

Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Wednesday, May 20, 2026

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

Tennessee Volunteers Coach Josh Elander Blake Grimmer

Postgame Press Conference



Arkansas - 8, Tennessee - 4

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Tennessee head coach Josh Elander and Blake Grimmer.

JOSH ELANDER: Not the result we were looking for today. But congrats to Arkansas. They really landed on some balls today. Those were hit a long way.

I thought our guys did a good job staying in the fight. We'll go home, rest up, get ready for our next task.

Q. You went down early. How do you guys stay in the fight and make sure that even though when the score's not in your favor early on, you stay in the game?

BLAKE GRIMMER: We've got to know that there's a lot of ball game left. Those runs really came in the first few innings. We still had seven, eight innings left to go. And we know that as a squad, and we know what our hitters are able to do when we're up to the plate. So just trusting our guys, knowing that we can score as much as we let up to.

Q. Talking about trusting the guys, what is the confidence of the offense right now, maybe, compared to how it was early in the season?

BLAKE GRIMMER: We've come a long way. I think just overall we're taking better at-bats. Not -- taking the self stuff out of it and just working towards the team I think is what has worked over the past three or four weeks and really helped us out down the stretch.

Q. You worked a 10-pitch walk in the first inning where you fouled off four straight two-strike pitches. What were you looking for in that at-bat or what was your goal hanging on there?

BLAKE GRIMMER: I was just trying to see the ball up. He was spinning the ball a lot down. I know with the downward angle he comes up with, everything's going to be going towards the dirt. So I was trying to see the ball up. I probably swung at a few sliders that probably weren't strikes, but I was just trying to grind out, hit the ball in play.

Q. Just two games here this week, but do you feel like you guys got better these two games? And how do you feel these two games can prepare you for what's next?

BLAKE GRIMMER: 100 percent. We got some guys out there from the bullpen that really showed what they could do and really performed well yesterday and even today, like Bo Rhudy closing it up there. I think we took a lot from these two games here, playing in SEC competition.

Q. What was it like going up to, playing 18 innings with the ABS? And you won't see that in Regionals, but what was your biggest take with how adjusting with the ABS and just some scouting evaluation with that?

BLAKE GRIMMER: I thought it was interesting first time around. I think just using it, having good strategies when you use it, certain times -- it's not very smart to use it and just using it to your advantage most of the time.

Q. How would you assess Evan's starts and kind of the struggles he went through with the long ball?

JOSH ELANDER: Yeah, I think just the breaking stuff was not as sharp as usual tonight. I just love that he got out there and competed. Again, obviously not his best stuff.

And credit to Arkansas, they had a good approach. They were sitting on pitches, and they landed on them. And some of those were hit a long way.

But, again, he's a guy we have a ton of confidence in down the stretch. And he's a guy that sometimes he'd say, hey, I can't throw it today or whatnot. But him getting the ball today will give Tegan a chance to get a little bit more of a

breather after those guys have been really grinding down the stretch. So him being a really good teammate there. That off the street will be crisper next time he gets out and we'll get a little bit more rest and get back to work.

Q. You guys have gone down early in a decent number of times in recent games. Even though you've been able to fight back in some of those, how hard is it playing from behind?

JOSH ELANDER: That's a great question. I mean in a perfect world, there's a lot of different ways to win the game. Again, I think at this point in the year, we've been through the mud and had some -- we've won a lot of different ways and lost some different ways.

I want our guys to buy in that there's nine innings. So if you're up by five in the fourth inning, you can't get giddy. If you're down by five there's plenty of game left.

I thought there was a little bit of a lull in the middle of the game today which that was my challenge for the guys going into next week. It can swing back and forth both ways. But you've got to stay in it. And I think we can do a little bit better job of that going into next week.

Q. It's the third straight start that Evan's given up three runs or more in the first. What do you make of that?

JOSH ELANDER: I think today, I mean, each one is mutually exclusive. I mean the ball's flying in Oklahoma City. He's attacking the strike zone. And today again they landed on some pitches.

This is just his off speed stuff is not as clear as breaking ball. And, again, he's kind of grinding through for us right there. So him and Reyn will make those adjustments, we'll get him right back out there.

