

# Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Saturday, May 23, 2026

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

## Auburn Tigers

## Coach Butch Thompson

## Bub Terrell

### Postgame Press Conference



Arkansas - 2, Auburn - 1

We'll start with an opening statement from Coach and then take questions for the players.

**BUTCH THOMPSON:** Yeah, congratulations to Arkansas. Wish them and Georgia the best tomorrow. I don't think there's any doubt with our players and our coaching staff and our program that we had every desire and intention to try to be playing tomorrow.

Disappointed, but thought our guys absolutely -- if you looked at the defense for the time we were here, the pitching we run out there, some moments we had offensively, even I think we out-hit 'em tonight. Coming out of the rain delay, just didn't score or put anything together there. I think Eric Guevara had two as good of at-bats as he could there coming out of the rain delay and a line drive to second and center field there in his last at bat.

Mason McCraine down to the last pitch did a very nice job for us. Disappointed with the outcome, but absolutely thought this was great training, even the rain delay. We feel like Petrovic is going to go six or seven innings every time he takes the field, but no excuses, and Hetzler comes in and goes the rest of the way. I think we threw two pitchers each and every game.

I just thought the guys did a good job playing the game. The game tonight, we played a little bit this year, and so that's the one thing I told the guys, keep working hard, we get to try to play for another championship next week, and that's one more last little step of completion, I think, for us to prepare well and find one more little nugget to break through there, and I think we will and I'm looking forward to getting back home in preparation for next weekend.

THE MODERATOR: Questions, please.

**Q. Bub, that play at the wall right before the delay, can you just walk us through that and just what's going through your head as you're going up there to make that play?**

**BUB TERRELL:** Yeah, it was early in the game, and the wind was blowing a lot. Before that inning, I had went out and tracked my steps and seen how far -- how many steps it takes to get to the wall. That's a routine, as Gabe lets us do. I went up to the wall and I caught it, thank God, because it was definitely going over.

**Q. Also hitting that home run earlier, with everything else going on, how do you just for you offensively and what did that Florida series mean early in the season for you to spark and probably catch the eyes of many Major League scouts in the future?**

**BUB TERRELL:** Yeah, that was a big step in this season for me, struggling, and I feel like that was probably the most I was struggling, I feel like. And getting pinch hit probably the most brutal thing it feels, honestly. And just having a steady head. BT, he came to me the next game, actually, and he asked me was I okay, and I told him I was mentally ready, and I feel like if I keep that mindset going on, I'll be pretty good.

**Q. When you knew you had it and you brought it back, what was that feeling like to know that you saved your team two runs there?**

**BUB TERRELL:** It felt amazing. With the pitching staff we have, if we save any run, I feel like they can go the distance, and that's exactly what it felt like.

THE MODERATOR: All right. We'll excuse you and take questions for coach.

**Q. Ryder Helfrick has had a lot of success against your team. What did you see on that pitch to him tonight and what makes him so difficult to get out?**

**BUTCH THOMPSON:** I just think he's a winning ball



player. Maybe we see guys all around here that are kind of potential MLB players some day. I think of him and I think we might have a couple. And I think Grahovac for A&M, and I just go around the league and say that. So that's what good players do.

We were 15 over two strikeouts to walk tonight, and we made a commitment to shove the ball in the strike zone. We've actually lost a game earlier this year where we struck out 18 and walked nine. Arkansas matched that pretty good tonight.

I think McElvain was more the difference. But you absolutely look, he hits a home run. So whatever you do is like -- it's Helfrick, and we were absolutely targeting him because he's played great against us his whole career. But the 3-2, 2-1, we have a job to do as pitchers, and I think we just made a pitch we would love to have back. In that situation, he has a knack for that moment.

And then the other RBI was Kozeal with two strikes, and he hit a ball where we were not trying to throw him a strike as much as how hot he has been. So he's chased us below, gets a fastball up. Just your best players need to play really good this time of year, and that's what it comes down to the ball game.

Bub hit our first home run, and I really keyed in on the Guevara two at-bats where -- this is one of those nights where it just didn't work. If his is a little bit more toward left field, I think we got a shot. I think the ball he hit to second base was as hard as you could hit a baseball in the moment.

And so they got that one more big swing in tonight, but I always look where we had a couple more hits than they did, and it just went at 'em a little bit tonight. But I wouldn't take anything away from Helfrick there, especially with nobody on and thinking about the situations where you would do something. Maybe Kozeal is hotter in the moment and what you would do with those two guys, and that's why we kept pitching to Kozeal, is out of respect for Helfrick, actually.

**Q. You got five out of Hetz. What did you see from him and did you think if you had gone to the 10th, you could of sent him out there for one more?**

BUTCH THOMPSON: He was at 70. I would imagine that's his biggest pitch count. If we would have tied it, I think they had two lefties up. The part of their lineup was -- Rutenbar and Robinett were the two lefties coming up. We were probably going to Abe Chancellor there because we got to that 70 mark, and we thought that was the longest outing of the year for him. So that was probably the plan

that we were talking about in the dugout. If we would have tied and went to the 10th inning, we would have -- we had Chancellor and Kulik, we had a lefty and a righty both ready to come into the ball game.

