South Alabama head coach Mark Calvi

**Opening statement**

“Very excited to open up the regional with a win against a very good Mississippi state team. This is our fourth time playing them this year, first time seeing Cole Gordon, but he’s been really hot as of late. This team of year you need to play well. For us, our guys have been playing playoff caliber type baseball, I would say, for the last six weeks. This is the only team that I’ve been a part of that everyone on the team understands the RPI, understands what’s been going on the last six weeks. They understand the importance of winning to get here. I had a feeling, I knew when they got here, and it meant so much to them to get here, that there wouldn’t be a letdown. I knew they’d played their same brand of baseball and they’d be who they are. That’s a bunch of guys that work extremely hard and play together as a unit very, very well. You say the story of tonight was Randy Bell. Randy Bell went all nine and threw 130, 132 pitches. That was a function of his teammates. We had some guys make some great plays for him, we had some guys score runs for him. So, there is no one guy that’s bigger than our ball club. We have some good guys and they play well together. Tonight is an indication of that. We’ve got about two hours to enjoy this, because you should. It’s a big deal to win one in a regional, in the post season. It’s a big deal to win one game. But the tournament isn’t over. We have a lot of baseball left to be played. There are so very, very good teams in this thing. I’m excited about our win tonight. I’m excited for my players mainly. I’m so happy for this group because the effort they have given all year long. They understand the important of winning. Sometimes, in today’s day age, kids that are 18 to 22, they don’t understand how important it is to win. We have a bunch of guys who understand how important it is to win and to take their opponent seriously, respect their opponent, play the game the right way and do things the right way on and off the field.”

**On getting off to a fast start with the leadoff homer:**

“It’s always important to get off to a good start. Our guys know there are 27 outs to a ball game. The 27th out is just a formality. It’s what you do with your outs and what you do inside your outs that matter. That’s another thing our guys understand. They understand how important the outs that they have are and they understand how important it is to maximize every out and everything they do in between those outs. I was happy Hardy took the first pitch over the wall in left field. We scored three runs, but we knew they still had 27 outs left at the top of the first. We have the utmost respect for Mississippi State and every team in this tournament. Our kids just played the right way from inning to inning. They weren’t counting outs and they just played every out they were given.

South Alabama left fielder Dylan Hardy

**On his leadoff homer**

“It was a surreal experience. We knew Cole [Gordon] was going to pound the zone early with fast ball. I tried to be aggressive and get my pitch and I got it in the air and out of the park.”
South Alabama center fielder Travis Swaggerty

*On not seeing Konnor Pilkington pitch for Mississippi State*

“At first we thought it was a slap in the face a little bit because they weren’t going to throw their ace against us. We had a game plan anyway. We got in there early and hit fast balls. He walked a lot of guys too so we had to take advantage of that.”

Mississippi State head coach Andy Cannizaro

*Opening Statement*

“The game certainly didn’t go the way we envisioned it. Most of that was due to the way South Alabama played. They are an outstanding ball club. They have great players. They are aggressive on offense. They took tremendous swings tonight. They are extremely talented and they played really well tonight. Their starting pitcher was outstanding. Anytime a starting pitcher goes a complete game against you, you’re probably not going to win the ballgame. We didn’t do enough tonight to beat an outstanding team. As a pitching staff, if you walk 10 guys like we did tonight, you’re not going to win. We needed to play much better tonight against an outstanding South Alabama team and we did not do that. Leadoff hitter hits the first pitch of the game in the woods. Seems like we did not get back into the rhythm of the ball game after that. Give a lot of credit to those guys for coming out and playing extremely well tonight. Certainly looking forward to getting back on the field tomorrow, backs are against the proverbial wall, season on the line. A disappointing night tonight, not how we envisioned it. The atmosphere was incredible, it was an awesome night of college baseball here in Mississippi, two really good teams playing against each other. South Alabama played great and unfortunately, we did not.”

*On what to expect out of starting pitcher Konnor Pilkington on Saturday*

“The best place to start is really confident that he is going to come out and throw strikes. He is going to throw his fastball over the plate. His breaking ball and changeup have gotten better as the season has progressed. He is our best starting pitcher and we expect him to come out tomorrow and pitch a very mature game. Expect for him to put us on his back tomorrow and extend our season and do everything that he can to help us continue to play in this tournament.”

*On any regrets about not starting Pilkington Friday*

“Not at all. Cole Gordon had been pitching extremely well his last four or five outings. Our team had the upmost confidence in Cole. Guys, in order to win this tournament, you have to have outstanding starting pitching and I felt like we have had two guys that have been pitching extremely well the last couple of times out. I can’t speak highly enough about South Alabama and what they have done all year. So there’s absolutely no saving of Konnor Pilkington for anybody. We felt like Cole Gordon matched up extremely well with those guys. We expected him to go out there and pitch really well. You’re talking about a guy who just went 7 shutout innings last week against the University of Florida. He just didn’t do it tonight. Have I lost confidence in him and feel like he can’t get it done? Not at all. Tonight just didn’t get it done. We’re going to see if we can continue to win ball games in this tournament and see if we can hang around a little bit. Hopefully we can play long enough in this tournament to get him back on the mound in some capacity.”
Mississippi State shortstop Ryan Gridley

On Jaguar starter Randy Bell’s effectiveness
“All time you can get a starter that can pound the zone and make you swing the bat, it’s going to be a phenomenal start for the other team. We expect that from our guys and when you can get a starter that pounds the zone, it’s going to give you a great jump start to your game and we hope going into tomorrow we get a great start out of Pilkington and he pounds the zone just like their guy did today.”

On the team’s offensive struggles of late
“You can say maybe we aren’t producing offensively, but if you were watching the game, you can see that we are putting good swings on the balls, we’re getting good at bats, we’re working the count and I just think sometimes it doesn’t work out like you want it to.”

Mississippi State third baseman Cody Brown

On what to expect out of starting pitcher Konnor Pilkington on Saturday
“I’m very confident in that guy. Every time he goes out there we are expecting a great start out of him. He’s produced. He’s going to fill up the strike zone for us. We love playing behind that guy. He’s going to fill it up and give us an opportunity to make plays behind him and trust us to put up some runs behind him.”