But one walk, again, three strikeouts is probably the one that's a little bit lower. He's a guy that can punch some guys out. If he's throwing the ball over the plate and our guys are playing defense we'll role with Blanco any day.

Q. Where do you feel like the team's at headed to next week? I mean, obviously you want to be playing your best this time of year. Do you feel like that's the case?

JOSH ELANDER: Well, I think we've been challenged all year. I mean we had a it's a young team that now has some reps, so that's where at the end of the year our guys need to -- one of my favorite parts about this time of year is now you're just competing for more time together as a group. You're only guaranteed a few more games or

whatever it may be, so there shouldn't be any more motivation needed.

But I think going through the challenges and having some scars and having some successes, it gives them perspective going into the postseason. And we play in the SEC and it's a bear, so it will get you ready for the postseason.

But I think offensively the guys have really been swinging it well. It's been good to get Jay and those guys some versatility, moving them around and getting them some different spots.

We'll give us some options lineup-wise once we see what the match-ups look like. And then pitching wise it was good to get Appy that box checks, and Haas has really throwing the ball well. And we got Tegan some rest. That's a small victory there. So those guys are fresh ready to go next week.

Q. Similar question, how do you feel those two days here can help you all going forward and what's to come?

JOSH ELANDER: Well, I think just the environment, I mean I know tonight we're getting closer to the nightcap. It's a great stadium and it's a different space, whether you're playing on the road or even just playing -- we play on turf at home. And getting to play on a natural surface and dealing with the ABS and all the media stuff, now with college baseball as it continues to become bigger and bigger across the country there's more eyes on it. And I think that will help guys as we get to the postseason because for some of these guys it will be their first time doing it here in a Tennessee uniform or it's some freshmen that will be doing it.

Q. Five games the last six days, no games coming up within the next couple days. Obviously get some rest. What's the team going to be doing between now and Monday and then, of course, knowing where you go?

JOSH ELANDER: Sure, we'll keep it moving. We definitely are going to get some rest, make sure they need to hydrate, reset. We'll get them back to Knoxville as soon as we can. And then that's the beauty of having Keegan Knoll on our staff. I mean, a former Major League strength coach that's got a ton of experience of how do you navigate the hot part of the summer with also you still have baseball to play, and what do they need to be as fresh as possible for next week.

But that will be one of the main focuses right there, and then just keep it moving as far as ground balls and swings.



We'll do some live ABs and some other things. We've had a couple of years where we've done it like this.

So we'll kind of look back and see how we've done that and adjust for whatever's best for this club. But we'll get back to Knoxville. We'll get some boxes checked before we get going again.

Q. Having Garrett last night in center field and now behind the dish, what's it like just having his availability presence and just evaluating your depth at the catcher position and also with Clark managing yesterday and fixating from the bullpen outside of the starting rotation?

DAVE VAN HORN: We're very blessed with those guys, not only all incredibly talented and capable of being number one catchers in the league, but they're great kids, too. They work hard. They bring incredible leadership qualities and they're great teammates. We've been very, very lucky with that group. And the thing that I think is cool there's never really any fighting.

They're all rooting for each other, and we're able to get Stone and Garrett back there tonight. Stone does a good job coming off the bench.

Garrett's a unique player, and he made himself some money in the draft this weekend just with what he did, swinging the bat and leaving the yard.

I mean, he threw that ball to second today. I didn't get a watch on it, but I knew it was pretty good, that throw to second.

He's capable of playing both positions in the middle of the field at a high level, and he's just had so many winning qualities, and a lot of our catchers do. He's been good for us down the stretch.

Q. Obligatory update question on Landon Mack and Reese. Any difference with Reese today and, of course, Landon as well?

JOSH ELANDER: I'll talk to Landon as soon as we're done here today. No update there. Hopefully we'll have something. Today's Wednesday, hopefully early next week we'll have a pretty good feel.

But him and I have been -- not today -- but we'll be in contact. And then Reese it seems to be, we're hoping to have him back sooner rather than later. We'll see how that one plays out but I'll get with those two guys tonight.

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