

Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Tuesday, May 19, 2026

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

South Carolina Gamecocks

Coach Monte Lee

Patrick Evans

Postgame Press Conference



Tennessee - 11, South Carolina - 6

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by South Carolina.

MONTE LEE: Congratulations to Tennessee. They did such a good job tonight offensively. A lot of two-strike hits. They did a great job of just using the whole field offensively. Hit a lot of balls hard the other way. A lot of two-strike hits. I thought they did an outstanding job offensively.

When you're down -- and we didn't make a couple of plays early in the ball game, but ultimately, the difference was when you give up six in an inning, a big inning there early in the game and you get behind, it can make it really, really tough on you.

And I thought our guys responded pretty well offensively. I thought we had a pretty good offensive night, especially with this guy to my right. Pat Evans, I think everybody got a chance to see how special an athlete he is. When he puts it all together, he's a very dynamic player. And it certainly showed tonight.

But I thought we swung the bats pretty well -- 11 hits, six runs. Needed to be better defensively. Needed to make a couple of plays that we didn't make.

But ultimately we just got hit. And we gave up too many hits, too many runs early in the ball game. We fell behind. We didn't do a good enough job of executing two-strike pitches.

And ultimately, when you fall behind against a good club like Tennessee, it's going to make it tough. But they were the better team, and wish them well moving forward.

Q. Patrick, three hits for you tonight. What was

working for you so well at the plate?

PATRICK EVANS: Really just trying to stay calm. Had a little bit of a tough stretch here, but just been battling through it, working on a couple of things and paid out tonight. Got my good pitches to hit and put the barrel on it.

Q. For you as a team it's been kind of a struggle at the end of the year. Can you put your finger on what's been kind of the key part, the key factor in that?

PATRICK EVANS: I don't think our season kind of boiled down to one specific thing. I don't think I can say that. Could have been a couple of things. But it's just tough. Couldn't really put my finger on one certain thing, no, sir.

Q. Tough or vague, but is there one thing or kind of a number of things that you think this program needs to do to get back on track and get in the NCAA Tournament?

PATRICK EVANS: Well, to be honest with you, I don't really think that's kind of my decision to say what we need to improve on. I mean, it really could be anything. It could be different for different teams. We didn't play like the way we should have.

I think any one of our players would say this guy deserves a job next year, and he's our leader. We're his soldiers, and I think we would run through a brick wall for this guy.

Q. What did this year mean to you to be back home playing at South Carolina? I'm sure it was a dream for you growing up. What did that mean to you?

PATRICK EVANS: It means everything. It's my home state, really hometown. Grew up probably 20, 30 minutes away. After going the junior college route, and I got the call from them, it just felt like the right decision. It means the world to me to represent my town, my state. But wish we could have done a little bit better.

Q. If you don't mind, what is it about Coach Lee that gives you that confidence in him?



PATRICK EVANS: I mean, he's a natural-born leader. He's going to have your back no matter what. He's going to praise you when you do the right things, and he's going to praise you even when you do the wrong things.

I mean, I said it already, but he's going to have your back no matter what you do. He's not going to scream at you when you make errors. He's going to coach you. And, I mean, I think I said earlier, I would run through a brick wall for him, or at least die trying.

Q. I guess as a follow-up, with everything that's gone on this year, the change in the middle of the season, all the losses, how much easier did it make it for you and the rest of the guys knowing that you had a guy like him leading in the dugout?

PATRICK EVANS: It was pretty easy, even before the coaching change, he was already there in the dugout. He already kind of had our backs before. It just kind of carried over.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach.

Q. Now that the season's over, things are probably going to pick up a little bit. I'll ask you point-blank, why should you be the next coach at South Carolina? What makes you the right guy to lead this program permanently?

MONTE LEE: Well, look, I've talked enough about myself, right? I mean, I've been asked this quite a few times. And it gets a little hard to talk about yourself constantly. The only thing that I'll say is this: I got into coaching 26 years ago to serve players and to be a good mentor, role model, coach the players to the best of my ability.

Like Patrick said, I've always had the player's back. And it's been a blessing. It's been a blessing to be a part of this program and all the other programs that I've been a part of as a coach. And I've had a lot of success as a head coach. I have.

And I would just encourage -- I know this season has been really, really tough. The last two years have been really, really tough.

But look, I know who I am. I know what I've accomplished as a head coach. You can look at my track record, and I just ask anybody to look at my track record as a head coach. I've won plenty of games as a head coach.

Now, that being said, the administration has to make a decision as to who they think is the best leader for the

program moving forward. And I respect that they're going to go through that process and pick the right guy for the job.

