

# 2021 Women's College World Series

Saturday, June 5, 2021

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Arizona Wildcats

Mike Candrea

Reyna Carranco

Malia Martinez

Postgame Press Conference



Florida State - 4, Arizona - 3

**Q. Just for you both, just a tremendous season for what your team has been through. Just to take back the moment of what you guys have been through, to sum it up, how will you look back at this whole year after everything that happened last year when there was no season?**

REYNA CARRANCO: I'm so grateful to be here -- sorry (tearing up). I'm just grateful to be here with my team.

MALIA MARTINEZ: Yeah, I'm so incredibly proud of what we've done. We faced so much adversity in this last year, and we came out with the goal of getting Coach back to the World Series and that's what we did. I'm incredibly proud of these girls and I'm just so thankful.

**Q. Can you take me through that double that you had that tied the game and what it says about your senior class that they had that home run and you guys fell down and you rallied right back and responded?**

REYNA CARRANCO: Yeah, I knew we could pick up our pitcher. We wouldn't go down without a fight, and I think that just describes our senior class. We're kind of -- we like to be the bulk of this team and we just knew we weren't going to go down without a fight. We were going to do everything that we could.

**Q. Just talk about as a whole the impact Coach Candrea has had on your career, and secondly, have you heard much speculation, and if Coach Candrea retires, what will it mean to you to play on his last team?**

MALIA MARTINEZ: I feel like I am forever indebted to

Coach because he has had such an impact on my life and really built me into the person I am both on and off the field. He's always there for me and I just love that man so much, and I owe him everything. I'm just grateful for the opportunity to be able to play for him. So I'm just -- I don't know.

REYNA CARRANCO: Yeah, I'm just so grateful to play for him; that he gave me the opportunity, and yeah, he's like a second dad to most of our team. And all of our team, he's like a father figure to all of us. We're all so grateful. We know he's going to be here throughout the rest of our lives and we'll be able to count on him, and we're so grateful to be able to have him as such a big part of our lives.

**Q. What did it feel like for both of you to have that contingent of your -- I guess your sisters who have played before you and some with you; they were there and with you every step of the way, every pitch, cheering you on.**

REYNA CARRANCO: Yeah, it made me so happy because they are some of my best friends and it just got me so excited to see them there because I know they are really rooting for us. I thought about my freshman year when I played with Katiy, and I thought, this game is for her, we're doing this for her, and for the whole senior class and all the people who played here before because we really are a sister here before.

MALIA MARTINEZ: Yeah, it's the family culture we have at Arizona, even after you're done and you're an alumna, you always comeback and root for the team and root for Coach. It shows how special the program is. It's definitely a family.

**Q. Take us through the home run early in the game. What was that moment like for you?**

MALIA MARTINEZ: Yeah, it was really cool. The mindset for us is always pass the bat. I went up there, I wanted to square something up and just get on base so then Peanut behind me can make something happen. It's a cool feeling. It's definitely a memory I'll always have.



**Q. Is that a pitch you were looking for? You absolutely crushed that ball.**

MALIA MARTINEZ: I was just thinking, first good pitch I see, I'm going to go for it.

**Q. Obviously a tough loss today. But after everything that's happened, if you could just speak to how proud you are, not only of this senior class, which you consider them as a gold standard, but your team as a whole, how they fought and how they performed throughout the whole year.**

MIKE CANDREA: Yeah, today's tough. It always is when you get here and you fall short of your goals. But there's so much for this group to be thankful for and a lot of it is just their body of work getting through the season and protecting the bubble and doing all the little things just to play the game that they love to play.

I'm just very, very proud of them, and proud of them as people. You know, this is a good group of young ladies that have made me proud by the way they represent our program and our university, and I couldn't be prouder of them. You know, it hurts right now and unfortunately when you get to the World Series, there's a fine line to winning ballgames. You know, we had some opportunities today. We just couldn't -- couldn't finish it.

And tip my hat off to Florida State for the job they did, and I think each one of these young ladies will learn from this experience as they move forward. It's not life-threatening. No one died today. But it feels life-threatening when you're going through it. But at the end of the day, I was just proud of the job they did to get us here.

And I'll go back to the Super Regional in Arkansas. I think that was one of my highlights, the way they played the game on the road in a tough environment. We just got here and we -- yeah, we fell short.

**Q. We heard from your seniors saying that they look up to you as a father figure and they admire you and love you so much. What does it mean for you, hearing that from not just them but previous players who have nothing but admiration for you?**

MIKE CANDREA: Well, it's a blessing. I mean, not often do you get to do something that you love to do and then surround yourself with people that you never want to see leave. You know, every athlete that I've ever been a part of at Arizona, it's a lifelong relationship, and as a coach, that's what you hope. I hope that I treat them well. I hope I treat them like my daughter. And I hope that I can continue to be a part of their life, because it is all about when you

spend this much time together, it's awfully hard not to be that way.

And so, you know, I told the kids, the one thing that I realized in my career, you're really only the gatekeeper at the end of the day, and I just hope that this program is stable. I've tried to do the right things the right way, and I hope that it has an impact and influence on the kids that I coach. Because I think the one thing that I take very seriously is being a mentor and being a role model. I always tell them everything I do, I always think about how it's going to affect them for all these years.

So I'm honored and blessed that I've been able to coach so many great young women.

**Q. You fall behind 3-2, a dramatic three-run homer was just a kick to the stomach and your kids just rebounded immediately. How proud were you and what does that say about your team?**

MIKE CANDREA: Yeah, I'm very proud. I mean, like I told them, I can look each one of them in the mirror and love what I see. I've asked them to do two things this year and that's to compete and have fun, and I think they have done that. You know, they have been fun to be around. Great teammates. Great team chemistry. You just look forward to coming to practice every day because of the type of people they are.

Yeah, it's tough because things -- you know, we have to stay away from the crooked number, and it wasn't the home run that got me as much as it is the two walks before that. When you get to this level, you can't afford to give people unforced bases, and I feel bad for Mariah, but Mariah has been through so much and has done such a wonderful job. You know, you can't get mad at that.

Those kids, to go out there and compete and put on that uniform is not easy. I think a lot of people in social media and a lot of people in the stands can probably look at the game and go, "God, why aren't they hitting?" Well, I don't think many of them have been in the batter's box when someone is throwing 70 miles an hour and the ball is moving.

I admire these kids for what they do. I think they are tremendous athletes. Powerful young ladies. They will all be successful in life because of their foundation that they have gotten from playing this game. You know, they have made our program better and to me, I think that's the one thing that I've always wanted to do is try to make the program better every year. I think this group definitely took a step in the right direction.

**Q. I know you're aware, there's a lot of talk out there. Will you be the Arizona softball coach next year, and what will go into that decision or what has gone into that decision?**

MIKE CANDREA: Yeah, you know, I usually -- at the end of every year, once you get to my age, you kind of evaluate life and things, and the only thing I can tell you is when that day comes, I will do it on my own terms and make that decision.

But right now, I'm not in any position. Right now I feel bad for these kids, and we've just busted our butts to try to keep playing. So I will let it all absorb and go from there.

**Q. What did it mean to you today to have so many of your former players sitting behind the dugout, not even just sitting, but standing the entire game, every pitch, cheering you on?**

MIKE CANDREA: Well, I can't express it in words. It means a lot. It means a lot to these kids that are playing and it means a lot to me.

You know the one thing that I can tell you right now is that I'm very, very proud of the tradition that has been built at Arizona. And the one thing I've always wanted to do is make it a family. I try to treat it like a family. When I see all of them, you know, that's our family. I kind of look at that as, you know, they are here because they want to help this group. And many of them that are in the stands have had this experience. You know, many of them walked out of here with a great feeling and a National Championship and some haven't.

