

Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Thursday, May 21, 2026

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

Mississippi State Bulldogs Coach Brian O'Connor Noah Sullivan

Postgame Press Conference



Georgia - 5, Mississippi State - 3

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Mississippi State head coach Brian O'Connor and Noah Sullivan.

BRIAN O'CONNOR: Just start off by saying that obviously we're disappointed that we're not advancing, clearly. But I thought we battled the whole game even there in the ninth inning. We just couldn't put enough good things together offensively. And they did. Obviously, the three-run home run was the difference in the ball game.

And I thought Duke Stone was pitching good. That inning started off with a roll-over ground ball and then a two-strike hit. Credit them, the 2-0 pitch, the guy hits a three-run home run. But we just have to be a little better, certainly. Noah would admit to that going into next weekend.

But proud of our team how we competed. And we'll go from there.

Q. Noah, this time last year you guys got beaten 9-0 and you were just kind of hoping to get in the tournament. You figured you'd be in. Maybe explain the difference this year. You guys come in here, you win a game. Good chance you'll be hosting next weekend. So what's the last 12 months kind of been like for a Mississippi State player?

NOAH SULLIVAN: It's been a lot of fun. The transition has been really smooth. Coach Oak and the guys have really been amazing. And we've played ball a lot better than we did last year, and it's been a lot of fun.

Q. When you look at today, you guys had a lot of strikeouts offensively, but you put the barrel on the ball pretty much all day and just found the glove. I think they had four double plays defensively. What

was your assessment of the offense as a whole today?

NOAH SULLIVAN: We swung it pretty well. We just left some guys out there. Certain situations happened, but we just have to be better offensively as a whole. There's not one guy to just pinpoint, but we've just got to be a better offense.

Q. What is your message to your teammates to put this loss behind them and then focus on the regional and not let one loss turn into two?

NOAH SULLIVAN: We've been here the whole season. It was a weird season for the most part with the sweeps and getting swept. It's a place we've been. It's nothing different. Hopefully we can play at home.

Q. How do you feel about the state of the team right now as you guys head into a regional, just the way you guys are playing at this point?

NOAH SULLIVAN: I mean, we're playing well. We're all excited. We want to play at home, and hopefully that does happen.

But I mean, this game, it is what it is. We didn't do enough on both sides, and it just is what it is. We'll move forward, get back to work and see what happens.

Q. What does it mean to see, honestly, with how you and Stallman both had multi-hit games, how do you carry that offense into next week into the regionals and just how much you guys have prepped to get to this point?

NOAH SULLIVAN: As a whole, we've worked really hard. We've done a really good job at leaning on certain guys. It doesn't really matter. We need 1 through 9, and we've done a really good job throughout the whole year.

It's cool to see a couple of multi-hit games, but obviously at the end, we want to win.

Q. Yesterday you guys scored 12 runs. What was the

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difference a little bit? I know you made contact today. But what was the difference at not being able to bring some of those guys home today?

NOAH SULLIVAN: I guess the pitching was a little better. Maybe we tip our hat a little bit. But we just have to be better in certain spots with a guy on first, not necessarily hit the ball in the air, but try to stay off the ground.

Q. You mentioned the sweeps and kind of the ups and downs of the season. And like today, there have been a lot of games that are very marginal in the difference, and you guys come up short. How do you stay focused, how have you guys kind of kept together through those, and what are you trying to do this time going into a regional?

NOAH SULLIVAN: Yeah, I mean, it starts up top. Coach Oak does a really good job of maintaining us and making sure we're looking forward and be where our feet are. And then on top of that, we understand we have a really good team, and it's shown throughout the whole year.

Q. Ryder Woodson, these last few weeks, ever since that kind of freak Drew Wyers injury, seems to be hitting it pretty well and did in both of those games here at the tournament. Just what have you seen from him kind of behind the scenes and just the way he's swinging right now?

NOAH SULLIVAN: Yeah, looks like he's locked in on everything. He's doing what works for him. He's swinging it super confident, which is really important going down the stretch.

Q. You said recently it's important to kind of figure out who you could trust. It appears like the last couple of weeks, Tyler Pitzer's kind of moving into that circle of trust. Where do you see him kind of factoring into your regional pitching plans?

BRIAN O'CONNOR: Well, I think he's pitching some really great baseball the last two weeks for us. He's executing his pitches. We've seen that kind of stuff that he's shown the last couple of weeks at periods of time this year.

But you want your guys pitching their best baseball at this time of the year, and he certainly is. We have a lot of confidence in him. That will continue. So certainly he'll be a key guy starting next weekend.

Q. Barring a match-up in the super regionals or in Omaha, you completed your first tour through the SEC. I'll ask you the same question I asked you last year: What are the expectations that you've seen that were

what you thought they'd be? And are there some things this year that were different than what you expected?

BRIAN O'CONNOR: That's a great question. Here we are now done with the conference tournament, and, first and foremost, I'm very proud to be the coach at Mississippi State.

I understand what comes with that and the pride that not only the fans have but the players and former players have in this baseball program. And I want to do everything I can as the leader of it to live up to it, of what the standards are in this program.

