

**June 8, 2015**



An Interview With:

## VANDERBILT

TIM CORBIN: Well, first off, I know there's a lot of levels to what just happened out there, but I think we saw exactly the type of team that Illinois is and was: Very hard-nosed team, very difficult to beat, as has been shown by their record. To beat them twice at home was a difficult proposition.

The guy on the mound today, Tyler Jay, he's fantastic. You think about his situation and how he came into today and how motivated he was, we really had to battle to break him. We just barely did. We probably never broke him but we just scratched enough in order to move one run ahead of them.

Obviously the big hits in the game were Zander's home run, Dansby's home run which was cut against the wind, two-strike hit which he did a great job of staying on a breaking pitch. Bryan Reynolds, two-strike, two-out hit which kind of broke the game open from a small momentum spot and the safety squeeze by Rhett.

Philip Pfeifer, just proud on a lot of levels for him just because of where he's been and the fact that he wasn't with us last year; and the fact that he got the chance to start this game today. Pitched very well as the day progressed. Just so proud of the start.

And Ben Bowden, giving us the stop gap; Kyle Wright being a freshman and an out with the bases loaded was the turning point in a lot of different ways.

Very, very proud of the team. So very difficult to do coming off a situation like last year.

Not defending anything but it's difficult. That target is very big and there's a lot of shots that you take.

So we're just very thankful that we can get to the point, storybook ending. You've got the No. 1 guy in the country here to watch us play from Chicago, he's got the day off, and he's standing there watching the guy on my left get picked, No. 1 in the country today.

So the whole deal is just surreal and kind of jaw-dropping to say the least. Just a great day for Vanderbilt university and the kids. I'm just so happy for the kids.

**Q. You guys had on one side the best left-hander in college baseball and Phil on the other side, having to compete with that. What does it say about Phil that he had the game that he did today?**

DANSBY SWANSON: We knew Phil was going to come out and give us all he had. He was one of those guys, once he gets his rhythm and momentum, he's definitely hard to hit. Once he kind of was able to shut them down, we got all the confidence in the world in him.

We're just so proud of him from everything that he's gone through and where he is now. He battled out there. He made pitches when he had to, and he was able to have some good innings in the middle part of the game that helped us get some momentum and rhythm back on offense. So huge credit to him.

**Q. In the early going, you were a little rough there.**

PHILIP PFEIFER: Yeah, but that's nothing new, really. Starting off a little out of rhythm has kind of been my Mo. But you know, I think if I've learned anything from the past two years, it's going to look bad before it looks good. So I had faith in myself and faith in our hitters who battled their butts off today. I was just going to try and execute

from that point forward and just get out.

**Q. Can you talk about what you learned from your first at-bat, the strikeout?**

DANSBY SWANSON: Well, first time facing Tyler Jay. He was just locating really well, staying down in the zone and his slider was working well. He was just able to locate down my back foot, so I was able to clear a little bit of space for myself. And just look over the plate and just adjust to what would come and I was able to cut my hands across a slider that was left up a little bit.

**Q. As a whole for the team, did you see him better the second and third time through than the first time?**

DANSBY SWANSON: Yeah, I think so, and I think that's true for any lineup. We were able to battle and stick with it, because eventually we'll be able to break through and we had faith in ourselves and confidence in ourselves to be able to do that.

Had to battle off some tough pitches and have some long at-bats to kind of tire him out but he's phenomenal in a lot of respect having been a former teammate of him?

**Q. Did you face him in the U.S. national team ever? Left lefty did not.**

**Q. So you have a big role in advancing back to Omaha; getting selected to No. 1, this has to rank high on your favorite days.**

DANSBY SWANSON: Yeah, I can't complain, that's for sure. It's a surreal moment, especially to be with all my loved ones. I have my family here. Coach Corbin has done so much for me and the rest of the staff, as well, and my best friend is standing next to me, too. You can't screw up the moment any better than that, just to be able to enjoy the moments with the people closest to you, it's pretty phenomenal.

**Q. Tyler Jay, how much of a distraction was that going into today?**

PHILIP PFEIFER: Would you repeat that, please.

DANSBY SWANSON: For me? Honestly, it's two separate things. I was at peace with both just going out there and just competing because baseball comes first before us than anything else and I can't control anything going on around me. I was just going to control my effort and focus and let everything else pan out.

**Q. Inaudible.**

PHILIP PFEIFER: Still waiting on my alarm clock to wake me up honestly. This day has gone so well for our team, and I'm ecstatic. I've been waiting for this moment for so long, and now that it's here, I don't really know what to tell you. I'm just ready for the first game once we get there.

**Q. What have you learned from Carson and Walker? Must be special to be on the same staff and getting drafted so high; what type of teammates they are.**

PHILIP PFEIFER: First off, I think those two guys might be the biggest fan of our pitchers. Those guys are incredibly supportive on and off the field.

Secondly, I think just watching them work makes you better. They compete low in the zone. They throw strikes. They have plus pitches and they work really hard. So I think pitching in between them has made me a better competitor for just being around them as they were.

**Q. Anything individually about both of them?**

PHILIP PFEIFER: You know, sometimes I watch Carson, just how he competes. He is very aggressive on the mound. And really, it's almost like watching a yin and yang, taking Carson's competitive edge and the way that Walker just approaches the game.

Walker is very relaxed up there on the mound. He's aggressive but he does so in a controlled manner, so trying to find that balance between them, really, I think is what's benefitted me most.

**Q. How satisfying is it this time to go to Omaha with all that extra baggage you have to deal with?**

TIM CORBIN: It's just as great, if not greater, just because of the circumstances that exist throughout the year. It's a difficult year to play, there's no doubt about it. You think about it from the time that we won that National Championship, I can personally say we haven't stopped. It's been a full-blown, 100-mile-an-hour ride, and it has not stopped up until this point but I'm perfectly fine with it.

But I've become very protective of the kids, of course, because they are ours and I want to

protect their emotions as much as possible.

So I think if there's one team that I've lived with with them is trying to center them in just these small moments that we're involved in and try not to get too distracted by anything, and I think they have done a wonderful job that way. I tell them all the time, I'm at peace with them because they are mature, and it's like raising your own kids.

Once they leave the house, you say, step back, I'm happy with them, they are going to be fine. I don't have to worry about them at all. They will do the right things and make the right decisions and that's how I feel about them.

**Q. Your relievers got out of big jams; what impressed you about them?**

TIM CORBIN: Just the ability to get out there and pitch and throw strikes. Ben's situation was difficult because it was a one-run second so he had to amend that inning. Kyle Wright, bases loaded, one out, freshmen don't do that. That's just tough to do, to get a strikeout and then get the third out.

And then finishing the game is very difficult to do in someone else's ballpark. Just to get the third out is difficult to do. And when you're going through the middle of their order, it's two and three, and they are both left-handed and they have both had tremendous success this year. I'm just happy that they were able to complete the mission and breathe, for a lack of better words, just breathe and execute a pitch, which is so very important.

**Q. How tough was that grind of trying to get to Tyler Jay enough to when he's out of the game, you guys have the lead. How difficult was that?**

TIM CORBIN: It's very difficult scoring runs against him because he doesn't give you anything. We felt like if we could get to first base we were going to try to run just to get to second base because we knew he wouldn't give in. But he's a very tough competitor. I look at his situation a lot like Dan, there's a lot riding on the line for that young man.

He gave them every opportunity to win the game: Our hitters are pretty tough to knock down, especially now, because I think they are seeing the ball well and I think they are breathing really well. He's a tough customer. I don't think it's going to take him long to get to where he needs to go.

**Q. Did you have any take away from what Missouri State did to Arkansas? Coming**



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**back with a lefty, must have struck you as a cautionary tale.**

TIM CORBIN: I was 100 percent sure we were not going to have the same type of game. We talked about it being a close game. We talked about it's going to be a battle and we are going to have to absorb some punches because we knew this was a prideful team at Illinois and very difficult to set down.

So we knew we were going to have to take their best punch, and I thought we did, early. And I just thought that we had to grind out the at-bats, that's all.

But I knew it was going to be completely different. Yes, I saw that game, and understood, but you know, everything is a little bit different. We just knew that this one was going to be most difficult.

**Q. How did this team stack up to teams you saw in the SEC? Where is the Big Ten? Is it moving forward?**

TIM CORBIN: I think the Big Ten has made the greatest advancement in college baseball without question. And I don't say that just after a victory. I said it before we came in here. I thought Indiana was very good. I thought this club that we played was very good. They could have been in Omaha, too. That type of pitching, we didn't even see Johnson. That guy, he has a 2.0 ERA. Older clubs are very dangerous because they are usually not spooked and this one wasn't.

You look at the Big Ten teams that didn't even get in here, Ohio State, Nebraska and Michigan State, for crying out loud, was one of the better teams in the country for a while. My buddy was here, Eric Backage (ph) watching the game and his club was very nip and tuck with Louisville.

Yeah, I just think there's a lot of equality in college baseball right now without question.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports ...

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An Interview With:

## ILLINOIS

DAN HARTLEB: Don't really know what to say. We competed very well today. Thought Tyler Jay threw well. Nick Blackburn threw well, the bullpen. We had a lot of quality at-bats. Had some opportunities and couldn't come up with a big two-out hit but no regrets on anything the entire day. Our guys competed, played extremely well. We just came up short. At the end of the day, it happens at times. But just proud of this entire group.

**Q. Do you realize what you did this season?**

CASEY FLETCHER: It's a special year. These guys are my brothers. It's just tough going down like that, just knowing that we thought we had an Omaha-bound team. We fought all year. We did a lot of great things and I'm very proud of these guys.

DAVID KERIAN: Obviously we've worked so hard to get to this point and just to see it come up short like this but definitely don't regret anything, like Coach said. We worked our tails off to get here, and just came up short and against a very good team. Very proud of everybody.

**Q. You had them on the ropes early but they seemed to get stronger after you let them off the ropes. Is that what you saw?**

CASEY FLETCHER: I would say he was up early and I think once we scored a couple runs on him, he really started painting corners on us, just in my at-bats I noticed that. He was not leaving many balls over the plate. Everything was spotting up and he got to us, he was a tough pitcher today.

**Q. You put Illinois baseball on the map.**

DAVID KERIAN: Thank you.

**Q. What do you guys think you did for the future?**

DAVID KERIAN: I think we did a lot, for a northern school to be able to make it this far and host a super regional is awesome. A lot of recruits will come here and facilities will keep getting better. It will open the doors for the Big Ten, too, with the five teams making the regional, it was great for the northern schools, too.

CASEY FLETCHER: Hopefully a new stadium but we have Tyler Jay for that. (Laughing).

**Q. For both of you, this team lost two games in a row, not just twice -- what was it about this team --**

DAVID KERIAN: Just says a lot about our team and just the resilience of everybody. When we did lose, we just gathered right back and fought the next day. We scored right after they made those two home runs, we came right back, but just got the big hit when we needed it.

**Q. Can you take us back through the last 24 hours with the game getting rained out? Were you chomping at the bit to get back at it yesterday? Do you think that helped you guys even more, more of a home-field advantage?**

CASEY FLETCHER: Yeah, I'd say it was definitely an advantage. We were all ready to get out and I think maybe from the bullpen side, just a little bit of rest and everyone just gathered themselves and realized the moment we were in and that we need to just play the game that we've been playing all year. I think the first game, we were a little overwhelmed with just everything that's going on and it improved with our play.

I think the day off really just let us collect ourselves and realize, hey, we're here for a reason. We're a good ballclub and we just have to go out and play how we've been playing all year. Vanderbilt, they are a battle-tested team. We just came up short.

**Q. The run in the first inning, how important was that after Saturday's game where you got shut out?**

DAVID KERIAN: That was very important to show that we're here and ready to go. That day off definitely helped us regather and regroup ourselves. And to be able to get a run in the first inning and just start attacking the pitchers is big for us. Just keep getting runners on base and put pressure on them is something we've been doing all year. Just not getting the big hit today is what happened.

**Q. What did Tyler do for you guys --**

CASEY FLETCHER: He battled. He's our main guy and we put him in a spot where, hey, we need you to come up big and he battled his butt off today. Just so happened he left a couple pitches up and they ended up out of the ballpark. He threw a great game today. Vanderbilt is a really good-hitting team. We just didn't put up enough runs to win the game.

**Q. Bases loaded again and couldn't get the run across, in the dugout after that, what was the feeling like?**

CASEY FLETCHER: You were on base so I'll answer this. I would say we were a little disappointed we couldn't get the run across but we knew next inning we were going to come out and hopefully get some guys on base and we were going to win this game. There was never a doubt in our minds that we weren't going to battle them and hopefully get a run across. It just so happened that it didn't happen.

**Q. Can you share with us the role your coaches played in the season? Sometimes it's hard to gauge unless you're on the team and I know going back to the ball, you took the trip to the Dominican, that was Coach's idea and paid big dividends. Just a specific example of the role they played.**

DAVID KERIAN: Everything.

DAN HARTLEB: Be nice.

CASEY FLETCHER: Everything. These group of coaches, they are awesome. Spen is



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coming in, he had a tough role to fill, stepping in for coach Snyder and everything, and everything that he did for this program, and he came in and just in stride, he was like a friend to all of us, he was awesome and he kept us in line, kept us ready to go. He was a motivator, and as far as coach heart will he be, I couldn't really say enough about him. [ ] he gave me an opportunity to come here, and (tearing.)

DAVID KERIAN: The coaches, just putting us in just a position to succeed, just starting in the fall, just giving us everything that we need to be able to, going down to the Dominican, just an unbelievable experience, getting together with the team, that helped everybody out. He knew what he was doing with that, get all the teammates together by ourselves.

And the winter workouts, just the intensity and being loose at the same time, just enjoying it, having fun and just getting better every day, something that we did great at this year and just enjoying being here and smile, like Coach always says.

**Q. Do you see some parallels with Vanderbilt in building the program?**

DAN HARTLEB: Well, Tim Corbin has done a great job with the program. Started a number of years ago. I'm not sure how many years, but he went in and built the program. Did a great job recruiting. Continued to get great support from the administration, and as you said, they made it to regionals and they made it to super regionals and continued to build, got the belief in the program.

They are a perennial power. Again, they have done such a good job. Was a tough opponent. Thought we competed very well but just came up short against them.

**Q. The SEC has been so great in baseball and this program has been part of it. Where do you think you took your program and the Big Ten right now?**

DAN HARTLEB: Well, the Big Ten, as I've talked about all year, is the best it's ever been and we've continued to move forward. Each and every year, we've continued to get more and more teams involved at a high level and competing against some of the best teams in the country.

You look at what Indiana has done over the past couple years and then we were able to



make this jump. You've got Maryland that joined the conference, has been a big shot in the arm.

I think the conference is going to continue to get better. I think our program has made strides. This isn't where we want to be. We don't want to be sitting here losing the super regionals. So it's a stepping stone for us. All of our young players need to understand where we've been, how we got here and what they need to do to continue to move it forward.

**Q. What did you see out of him the second and third time --**

DAN HARTLEB: Tyler was outstanding today. Thought he threw a lot of quality pitches. If you look at his strike to ball ratio, I don't know what it is but he threw a lot of strikes. He competed very, very well. Put a couple swings on some of his good pitches, and late, the runs that put them ahead, he threw some really good pitches on the inner part and jammed some guys and they were able to fall in over our infielders. They came up with a couple big hits the Tyler gave us an opportunity to win and that's all you can ask for. Thought he threw very well and competed. He's one of the best competitors I've ever been around.

**Q. When you look back at the early innings there when you got runners on, was there a point when you look back at it now that there was a vulnerable stage in there where it could have changed the game?**

DAN HARTLEB: Well, if we got a few more runs we'd probably won (laughing). The game's not easy. And it comes down to getting some two-out hits. We were able to score I think one run with two outs. If you look at the most successful teams when they get into runs, they get a lot of two-out hits, and today we were not able to do that. I thought we hit some balls on the nose right at some people and had quality at-bats in those situations. You know, if you get a lead early, sometimes the game, you can spread it out a little bit. But that doesn't happen all the time, especially in these types of games. It was a great battle both sides.

**Q. Can you talk about the craziness of the last hour? You guys are playing in the regionals, the draft is going on; would you like to see the draft changed to a different day so it doesn't interfere?**

DAN HARTLEB: That's tough. Major League Baseball, they have the draft because they

have to fill their rosters because they have a season to play. I mean, if we want to be selfish, yeah, let's do it the day before school and somebody signs that day or they don't.

It's not realistic. It's tough. It's going to be tough on the players that are still alive and going to the World Series and drafted and trying to make decisions and try to stay focused.

Generally, those guys are top picks for a reason and they can handle it from a mentality standpoint. So Tyler Jay, he's going to go off the board here early and so it's going to be a bittersweet day for him. But the one thing is he walked off the mound gave it everything he had and he'll be fine.

**Q. No extraction what serve?**

DAN HARTLEB: Absolutely not. If you have distractions, it's everybody that wants to talk to him throughout the year. I mean, those are the things that are distractions or can be distractions. He's handled that like a champ.

**Q. What was it about this team that it took a two-time defending World Series Champion to beat you --**

DAN HARTLEB: Yeah, a special team. Just good players believed in each other. A lot of different guys. And when I say that, it's a positive. All guys, you know, they are very different, yet they all respected each other and got a long. We played some talented teams this year that weren't composed and didn't get along. Our group's special.

**Q. How would you summarize Tyler Jay's meteoric rise?**

DAN HARTLEB: Tyler is a very hard worker. He's done a great job. He's really matured. I'd have liked to have wrung his neck as a freshman a few times. He'd probably like to have wrung mine; a growing process. Just the maturity off the field, the work ethic that he's always had, he's got that special drive to be successful, and his release is getting on the mound and competing. You know, some guys don't compete like that. They have great talent but don't compete like him. He's going to be highly, highly successful at the next level in a short amount of time.

**Q. Any inkling in his freshman year?**

DAN HARTLEB: His freshman year. He

came in, and he was a breaking ball pitcher. He'd always gotten guys out with his breaking ball but he had a good arm. He had a quick arm. Wasn't throwing with the velocity that he is now. We went down to Baylor and he came in in two different situations, and you saw his velocity start to spike. He was 93, 94, 95. Went out that summer and pitched well, came back in the fall, continued to mature.

And then went out and had a great sophomore year for us. Went and had a great opportunity to go try out for the USA team. Took advantage of that. Was their best pitcher last summer, and you saw a lot of growth from that standpoint. And then he came back this year, and there was great talent.

But he also gave us great leadership in a lot of areas. He really pushed guys to do extra things. There would be days when we had off-days and you had a group of guys that would always go in and lift on off-days, and Tyler was pushing guys to go in and do the extra thing to be successful. Just a maturity process along with his work ethic.

**Q. You've been coaching a long time, but what surprised you about this season? How did you improve as a coach, aside from the great success and how has it impacted you?**

DAN HARTLEB: Well, no surprises, honestly, there's no surprises. We thought we could be good. I think the thing that was so enjoyable was the fact that we had a group of guys that, again, they got a long so well. You didn't have to micromanage them. It wasn't begging them to do the right things. You put things in front of them, ask you them to do certain things, they can get it done.

I would say, if you ask any coach, the teams, when maybe you scuffle a little bit because you're young or because you're not doing things well, that's when you probably feel like you worked the hardest and grind the most. This is a great team where you just give them direction and stay out of their way. So a great group.

Thank you and thanks to everybody in the media, appreciate your coverage all year. Thanks to the administration and the NCAA reps and Vanderbilt for a great Super Regional. FastScripts by ASAP Sports ...