But on the other hand, I think one of my proudest moments at Arizona is our alumni, being in touch with each and every one of them as much as I can. The only thing that I can tell you that I try to do every day is I've got -- in my planner, I've got a list of birthdays, and I try not to miss a birthday of any kid that's played for me. I take that very seriously.

So I hope that connection is what kind of allows moments like this to happen, but they are very proud of their time at Arizona, I hope and feel that they do, and I think it just makes a huge impact with the kids today. Because many of those kids are the kids that they looked up to when they started playing the game. They were the role models. And so when they are sitting in the stands cheering for you, it's pretty uplifting.

**Q. How honoring is it to know that so many hold you at such a high level, not only just in college softball, but just all over the world, knowing that you've made**

**such an impact on so many people's lives; many, you haven't even met.**

MIKE CANDREA: Yeah, I'm honored. When I took the job, I got talked into going into women's softball. My career path was baseball, and so I've got to thank George Young for talking me into doing it because I fell in love with it.

And so the one thing that I've always wanted to do when I got into the sport was to help grow the sport and help pass along information, and I think to me that's part of the job. As that gatekeeper of the sport, your job is to mentor other coaches, whether they are travel ball coaches or whether they are college coaches or whether they are parents that want a little piece of information or advice.

And I've taken that very seriously. I've been very blessed to be a part of USA Softball and being able to use that platform to reach out to people. I was probably one of the first that thought it was kind of cool to do a video, and I look at those now, and there's a lot of bad information in them. But you know, they were fun to do at the time. You thought it was the best that you had.

I think today is the big reason why these kids are so good and because of the power of information that's out there. You know, there's a lot of good information, and many of these kids are growing up getting good information and developing their skills the right way. I think that's what's helped our game grow.

I think if you ask anyone that has ever e-mailed me or called me, I always make sure that I take the time to talk to them, no matter who they are. Some of the people I don't even know. But if they want, you know, my opinion on something, I will give it to them. And so I've tried to be -- people always ask about my philosophy, and the one thing I wanted to be is consistent, a consistent person, no matter what, no matter where. Win, lose or draw, I wanted to be competent.

I've always been a student of the game. I love the bad ballgame and when I was playing baseball, I was probably good because of my hard work and my knowledge of the game and my thirst of knowledge. Then when I got into coaching, I surrounded myself as much as I can with people that I could learn from. And so I've always had an open mind.

And I think the third thing is I always cared about people, and caring to me is pretty important. I want every kid to have a great experience. It's going to get awfully tough as we look forward to college athletics and some things that scare me right now. The transfer portal can be a real blow-up. So I've got a strong commitment to the University

of Arizona. That's why I've been there for so long. I would hope when someone signs a letter of intent, that they have that same strong commitment. But unfortunately sometimes it's easy to get out of commitments today, and I just hope it doesn't ruin our game because it looks a little bit like free agency to me.

**Q. Since it feels like we have gone down memory lane a little bit with so many of your former players being here, your 1994 team was regarded among the best if not the best of all-time. What is it about that team that has stood the test of time, do you feel like?**

MIKE CANDREA: God, I go back and my memory is not that good. Someone always asks, why don't you write a book? I can't remember 90 percent of what I've done. Live in the moment, forget about the past and don't worry about the future.

But that 1994 team was very talented. One through nine, very good athletes that loved to play the game. They had great chemistry. We had very good pitching. Played good defense and we hit. The thing is, is when you get to Oklahoma City, sometimes you never know how that's going to be.

Now, that team caught on fire here, and hit the hell out of the ball if I recall. But every team I have, win, lose or draw, there's always something you can draw from them and they are all special because of the people. I look at Hillenbrand stadium and I look on the wall and there's been 105 All-Americans. If I'm an outsider walking in there, I'm thinking, shoot, he should be able to coach if he's got 105 All-Americans.

That's where it starts, the athletes. That's what it's all about. They do the job and they are between the lines, and I've been blessed to be able to be around some really tremendous athletes and on some great performances.

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