

Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Wednesday, May 20, 2026

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

Arkansas Razorbacks

Coach Dave Van Horn

Tate McGuire

Zack Stewart

Postgame Press Conference



Arkansas - 8, Tennessee - 4

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Arkansas head coach Dave Van Horn along with Tate McGuire and Zack Stewart.

DAVE VAN HORN: I thought Tate did a great job of getting us off to a good start. I mean, Tennessee has a really good lineup. They're very aggressive. He kept them off balance, but he threw a lot of strike ones.

And we could have sent him back out for the fourth. This was definitely a bullpen day for us. We felt if we could use our bullpen today and find a way to win, it sets us up a lot better and it gives some guys a little more rest, get them back on track.

So that really worked out. And the bullpen did a good job. We let Parker Coil down. We didn't play good behind him. Broke back on a ball that on a jam shot, it drops in. We've got to make that play every day.

Tough play, third baseman didn't make it. He makes it a lot of times. Just a lot of things didn't go our way. But Parker hung in there.

And then DeCremer, I thought, came in and did a nice job of slowing things down for an inning or so. And then Gibby finally got it going there really in the ninth.

But the game for us was five swings -- solo homer, two-run homer, double down the right-field line, three-run homer. I think all of our runs were driven in with those five swings. A lot of times it's one pitch or one swing, but those were all big.

Q. Zack, what's going right for you?

ZACK STEWART: I mean I think I'm just going on the right pitches and getting a pitch in the middle of the zone, committed to the approach. When I stay within the approach, good things happen. So it's just doing that.

Q. What did you think the key was to that first inning, you guys putting together all those at-bats against Blanco?

ZACK STEWART: I mean I think it started off really well when Cam hit the home run. He kind of got us going, big shot off his slider. And I think that just kind of led to good things the rest of the inning.

Q. Tate, what was working for you today? And also just seeing the back end of the bullpen just fill up innings for you guys also.

TATE MCGUIRE: It was awesome, getting ahead in the count. For me the whole idea behind starting pitching is just getting (lost audio). The bullpen did a great job as they always do, filling up the zone and getting ahead and kind of keeping their offense down as much as they could.

Q. Zack, you hop in the portal, you come to Arkansas. Ups and downs this year. And then it looks like ending the year on quite an up. What's this year been like for you?

ZACK STEWART: It's been really good. I would do this over and over again no matter what. This is the best decision I've made in my life to come play here at this university, meet all these guys.

It's been a really good year. I've had a lot of fun, winning a lot more. And that's what I like to do.

Q. Tate, what does it mean for you guys to be able to pitch so well today and do it without Dietz or Gaeckle and be able to save them later in the tournament?

TATE MCGUIRE: I mean it's great. For us it sets up well



later down the term. We kind of have those guys going. It's just more of like a momentum thing for all the arms down in the bullpen, just getting off on the right foot as we head into the postseason.

Q. Zack, Coach Elander mentioned that Blanco clearly didn't have his off-speed stuff working early in the game. Is that something you guys as an offense noticed and were able to kind of communicate with each other about early?

ZACK STEWART: Yeah, I think we picked up on it. Cam hit the home run off the slider. I kind of communicated with him, seeing the pitch shape, what he thought it was and everything. And then he relayed that to me. And then, obviously, that's what I hit my first pitch. Just kind of relaying those messages, communicating in the dugout, I think that helps a lot with our offense.

Q. What did you think about the new rule with the ABS with the first time it's being implemented here in this tournament?

DAVE VAN HORN: Well, I think it brings a little extra excitement to the game. It really -- I see it as a good teaching tool. Man, I'm telling you, our hitters, they get to tap their hat and question the umpire. And catchers, the same way. I think it's going to help the hitters learn the strike zone a little bit.

But I thought, so far, it's run really smooth. It's been really fast. I'm all about it if you can do it away from here and do it in ballparks in the SEC. In college baseball, that might take some time. But so far, so good. I like it.

Q. With Zack, other than having great hair, what makes him what he is? He's really rolling?

DAVE VAN HORN: Really good personality. Real popular on the team. I mean, here's a guy that transfers in. Didn't have a great year last year. Last couple of years weren't as good as his freshman year.

We get him late, do a lot of talking with him, get him to come over, decides to come to school in Fayetteville, and didn't have a very good fall.

But it started building up a little bit. But he never complained. I guess that's my point. He was never, like, poor old me or I'm wasting a year. He just was a good teammate. And the players love him. You could just tell. They just gravitate to him.

I've told the story a couple times about, I'd say 45 days ago we had a coaches meeting in my office on a Monday

morning, and Zack's in a really bad slump. He's not helping us much. And I told Coach Thompson, I said let's change his luck, kind of the way I said it, frustrated. I said, why don't you just tell Zack to change his luck, cut his hair or something.

