

Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Saturday, May 23, 2026

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

Arkansas Razorbacks

Coach Dave Van Horn

Ethan McElvain

Ryder Helfrick

Postgame Press Conference



Arkansas - 2, Auburn - 1

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from Coach.

DAVE VAN HORN: Just, I thought it was a great game. Different than the games that have been going on here, high scoring, a lot of offense. Tonight was about positioning your defense correctly, it was about making some pitches in tough situations. And we turned a nice double play that helped us. I just thought our pitchers did a tremendous job. Dossett's first start of the year, gives us a couple innings, gives up one hit that goes out of the park. DeCremer, he was pretty tired, gave us one inning, and then obviously Collin Fisher gave us five outs. They hit some balls hard on him, but he got a big strikeout on Fralick. And then McElvain came in and we were just hoping that he would get through that inning and then give us what he had. And we thought maybe 60 pitches, if it went well. He had a couple of -- he had one really quick inning and it started looking like it could happen. He went through their lineup the first time pretty good. Then the second time they had seen him a little bit and the swings were maybe a little better, he was getting a little tired. He's not used to getting up and down so much, that was a concern for us. But he did a great job throwing strikes and letting our defense work. And obviously we got a big double from our first baseman who's been injured for a while, almost went out of the park at the yellow. And then the big two-out hit by Cam and then Ryder, who has done an incredible job catching and been a great offensive player. He was pretty frustrated and he took it all out on that slider. And it was great to see our dugout was electric.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the players.

Q. Ryder, three times you've beaten Auburn with a home run like this. Is that going through your mind when you come up to the plate at that point and just what went well on that swing?

RYDER HELFRICK: That's not going through my mind. Just try to get a pitch you can handle, get a pitch you can hit. That's what's going through my mind and I got one I felt like I could do damage on, but, yeah, it was good.

Q. Ethan, what was working for you tonight and also seeing the front end guys step up big, and then just the adjustments you guys made in the 2:15 minute rain delay.

ETHAN McELVAIN: Yeah, I think being inside and being able to stay focused with the guys and everything was huge. Nobody was really straying from the plan. It just, it was just working. Ryder was doing a really good job behind the plate calling pitches for me and just throw the ball forward, try to throw strikes, try to get outs.

Q. For a 2:20 game, this was a long day at the ballpark for you guys. What was it like from the duration when you got here to maybe what you guys did during the rain delay, not just your rain delay, but the one in the game before, just what was the whole day like, the experience.

RYDER HELFRICK: I mean, it was definitely a long day, but I don't know, we were, I would say during the Florida rain delay we were pretty calm. And then during our rain delay we had energy, we were just kind of keeping the vibes high and it was fun.

ETHAN McELVAIN: I wouldn't really expect anything different during the SEC tournament. It kind of happens every year. So, I mean, we got to watch the softball team make their way to Oklahoma City, and that was fun. So being able to be there for that was fun too.

Q. What were the adjustments you felt from the Auburn series in early April that pretty much brought around the scouting evaluation for tonight's game and

what you guys want to prepare tomorrow against Georgia as well and everything else?

RYDER HELFRICK: I mean, played 'em a little bit ago, but still a really talented team, still a really good team. I think just going into it we were just trying to line up our best against their best and just see what happens.

ETHAN McELVAIN: I think just playing it, playing it out, just trying to do what we can, not make mistakes in pivotal moments. There's always that moment when you can't make a mistake and -- or it feels like that. You just got to hone in on your stuff or -- like, if you're in the field, and just calm yourself down and just make a pitch or make an out.

Q. Ryder, Coach said you took out your frustrations on that pitch in the 8th inning. It's been such an offensive tournament. Like, so many people have been having success. Just has it been frustrating to go -- I think it was 0-10 at that point. Had that been frustrating for you?

RYDER HELFRICK: Yeah, I mean, I think anybody that goes 0-10, they're going to be frustrated. But just sticking with it and just keep it real simple. Don't try to do too much. Just get a pitch I can do damage on, I can handle, and keep it as simple as that.

THE MODERATOR: I want to know where the moth is. Did it get released?

RYDER HELFRICK: I don't know anything about that.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you. We'll take questions for Coach.

Q. Were you thinking about what Ryder had done to Auburn in the past? I mean, this is three times now that -- I don't know if I've ever seen a player have those type of swings so often against one team. What are your thoughts about how well he's done in those moments?

DAVE VAN HORN: I was not thinking about it. I was just hoping that -- I was hoping he would hit one out of the park, honestly. But I just wanted him to hit an extra base hit, get the next guy up, drive him in. I just wanted to get the lead. It's baseball. Sometimes it's just -- I don't know, it's not that Auburn's done anything different. It's just the timing. He just hit 'em. He got 'em a breaking ball, and I mean, Ryan had been throwing such good pitches, especially with that breaking ball away, but that one, I think it started at him and ended up in the middle of the plate and he saw it. And you could just tell he was on it. Happy for him. I'm glad we're not playing extra innings because I

don't know who I would have thrown. Just excited that we get to play another game here tomorrow.

