

**2026 HATTIESBURG REGIONAL**  
**Postgame Press Conference – Game Five**  
**(3) Jacksonville State 7, (2) Virginia 6**

**Coach Pollard opening statement**

Yeah, I said it on Friday night. That's a really, really good club. I tip my hat to Coach Beiser, who's done a great job of constructing his team. They're deep, they're deep on the mound, they're dynamic, they can score in a lot of different ways, they're athletic, they play good defense. Certainly, in all the years that I've been in NCAA tournaments, that's the best three seed that I've ever come up against. And what is that, 48 wins for them now? They're closing in on 50 wins, that's a really, really good club. You know what I thought, that Cash was good. We've struggled with left-handed change up all year. That's been a been a nemesis for us. Knew it was a tough matchup. We struggled with it again today. I thought we competed great once we got him out of the ball game, and were able to put the tying in the go-ahead runs on base in the eighth. Guys never stopped fighting. I thought we played a much cleaner game today than we did on Friday against a team that can put pressure on you in a lot of different ways. So it was a good ball game. We just couldn't get cash out of the game quickly enough, and credit him, man. What a great competitor, and a guy that can get you out in a lot of different ways. Just reflecting back on the season, losing in the semifinals of a regional, that's not our aspirations, it's not the expectations for this program, but I will say this. This team did a lot of really good things over the course of this year, 37 wins against the top 15 schedule in the country. To be a two seed in a regional, and look with 26 new faces on the roster that all had to come together, and so much for the credit of being able to be in this position of still being playing this weekend is because of Harrison Didawick and Kevin Jackson and the other guys that made the decision to return to the program when they had options to leave and the way they helped 26 new players eight new coaches, two new support staff members assimilate, come together that well, that the way they built culture amongst the team. I can't say enough great things about what that, what that group of returning players did over the course of this year. I'm so proud of Harrison Didawick, you know, he obviously had expectations to start his professional career after the 2025 season, should have been drafted, but then when it didn't happen, he came back. We sat in the office. It was an awesome conversation, and I knew right from that very first conversation this is a guy that I'd love to get a chance to coach, and he's nothing but come out with great energy every day, he is a tremendous teammate, he's a tremendous leader, he's had a great season. I've told him this, but I'll say it again, I'm going to run through a wall to give him every opportunity to keep playing, he deserves it, and he's good enough to play this game for a long time. RJ Holmes, his development over the course of this season has been awesome. Wasn't playing early, never pouted, never checked out, never took reps off, just showed up every day and got on the two hop machine and worked

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on his defense, did a lot to work on his throwing action, continue to work every day, and put in the time to develop offensively, and just to see him grow and have so many big at bats down the stretch was really cool. He's got an awesome future ahead of him, but right now, you know, we've got to go back to the hotel and put our arms around a bunch of seniors, and candidly, a bunch of juniors who aren't done playing the game, but they're done with college baseball, and that's that's a hard thing to do, but I am proud of this group and what they've done this year.

**Question 1 for Coach Pollard**

***“Chris, as you continue leading the program, what do you think this experience this season, but particularly this trip to the regional will do for you going forward.”***

Well, I think it creates momentum again, right? You're one of the 64 teams still left to this deal, and I told her guys early in the week, like about 90% of college baseball would like to trade places with you right now. So, is the goal to be a one seed and be hosting? Yeah, that's the goal every year and put this program in the very best position to go to Omaha, but to still be playing this weekend and still be playing on the Sunday of a regional, it gives us momentum going into the off season. The foundation that's been laid by these older guys and what they've done and what guys like Harrison Didawick have meant to UVA baseball, like this dude will go down as one of the all-time greats in the history of this program. There's a bunch of good young players, there's a bunch of good young players coming in, and look, we're going to bring in additional players along with them to put this program in a position to take the next step forward next year.

***Q: Are you looking forward to a little bit more of a conventional off-season?***

Coach Pollard: Yeah, for sure, Jeff. Last year is drinking from a fire hose and you're trying to assemble a roster so quickly. You got about 30 days to build a roster and now we can go out and we can be more surgical in our approach to really filling needs around the good young players that are here and the good young players that are coming in. And really be in a position when we hit the ground running in the fall, to have so much more continuity in terms of player development. And I'm very much looking forward to that.

***Q: Chris, Eric Becker was a game-time decision. He got out a couple tough at bats and then comes through in that age.***

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Coach Pollard: It's awesome, wasn't it?

***Q: Yeah, how big was that moment? Just to watch that, nobody's been through this year.***

Coach Pollard: Yeah, I know. And he said, people don't realize how many nagging injuries he's played through all year. I mean, the hand is documented, but there were so many other injuries along the way that he just gutted it out. There were so many guys out there today limping through the ball game, but wanted to be there for their teammates. And that's a guy that could hardly hold a bat when we started BP yesterday. Worked exceptionally hard with Bailey Hill, our athletic trainer and physical therapist to do everything he could to get ready to play. And he didn't even want to go through BP today before letting me know. He said, look, I'm in there. And to see him go in and gut it out in that way and have that big at bat and put himself at second base as a time run after we had rallied there in the eighth. Just goes to speak to his toughness and the type of player that he is and the mindset he is. And you talk about a guy that's going to have a great professional career.

***Q: Harrison, to come back and have the year that you had and to help the team get back to the NCAAs, how do you think you'll remember this year and maybe your whole career?***

Harrison Didawick: Yeah, I'll definitely remember it as probably my best four years of my life. I made some friendships that I'll cherish for the rest of my life, be at their weddings, they'll be at my wedding. And just all the things I've gone through, overcame with my teammates, coaches, and just all the failures and successes, it's just magical. And I was just glad to be able to come back for a fourth year and make the NCAA tournament.

***Q: RJ is one of the young guys on the program, a guy who will be back next year. What do you think this season, but particularly this postseason experience will do for you guys?***

RJ Holmes: It showed us like really how to fight. This whole season has been up and downs, but we were all banged up and we all just really fought together. Like probably our whole lineup was hurt, but we really wanted to just keep playing. And before our game today, AJ had a 90 seconds and he was like, no matter what, just delay it and just let's play as long as possible. So I think that's what was probably the most for us is just keep playing and just play for each other.

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***Q: Chris, Paone, Stewart today, and Lucarelli. A lot of your first-year pitchers do well all season and also today. Do you feel pretty good with those guys as a foundation for your staff going forward?***

Coach Pollard: Yeah, there's a great nucleus of young arm talent in this program, a great nucleus of young arm talent. And to see those guys grow and develop over the course of this season and be able to pitch in higher leverage situations. And look, there's some good guys coming in to pair up with them. I like where that depth is at.