Certainly, this league is outstanding. For a long time, it's been considered the best baseball league in this country. And the reason is the team in the other dugout every night is going to be really, really good.

And I'd say that the thing that I learned is how narrow it is, how much the fringes matter. I don't think this is just in league play, but I believe this year, we lost seven games by one run. And you can look at it and say, well, what could we have done had we won those? Sure.

But we're right there. We just need to be a little bit better starting next weekend in those tight ball games. I think there's a handful of games we lost by two runs as well.

So that's where I would say that I've learned that there's just little things that we all have to be a little bit better to win those close ball games. Because there's going to be a lot of them.

You know, other than maybe one game this year, if I can recall correctly, that we really were not very competitive. And that was game three against Auburn. Every other game, you felt like we were in it. And that's because of guys like Noah Sullivan and how much this program means to them.

And today's another great example. They're going to continue to compete, and that will be a cornerstone of our program moving forward.

Q. How did you feel about the state of the team and the way you guys are playing right now entering the NCAA Tournament?

BRIAN O'CONNOR: I feel great with about it. Obviously we didn't win a game today. And Georgia's got a really good team. Everybody is good in this conference. So, I feel great about it.

Yeah, we're not on a winning streak and all that. But most teams aren't that are in this tournament. You're going to lose a ball game, and you go home.

But I feel great about it. Their spirits are up. Obviously they're disappointed about today. But they really, really believe in each other. And I feel like this team has the skill and want-to to play for a long time.

Q. Wanted to ask you about your team, the trust you have in your guys facing adversity. What is your message to your guys heading into regional play? And also you mentioned the fringe things. What can you do in a week's time to prepare for that regional, where you don't let one loss turn into two?

BRIAN O'CONNOR: I don't really worry about the one loss turning into two. In this game, you have to have a very short memory, and you have to turn the page and put things behind you. This team has shown at times this year an ability to do that.

So we'll put a plan together. Fortunately, we've been in this situation a lot. And we'll put the plan together of what we're going to do over the next eight days or so to have them ready to go on Friday. I believe that will be at home, but if it's not, then wherever it is.

And this team, like any team in college baseball, they'll be remembered by what they do moving forward and that's the memories that they will have. I've been doing this along enough to see that there's been teams that have had 50 wins or mid-40 wins going into the NCAA Tournament, and they can't get out of a regional.

So nobody remembers the 44 or 45 wins in the regular season. We had 39 in the regular season, added one here. We're a 40-win ballclub, and there's not many of them out there.

And so we'll dwell on the positive. When you play in a program like this of this kind of magnitude, there's a lot of neglect around it. The players know that. And we'll dwell on the positive and get this team ready to go. And excited looking forward to the opportunity that they have in front of them.

Q. Had a chance to get Tomas and Duke in the ball game. Didn't get to see Ryan. How do you feel about Ryan heading into the postseason and kind of where he's at physically and mentally, I guess?

BRIAN O'CONNOR: Physically, he's in a great place. I think mentally, he's in a great place. He threw a bullpen yesterday in preparation to start on Saturday, had we won.

Again, when you're dealing with the injury that he's coming back from, it's not in our best interests or in the young man's best interest to pitch today on that kind of short rest, because his last time out there was Saturday.

So we lined it up for him to start on Saturday. That's not happening. So this weekend, we'll do some kind of innersquad scrimmage so he can continue to drive his pitch count up.

It's hard to say. He's been out there twice after being out seven weeks. I know how much it means to him. I know how much he believes in himself. He feels like his bullpen that he had yesterday was the best one and felt the best that he has since his return. So that's encouraging.

I don't know what that leads to, how much he can give us. We'll see and evaluate that after this weekend. But that situation is what it is. You can't do anything about it. You can't fast forward it. And you can't all of a sudden get him to 80 or 90 pitches like that. It just doesn't work that way.

So whatever he's able to give us next weekend, we'll take. And I feel confident enough that we have enough guys on that pitching staff to really do some damage moving forward.

Q. When you hired Zach Solomon (phonetic), you said one of the reasons you were hired was to bring postseason baseball back to Dudy Noble Field. And now you're a couple days away from finding out if that's the reality. You said you expect those games to be at home. If it proves to be the case, what would that mean to you and this team to bring postseason baseball back to Dudy Noble Field?

BRIAN O'CONNOR: Well, it will mean a ton, right? Because that will mean we did something special in year one under my leadership.

It's razor thin. I've been in this situation many times that it's razor thin on whether or not you host or not. I don't think this loss has really anything to do with it. This team certainly is fully capable, and I think I believe that we've earned that right to play at home.

The last thing I'd say is, you know, you've been around this program a long time, that how much it means to the fans. And not that we play the games for that reason, they're part of what we do, they're with us. And I felt that every day since joining this baseball program. And we want to do anything we can to bring that back to Starkville.

I hope on Sunday the committee feels that we are worthy

of that. I know our fan base and the community of Starkville will do an incredible job hosting a regional welcoming the other teams. And I believe this team has earned the right to be able to do that.

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