've beat the best teams. Therefore, we're one of the best teams.

Q. Want to ask you about the trust you have in Jelkin and Tyler Bell. And I know Hudson and all the other guys on the roster, but in particular Jaxon and Tyler, talk about the trust of those guys.

NICK MINGIONE: Superstars, superstars. Literally, superstars. You talk about star power. And in order to be like we believe one of the best teams, right? Like, well, we are one of the best teams, okay? You've got to have the best players.

Tyler, think about the list of first-team all-SEC shortstops in this league. The guy is a superstar. Best high school player I've ever coached. I've never coached a second-rounder. Like, second-rounders don't literally just show up at school.

And Jaxon, there's not a team in that tournament that's, like, yes, I can't wait to face Jaxon Jelkin. And I give my man Aaron Fitt credit. He saw him this fall and was all in on him. He was like, I'm going all in on this guy.

And he got hit around in the one fall game. And Aaron still threw all his chips in and was, like, this is what it's supposed to look like. And he was right.

Ton of trust. I mean, in nonconference games he went 4-0 in the games he pitched. He gave up five runs in four

games against nonconference opponents. Let that sink in. There's not a team in the field that's, like, I'm looking forward to facing him. He's just a superstar.

And I mean these two guys will play in the big leagues. I'm confident of that. And I'll show up in that locker room -- the SEC does so awesome. They have all the former players. I walked around after being in this league for 20 years, and just going through some of the great players, like, some of the best players in the world.

I'm confident that these two guys, they will be some of the best players in the world, especially when they get to the Major Leagues.

Q. You mentioned some of your metrics. I think your RPI is going to be top 40. Your DSR, the KPI both top 30 coming into today. Do you know if the committee weighs those as much as it weighs the other ones? And do you know, what's the process like when you file paperwork? Can you say, hey, remember we missed Hudson Brown for a while, we missed Cleaver for a bit, Tyler Bell. What do you do to kind of remind the committee of some of the key guys you had out for a bit?

NICK MINGIONE: Here's the piece that I have. Mike is obviously our chair. They're great. They're going to do their homework. So what they look at or how much, I would say I would probably, probably more for them, like, how much they're going to weigh.

But they're going to look at all those things. And they're going to do their homework. And I loved Mike's comments about just watching baseball games. It's one thing to look at numbers, but just to watch and look and see.

How much they look at that, I think there's times where maybe sometimes it's a moving target. Sometimes, we're like, whoa, that's different. But this is a bright committee. And we just trust them to do the right thing. And obviously we're going to be an at-large and we're just going to wait for them.

Q. What's the message to your team? You lose three tough games in a row and you're in a situation where you're going to have to sit down watch the selection show and not necessarily hope but wait to see if you're in or not?

NICK MINGIONE: I mentioned to them -- we just talked about the game. We just view every time you lose as a learning opportunity. So we just talked about the game. We left some plays on the field. We left some pitches that we would want back, and we had some at-bats we would

want back. So just told them to get rested. Gonna get dinner tonight, we'll head back to Lexington and get back to work.

Q. People are going to talk about the two series wins and the eight series losses. How would you address that chatter?

NICK MINGIONE: That's a fact. So when you look at the losses, but then you also have to look at the wins. We have really good wins.

There's only three teams in the conference that beat every conference opponent on their schedule, that beat every team on their schedule -- Georgia, Texas A&M and us. That's pretty good company.

When you look at it that way -- and again, all losses and series losses aren't created equally. And J.T. Ginn, that dude got the loss last night he had a no-hitter into the eighth. It's a pretty good outing.

It's, like, the same thing. I would say the same thing -- pretty good run. We're five plays away from 18 wins, five. That's how small the margin of victory is. And that speaks for itself.

Q. ABS, now that you've experienced it in real time, what are your thoughts about it? How could it improve the game?

NICK MINGIONE: I was so impressed by the players on both sides. They were good. I thought even the one they missed late, they might as well try it. They were sitting there with three of them. I was like, go for it.

I was so impressed. We haven't practiced that. Now, there's times where we've had inner-quads and where we've had the strike zone and things like that up there.

We go watch a ton of video, go back, O.J. has done an awesome job with that.

But that was actually really interesting. I loved it. I loved it. And this is what I know about umpires in our league. I said this on air, we have the best umpires.

And for them, even, it's feedback. We always say, like, feedback is the breakfast of champions. Like, for them it's like automatic feedback for the umpires. And I know they would welcome that. If I was an umpire I would. I know we've got the best umpires.

It was like I thought that was really good. I give Matt Boyer in our SEC office a ton of credit. Like, just to keep

progressing our league. Guys, this is my 20th year in this conference, and to think about where it was to where it is now, it is incredible.

And you have to adapt. You have to adapt. And if you don't, you get left behind. And our league has continued to be at the forefront of a lot of things where we have moved the needle.

Quite frankly, we play the greatest sport in the world in baseball. And Major League Baseball has been able to show us the roadmap on a lot of things.

And I think the players enjoyed it, too. I think the players enjoyed it, because at the end of the day, umpires, coaches, student-athletes, they just want to get the call right, at the end of the day. You just want to get it right. And I know the umpires do, the players do. And it's just another way to make sure you get the call right.

There was a lot of time and effort that went into that. Just thankful for everyone that even liked to put us in that position.

Q. Certain stats don't really tell a little bit of this game. Four men left on base, eight hits you see Fennell and Kranzler, what Corbett has done on the other side, what do you feel that you guys could utilize more if you guys play another week, how certain execution can rise, besides even to have two key components on the offense for you guys in the top of the order?

NICK MINGIONE: One thing, the reason why, you know, over the last three years we have an average RPI of eighth in the country. That's what we have over the last three years, and the reason we've done that is we have some really good players. We've played a really challenging schedule, and our players work really hard. So that's what we'll do. We'll get back to work. We'll get back to town tomorrow. I'll give them tomorrow off and then we'll get back to work at practice. We watch a ton of video. Our team loves baseball. When I tell you, they love playing the game of baseball. And so we'll get back. We'll watch the video and every game is different, and so once I study the video, we'll create a game plan and what we did well, what we need to work on, and where we need to grow.

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