So that's where we were in the lineup and that's probably what we would have done if we would have trotted back out there for a 10th inning.

**Q. Taking two out of three from Arkansas in April, what were the adjustments that you felt on some scouting evaluation for tonight and just what you feel that in preparation you have towards next week and the regionals?**

BUTCH THOMPSON: Yeah, I just think we've got some of the best training. I hear all the other coaches talk about how hard their schedule and all that's been. I would fall in line with that. It feels like every day that we've -- if we play the toughest schedule in America, teams like Arkansas, we just got to play each and every day. There's nothing we can drill in practice or come up with that would prepare us for anything that we're going to see. I think that's what the SEC does. I think that's why the last six national championships and 11 of the last 16 have come out of this league. It's because of the training that you do all year against one another.

You get some exhilarating confidence from playing great against a team like that and beating 'em two out of three, and then you get your heart ripped when you feel like hey, man, you're doing everything that you can. And that's why we got to find one more little gear maybe, because we lost a 3-2, 2-1 ball game to them. We 10-runned 'em one time and I can't remember the other score. We got to find a way to push through there.

But again, college baseball, I'm trying to teach these pitchers to shove it in the strike zone. It feels like we were close to 70 percent or maybe north of that tonight. At my stage of my career I want a pitching staff that's absolutely committed to that, even if one of their guys hits a home run, as opposed to walking nine or ten and not giving yourself a chance in a ball game and playing Russian roulette that way. I'm done with that.

So the guys that absolutely are toeing the rubber for us are guys that we're committed to, committed to the strike zone, and there are times to duck and dodge. I would say if I ask you to list 20 things that command does for you, to have authority over the baseball and throw strikes, if you throw enough command up there, you should be able to throw some balls here or there.

So again, if they're going to shove it in the zone and make

a mistake and a great hitter hits a ball, I'm going to kind of stay with 'em on that deal. But most home runs are thrown, and I think that was the case there where that was just probably not the quality of pitch that he threw up there for five innings for most of the time. But if we go down, I want you to earn it, and that's kind of been our deal and that's kind of what happened tonight.

**Q. You talked about five weeks for your team to finish the season and then kind of reset. What's your message now as you reset again now and get ready to hear your name called on Monday and then start the postseason process?**

BUTCH THOMPSON: Yeah, this week was we were shooting for a championship and we fell short. Next week we prepare and do the same things and see if we can't just find a little bit of the power of one, one more little thing to put in for another opportunity to win a championship. This one has the ultimate consequence, so if you don't win this championship this next week, that's the end of the road.

So I think we all know that we have a desire and it's possible for us to make it to Omaha and make a push. I believe that because I believe our pitching staff, every day we roll out on the field, we got a chance to win. It's a good feeling as a coach. But you can't come up short next week. You don't get a chance to advance.

So a lot of the same things we did this week because I liked a lot of things we did this week. I thought we were ready to play baseball. So a lot of that, just understanding the consequences of not moving or accelerating or winning next week. That's another reason why I like this tournament, and this is single elimination, so you can see it with the coaches and what they're doing, and us going right to Hetzler instead of trying to piece something together in a 1-0 ball game. This is an elimination game. You're going to put your best guys out there in those moments. Our at-bats deteriorated a little bit, but we still had a couple of good barrels. We just couldn't put 'em together against McElvain, and credit to him.

**Q. Bristol, the last two nights it seemed like he had a bit of an impact as a bottom of the order kind of lineup flipper --**

BUTCH THOMPSON: When he gets on, he gets some balls to the outfield, he had a double, another single or so tonight, worked his way around. I think they actually put Fralick on one time and got Bingaman into the plate who hit a home run last night, and got a single later on, but worked for them. But he's just -- he has a great mindset and does a great job and the last two days is what we need him to be moving forward. I think it lengthens our lineup a

little bit, I thought Belza reached the first two times last night, I thought that was positive for us as well. So we do have to create some length and you see us we moved Rembert back to the lead off so there's always still a little tinkering, what can we do with what we did this week moving into next week that can maybe help us get on a roll. We liked a lot of the features that we did this week and we'll evaluate that and see the best way to go. But Bristol being on the field is and playing like that the last two nights, it definitely helps our ball club.

**Q. You talked about this team and playing so many freshmen and sophomores. But have you seen them take some steps forward and maturity and mental toughness over the last three, four, five weeks?**

BUTCH THOMPSON: Yeah, especially the one you were just interviewing right here. Bub, from the time he's hit campus in two years, how much -- where he started as an out fielder is what I was thinking about as he's answering that question. And I did ask Gabe, I was like, What did Bub say about that play? And I wrote it down he said, I knew where I was. And I think that's why he was talking about the steps. He actually explained it for us. But the answer I got back is, I knew where I was. And I thought that was an increasingly difficult catch -- for me one of the best I can remember in awhile. Because a lot of times those balls hang up or the wind's kind of blowing in, it gives 'em a chance to get there. That ball started pushing and it was going out and he absolutely I'm convicted and I believe the statement he knew where he was, because he timed the jump and the ball is still pushing out of the ballpark and it was an amazing catch.

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