Well, later that night, about 5:15, I get a call and it's Zack. I'm like, oh, here we go. Let's see how this goes. He said, hey, Coach, it was great. He said, hey, this is Zack. I said I know who it is. He said I was talking to Coach Thompson. He said something about cutting my hair. You want me to cut my hair. How short do you want it? That's what he said.

And I said, Zack, I really don't care about your hair. I could care less about your hair. I just want you start doing what I know you can do. I just want you to change your luck, something. He goes, okay, okay. I said, Zack, I don't care if your hair is whatever. So you get the gist of it. So it was good.

And I think he realized that we care about him a lot. And I think that helps him relax a little bit.

But that's him. He didn't call me to give me a hard time or be defiant. He called to see what I wanted him to do. And I really appreciated that.

Q. What's it like to have TJ at the hot corner and how you feel offensively with him, how he's capable to help the heart of the lineup pretty well? And just building the momentum of the offense even from Lexington a few days ago and what lies ahead on Friday?

DAVE VAN HORN: You know, if you look from day one to today and seen the number of lineups that we've had, the batting order, it's crazy. I've never done this. I mean, it's, like, I'm looking at match-ups.

Usually I just get a lineup that rolls. TJ's hit 9-hole for us. He's at 8-hole. Hit him 2-hole first time at Kentucky for a game. Didn't go good. Moved him back in the middle of the order the next day. We scored a bunch of runs. We win.

Today, this is the first time he's hit fifth all year. Zack Stewart hitting the 9-hole for me a game at Kentucky. The next day, I hit him cleanup because he swung so well. And I kidded with him before the game. I said have you ever hit 9-hole one day, clean up the next? He said no, sir. I said, I've never done it either. I've never done this. And he hit a homer that day too.

It's been nuts. But I like the lineup and the order that we were in today. I really like the way it flowed.

Q. Do you have an update on Kuhio, and what exactly happened on that?

DAVE VAN HORN: Yeah, let's just -- you guys know what I'm talking about. Yeah, it's not good.

Q. Is it something he was dealing with coming into the game?

DAVE VAN HORN: It happened on that swing. That ball went to the fence. It looked awkward to me. Something was strange about it. He didn't fire on it. He just swung, and it's almost like he slowed down a little bit.

Q. With Zack, I couldn't help having flashbacks to Spanberger out here nine years ago. He's kind of been on a similar trajectory last season. Do you see any parallels between those two?

DAVE VAN HORN: I guess a little bit. Chad got hot -- it took him half the season to figure it out. And obviously he had three home runs here. One of his home runs, he hit a breaking ball and he was on one knee when he hit it, I think, that last one.

But, yeah, you could say so. But I think Stewart has just been taking a lot better swings -- even when he strikes out, the swings are pretty good. You're not going to hit it all the time. The ball is coming in mid-90s, it's hard to hit. I get it. But when he touches it, it goes.

Q. How cool was it to see Cole Gibling put together those two innings after what he's been through the last year?

DAVE VAN HORN: Yeah, it was good. You know, I felt like the ninth was a lot better than the eighth. Getting a little nervous in the eighth. Breaking ball wasn't real sharp. Behind in the count.

But the ninth, he throws two balls in a row, maybe threw three, and then we had a strike and then ground ball to short. And then he got a hit. And then he got, throws a breaking ball, and all of a sudden that's a pretty good breaker. So the ninth for me was a lot better than the eighth, and it was good to see.

Q. Coach, can you talk about the Texas match-up on Friday and what challenges they might bring?

DAVE VAN HORN: Well, yeah, they bring a lot of challenges. And they can pick one of those three starters and they're all just about as good as the other.

I mean, you look at their numbers, they're just really good. They're a solid team. Really don't have any weaknesses, and that's what I see.

I guess the good thing about what's gone on, we got to play Tennessee today and we hadn't played them all year. We get to play Texas, haven't played them all year.

We're going to do everything we can to try to beat them. We've got some guys available. But this is so far been good except for the injury to one of my players, to get to see some different teams in our league.

Q. All the home runs were 420 feet-plus. Nothing cheap about those. What did you see from those swings? Why do you think the ball was flying maybe the way it was today?

DAVE VAN HORN: What I think about all those swings, there weren't any -- they went so far because they weren't full-touch swings. They didn't muscle the ball out and the wind blew them out. Those balls were smoked. Cam crushed that ball, left the bat, and we knew it was way out.

And Pompey got him a hanging slider and he crushed it, had backspin, and it just took off.

Both the Stewart balls were hit extremely hard. That second one was hit on the line. Looked like a shot out of a cannon.

Yeah, the ball's carrying here. That's pretty obvious. Everybody can see it. But those balls would have went way out anyway.

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