If that's not me, my time here has been a wonderful experience. It really has, from a guy that grew up 25 miles away, to grow up going to the football games, basketball games, baseball games, lived in this state my whole life, my family lives here, it's been really, really special. It's been an honor to be able to wear this uniform and to give the kids my very best.

I think ultimately, that's the one thing that I can say is I gave them my very best. It didn't always work out the way we wanted it to. And we're certainly disappointed the way the season ended this year. But I gave them everything that I could. So I hope that answers your question.

Q. I know you planned on being here in Hoover for several days, not just one day. So maybe you haven't given a lot of thought to the rest of your week. But now that it's over, what will the rest of your week look like? Do you have any idea when you'll have a chance to sit down with Mr. Donati and talk to him?

MONTE LEE: No, I haven't heard from Jeremiah yet in regards to that. I'm sure that I will. So I don't really know that. We'll get up early in the morning and we'll head back to Columbia.

And we'll be doing exit meetings with the players, just one by one, just to talk to each guy. So we'll get a sense of where they're at and how they're feeling moving forward.

And then from there I'll certainly look forward to hearing from the administration really more so just what are some of the things that they're going to want from me and the rest of the staff for the rest of this week. But I haven't had that conversation yet with him, no.

Q. You've been here in some good moments and in some tough moments at South Carolina. What would you say is the biggest change or point or emphasis that needs to happen whether it's you or another head coach for the program to turn back around?

MONTE LEE: Yeah, you know, I know I've said this a few times in different interviews, but whoever the next leader of this program is, it needs to build a program, okay? And I feel like in the last few years -- and I understand why, because I've been right in the middle of it.

The expectations of this program are very, very high. And we have tried really hard to put together teams every summer -- put together teams, put together teams. And

when we build a foundation that's rock solid in this program, whoever the leader is, of bringing in high school players, we need to get back to recruiting kids in the state of South Carolina and kids closer to home, like a Pat Evans who will run through a brick wall for the program. We need more guys like him where it's personal to them, the success of the program.

We certainly have to continue to recruit out of the portal in junior college. That's not going to go away. But I think to build a program, just building the classes from the ground up and letting the kids grow up in the program and recruiting kids that have a burning desire and a passion to play for South Carolina would be what I would recommend to the next leader.

And it's got to be someone who this is their dream opportunity. It can't be a financial situation, quite honestly. I've seen how that goes too. It's got to be I want to go to South Carolina no matter what they pay me because that's where I want to be. I know the tradition. I know all the success the program's had, and I want to be a part of that.

You've got to find someone who is super, super excited about the opportunity and not looking at it as a step up in regards to money and all of those things. I think that's a big deal. Gotta find a guy that's got a burning desire to be here.

Q. Just looking at the first two games of the ABS system for the first time in college baseball and SEC history. How do you feel this is a big adjustment to the Southeastern Conference? And what could lie ahead for other conferences down the road at the D-I through III level? And how the coaches committee has handled that as well?

MONTE LEE: Well, we weren't very good at it tonight, so I don't know if you want to ask me about it.

Look, I mean, I think I'm not critical of things that I don't understand. So therefore, I would probably say I'd like more time with it to be able to get a feel for it. But I will say this, I think it's a good thing in regards to, I think the catchers have a feel for it. I don't think the hitters are going to have much of a feel for it. And I know the pitchers aren't going to have a feel for it.

So I think that, from my perspective -- and, again, very small sample size -- but talking to people who have used it, I like it. I do. I'm all for it.

I think anything to -- look, there's been a big push over the last few years in general just to get the call right. That's been a big emphasis just with replay, and our umpires are

so good in this league as it is.

It's just another tool to get the call right. So I'm for it. But certainly would need more time with it to really give you a strong opinion on it.

Q. When you guys do have those exit meetings, I'm curious, with all the uncertainty, the players and you guys just not knowing what's going to happen next as far as the next coach goes, how do you think you may handle those conversations with those guys as far as trying to -- whether it's giving them advice on what they should do next, even though they may not know what's next for South Carolina?

MONTE LEE: Look, I went through this with the transition from Coach Kingston to Coach Mainieri, and I was in the interim role. Look, I tried to do everything that I could to just hold the roster together because I do think -- this is just my opinion -- I think, kids have -- it's their right to decide whatever they want to do. If they want to go into the transfer portal, wait it out, stay here, it's certainly their right.

What I'm going to do is just try to encourage them to just hold tight and be patient and see who the next leader of the program is because I have obviously full confidence that the administration is going to pick a tremendous leader to run the program.

So that's going to be my advice to the players is just to be patient and wait and see how the process goes and see who the new leader is going to be before they decide to jump into the portal and transfer, unless, again, it's something that they wholeheartedly want to do. So that's going to be, I would say, just in general my message to the guys.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports