

Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Wednesday, May 20, 2026

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

Florida Gators

Coach Kevin O'Sullivan

Brendan Lawson

Blake Cyr

Postgame Press Conference



And what can you say about Hayden Yost? I mean what a great story. He's raised his average up to .292, and he was sub .200 for a good part of the year. I don't know how many home runs he's hit in the last 20 games, but it's quite a bit. It's another great story to go along with the Caden McDonald story.

So feel good. Just looking forward to playing tomorrow. We know we have our hands full. You don't have to tell me who is going to be pitching against us. We're fully aware of Fay. So we know we're going to have our hands full.

Q. Brendan, what did it mean to start out the frame of the bottom in the first offensively and how you've been leading with everything else for your team, one through nine? And just seeing guys like Lawson and Kurland and Cyr right beside you, Blake, just coming up big today for you guys offensively?

BRENDAN LAWSON: Yeah, I think if you want to win baseball games, I think it has to be a group effort, one through nine. And I think, as I said, one through nine, we did a great job today of getting on, playing smart baseball, moving runners. That was really good today.

Q. Baseball is a sport of failure. You're going to have ups and downs. How do you rebound from the bad times and keep your head in it?

BLAKE CYR: So I think baseball is definitely a mental sport. But I think the biggest thing for just anyone playing this game of baseball is, like, one thing that we use here at the University of Florida is that every game that we play is the most important game of the year.

So that day that you might have had a bad day before, this next game's the most important game of the year. You can't even worry about what you've been through or what happened the next day or even no matter what happened off the baseball field because you've got to go out there and play your hardest and give everything you can for not just yourself, but for your team, for your coaches and what you're playing for on the front of your jersey.

Florida - 8, Vanderbilt - 3

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Florida Gators coach Kevin O'Sullivan and student-athletes Brendan Lawson and Blake Cyr.

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: It was a really well-played game. I think we gave up three in the fifth and then we turned around and scored two in the second. And that was probably a swing inning for us.

But personally, it was really good to see Tim Corbin. He's one of my best friends. Oddly enough, we didn't get a chance to play them this year with the scheduling now with the SEC. So it was great to see him.

And as far as our team is concerned, we wanted to keep Aidan King to about 75 pitches. That's exactly where he was. It's really good to see Jackson Barberi back out there. He was outstanding. He finished off the one-hitter with a 3-2 breaking ball. And his stuff looks back to what it was before he was shelved for a bit.

And Ernie continued to be Ernie. We call him Everyday Ernie. He just comes in and does his job and kept it to about 11 pitches.

And top of that, getting Luke McNeillie back, this is huge. This is the first time I think we've been healthy, truly healthy the entire year.

Kyle Jones has been dealing with a little bit of a turf toe. We got him back in the fold today obviously. And obviously Brendan and Blake here combined for seven hits and four RBIs apiece.

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BRENDAN LAWSON: Yeah, he hit the nail on the head right there. I don't really have much to add for that. I agree with everything he said.

Q. (Off microphone).

BRENDAN LAWSON: I think it's important to have things that you enjoy to do outside of baseball. For me, I really like playing guitar. I like fishing as well. And I think if you can kind of -- when your time is over at the field, if you can have things that you're passionate about and that you enjoy, it makes you realize that it's just a game and failures are going to happen. And it allows you to clear your head and reset for the next day.

Q. A lot of coaches have talked about it, but from a player's perspective, what was it like today playing with the ABS system and stuff like that?

BRENDAN LAWSON: I thought it was really cool. And I think our catcher, Karson Bowen did an unbelievable job with it today. And I think the coolest thing is it just takes our game one step closer to professional baseball.

We watch Major League Baseball games, and they've been using it this year, and it seems like it's been a success. So it's been really cool to just be a part of it.

BLAKE CYR: I agree. I think the biggest thing for me is that at the end of the day we want to play professional baseball. We want to play in the Major Leagues. That's what they do there. So anything that can benefit us towards getting to that goal, I think is awesome for the sport.

Q. Blake, obviously you've been on a tear kind of lately over the past month. Is that more just because you're finally healthy or are there adjustments that you made kind of halfway through the season that has resulted in you kind of taking off?

BLAKE CYR: I think it goes back to the earlier question. It's all mentally, I had a tough year last year off the field. Being the first full year without my dad. And I didn't really know how to separate off-the-field and on-the-field stuff. So I would say that mental battle was tough.

Then I actually went up to the Cape and talked to some mentors. And it's such a blessing to be able to be out here every single day. Honestly, I would give a lot of credit to Sully. He's been an unbelievable person in that process outside the baseball field. He's not just an awesome coach on the field, but off the field he cares so much about who you are and what's going on.

Him constantly checking in on me, and to lead me coming back this year with such a mental clarity and ready to go, I wouldn't say it was just like something clicked in the middle of the season. I mean, in the fall I was just a totally different person. And I kind of even had my academic advisors, like, "I'm happy for you" kind of thing.

So it was just a mental thing for me and I'm just out here having fun playing the game of baseball again, exactly doing what my pops would want me to do.

Q. What's this year been like for you? A lot of ups and downs. Seems like you guys are putting it together here at the right time.

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: Yeah, I think sometimes -- actually, I said this today -- I feel like our team may have, in a weird way, flown under the radar, so to speak, which is not normal here at Florida.

I think some of the losses early in the year were made more than they possibly were. Obviously we went through some changes in the fall and there's a lot of different things.

But I think the one thing I do take pride in is I do believe that most of the teams we've had, they've gotten better as the season has gone on. And we've had some special stories, like Hayden Yost or Caden McDonald. And it's just a testament to their hard work not putting their head down and being good teammates. I'm a firm believer that as long as you stay the course, good things are going to happen to good people. And it certainly happened with those two.

I just think it's not -- like, when you're struggling, it's not just one person in the group that makes it turn or click. I mean you've got to have your assistant coaches on board, your academic advisor, your trainer, your equipment manager. I mean, you name it, your strength coach. Everybody has to be pulling in the same direction.

And I think the continuity that we had, just coaching-wise, has really helped us establish some consistency that we're all striving for.

Q. You're the perfect person to address this. Vandy has the longest NCAA Tournament streak at 19. You're next at 17. If their streak ends, can you put into perspective what an accomplishment that has been for them and for you?

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: I'm not one to reflect right in the middle. I do know how difficult it is to win in this league. I do know that there have been years where we've been close of not getting in.

But it's an unbelievable accomplishment, what Tim's done at Vanderbilt and where he started with that program and where it is now.

I mean, I have the utmost respect for Tim and the way he goes about things. I sure hope that this wasn't the last game they play. I hope they get an opportunity to move on.

Q. Just coming off a huge sweep against LSU this past weekend, and just seeing King and Barbie work the strike zone efficiently, what's it like to have Bowen behind the dish and just see him throughout the fall and the spring just pretty much revitalize the pitching staff?

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: I don't think it could be stated enough about having an older catcher with maturity behind the plate. He gives us so much more than just good play day in and day out. His leadership -- I mean, he's calling the games for the most part. And for me to be able to give him that confidence, tells you everything that you need to know about him.

And he had a tough fall. He had to go through some injuries and some rehab stuff. But we would not be here where we are without him. And I have the utmost respect for him, like I said.

And he's like our unsung hero. He's a grinder. He just gives you good at-bats over and over and over. The stats may not jump out at you, but when you need a good at-bat, he usually delivers. And behind the plate he's been outstanding for us.

Q. Back to the ABS question, what did you guys do as a coaching staff to help your guys prepare for that?

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: Prepare for --

Q. ABS.

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: Well, it's pretty simple. The pitchers were not allowed to be involved. It was the hitters and the catchers. And really I was talking to Tommy Slater about it, one of our coaches -- and obviously he's been through this process in professional baseball -- the best thing he said to me that made total sense was, use common sense, just be a good teammate, don't make this about yourself. If we've got two outs, nobody on first, it's a questionable call, that's not the time to do it. Now we've got runners in scoring position, and you feel firmly about it, that's fine. No one is going to get upset if you're wrong.

If you're down a run in the eighth and it's a 3-2 count and it's close and you feel like you have an opportunity to get on base to start an inning, that's fine, but the best thing he said to me and to the team was just be a good teammate, and when you make decisions, make them with some clarity.

Q. Talk about the Alabama game and going up against them for the fourth time this season.

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: I forgot about the Alabama series. I've somehow put it in the back of my mind and kind of moved on.

I mean, they've had a great year. And obviously we're facing their number one. We've got Liam going, and Josh didn't throw today, and Ernie only threw 10 pitches. I would expect it to be a very competitive game. But I've truly tried to put that series in the back of my mind. So no matter how hard you try, I'm not going to reflect back on it.

Q. Tim Corbin was incredibly complimentary of your team. He said he thinks you're an Omaha team. He said geez, I can't believe they lost 18 times. How would you react to that?

KEVIN O'SULLIVAN: Well, in all fairness, I think our strength of schedule is number two in the country. I think we've had the fourth most difficult SEC schedule, from what I've read. Sometimes our records are not as gaudy as maybe some others, just because our strength of schedule. Like, we played Miami three times. We played Florida State three times.

And these midweek games are no joke in our state. So have there been difficult games that we've lost that we probably shouldn't have? Yeah, I can't deny that.

But sometimes losing, it makes you stronger. It makes your team stronger, and sometimes you learn -- well, you do learn more from losses than you do wins oftentimes. But I do think we're returning in the right direction, and we're finally healthy. I think that's the thing that people don't quite understand sometimes. Like, when you watch Luke McNeillie go out there, and we hadn't had him in a month. And we didn't have Barberi for six weeks, you know, you take those two guys out of your bullpen, it looks totally different.

Right now, we make a change with Aidan and Liam. And now all of a sudden, Liam's last two starts is like what we've been waiting for. Lawson had to go through some things. We started the season without Cade Kurland. And so everybody goes through injuries. I've always said it's not who you play. It's when you play people. And when

we played Alabama, they were playing really good. And there's been times when we played our best on certain weekends and not our best on others.

So yeah, I'd like to look -- what is it, 38 wins? Once again, I'll focus on the 38 rather than the 18.

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