Q. The last time you guys played Georgia you guys lost 26-14, slugfest, a lot of pitching you guys utilized from that time out. What do you think about the full approach for just the full niner tomorrow, on Sunday?

DAVE VAN HORN: Yeah, they're an incredibly balanced team, very physical. I think going into the 9th inning, it was, like, 14-11, and then it got a little crazy, so we just kind of said, oh, whatever. The wind was blowing 30 miles an hour out to right field, and they hit a bunch of home runs. We hit a few. We actually were up 6-1. It went away, as you probably figured by that score.

So I don't know, we just are going to play. We're not even sure who we're going to start yet, not even sure who is available. We've been on the road for like, this will be our 11th or 12th night in a hotel in a row, so, whatever. Guys are just loose, and let's go play, it's been a great week and let's see if we can finish it off.

Q. What was that experience like watching the softball team and how did that help -- what are your thoughts for Courtney and getting to Oklahoma City, but how, did it help pass the rain delay quicker than maybe if that wasn't going on?

DAVE VAN HORN: Well first off, my thought about Courtney and her program is that she's one of the best coaches in the country and they have been so close and I know the misery of losing a super regional and it's happened to them a few times. I was just super happy for her, happy for her family, all the coaches, and obviously all the young ladies. They have such a good team. It's so balanced. I think they have run-ruled everybody in the five games they have played, you know, the regular regional and then the super regional. Pretty amazing. But I'm just happy that they got over the hump, that she can move on from that and just enjoy it. Enjoy every minute of the World Series and, you know, you might enjoy it so much you might win it.

So, and then as far as, yeah, it helped pass time in there. For the first hour it was pretty laid back and we had a little bit of food brought in. Then we finally got the game on and we had four TVs in there, so guys were sitting all over the place. But then when it got to the end they all got together and they wanted to celebrate it. And I thought it was awesome. I actually videoed it from the back side and I think my video's better than the one they did from the side but, you know, whatever. (Laughing).

Q. Where do you think the team has grown the most



since that Georgia series?

DAVE VAN HORN: Oh, yeah, so, well, that was a little embarrassing. I think we've grown a lot since that series and maybe the Florida series when we lost three at home. And people were getting on us pretty good and we just stayed strong because we knew we were better than that and it kind of kicked us into gear. I told Coach Kevin O'Sullivan the other day, we got them hot and they woke us up. And I guess, looking back, you know, I would like to have won a game there. But I think it's -- the second half we've been really good. We've won a lot of games. But the growth has been the team's gotten a lot closer. Offensively we've gotten a lot better. I made the comment last night that we do a good job of taking advantage of what you give us. We have stolen 80-plus bases, but we've also hit 80-plus home runs. I think the pitching has gotten better, it's more consistent. Like I said, I just feel like the team, they like hanging out together.

Q. You should tweet that video so we can see it.

DAVE VAN HORN: Yeah, I haven't tweeted anything this year. I usually do about two a year, I haven't put one out yet, so we'll see.

Q. You said you don't know what you're doing pitching-wise. How do you feel like you've managed your pitching down here, because that's always maybe a little bit of a factor or a concern the week before a regional.

DAVE VAN HORN: Yeah, you know, obviously Dietz didn't throw very much and we got to get him back. Gaeckle threw 75 pitches, I feel really good about where he's at. Gives us an option to go Friday Saturday, with those guys, whatever order we decide to go. Ethan McElvain hasn't thrown at all since last weekend, so we let him get some work. He's big and strong, he's built up for that. We could start him if we want him to, but it would be more like five or six innings or 65, 75 pitches. I feel like we've managed it pretty good. We really -- now tomorrow we'll have to go to some guys for the second time. We just have to. It's not like we've got a freshman over there that hasn't thrown in two months we're going to give him the ball here. I don't think it would be fair to them. But I feel good about where we're at and I don't think we've overstressed anybody and fatigued 'em that they won't be able to recover.

Q. What does it mean to have just Nate, Matt, Bobby, and Hudson be such key components to your coaching staff, and just the evaluation has been a big step for this week and being 12 straight days on the road.

DAVE VAN HORN: Yeah, my coaching staff's awesome. I mean it's just a -- is that what you're asking me?

Q. Yeah.

DAVE VAN HORN: Okay, we have a lot of different personalities, but we all think alike. And I think the players see it, the camaraderie of the coaching staff and the respect we have for each other and how we treat each other's families. And they know that we hang out together and have, you know, whatever we don't just go to work and then we disappear. We've been together for a while. And with Matt and Nate, they could have taken jobs other places. Bobby's young, and he's had a few things go on. And we got DJ and Zach and these guys have played for me and now they're in our, you know, with us in analytics, different roles. And it's just, it's, it pays off. I'm just telling you, it adds up. You play 60 games, it's going to get you a few because of that, I truly believe that.

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