

# Southeastern Conference Baseball Tournament

Tuesday, May 23, 2023

Hoover, Alabama, USA

Hoover Metropolitan Stadium

## Kentucky Wildcats

## Coach Nick Mingione

## Darren Williams

### Postgame Press Conference



Alabama 4, Kentucky 0

NICK MINGIONE: Appreciate you all being here. I thought Darren threw the ball great. We made some pretty good infield plays. A couple plays we would want back.

But I give their pitching staff a lot of credit. They threw the ball exceptionally well. Furtado did great, right on to Woods and Davis. They threw the ball exceptionally well on a night where the ball wasn't carrying. I think multiple teams just like hit balls where I thought they were going to be out, and they weren't on both sides. Congrats to Alabama for a well-played game.

**Q. Andrew Pinckney had a couple plays in the outfield and then with his back, can you talk about what you saw from him tonight?**

DARREN WILLIAMS: Yeah, he's a great player, one of the best in the league for a reason. We had a good game plan. I think we called a fast ball in there, which, you know, you just probably sit and spin based off the first AP against him and threw a sinker that didn't sink. Really good player.

NICK MINGIONE: I told the umpire, I said, J.J., this is pretty amazing what we've just seen. He took a run off the board by throwing us out at the plate, he hit a two-run home run, so he's plus three in my book, I don't know, and then made a great diving play down the line.

It was a pretty special performance and one I know he'll remember forever.

**Q. Darren, first time through the order it seemed like you were really cruising, Bama started to make adjustments second and third time through. Overall what are your thoughts and how do you think tonight went?**

DARREN WILLIAMS: Obviously you want to win, but we want to get better and we want to win ballgames next week, the week after, for the whole next month. Arm felt great, and that hadn't been the case a month ago.

Thought everything moved well, changeup was working really well tonight, curveball was landing. So I'll take it as a positive. Obviously you want two pitches back, but as a whole, taking a step in the right direction before the next month of postseason play.

**Q. Darren, how do you view the loss? Obviously stinging tonight, and you had bigger goals you wanted to accomplish here. But also having the perspective of how good the season has been for you guys so far and you still have a lot ahead of you. What do you see as your role being in that, your leadership role here?**

DARREN WILLIAMS: Yeah, I've got to keep our heads on straight. It obviously sucks to lose tonight. We have bigger goals, like you said, and we talked about it in the huddle postgame. Now we have 10 days or whatever. We've got to get better. Everybody will be fresh come that first game of the regional Friday. We're going to get lifts in, get our bodies right, and 1 through 27 are going to be ready to roll come that first game of the regional.

**Q. How was the crowd out there today? Birmingham, kind of a home game for Alabama. Did that impact you guys at all?**

NICK MINGIONE: You guys know this, but our league does the best job of our conference tournament. There's a lot of people that nail every detail. What about the grounds crew, the job they did on the field and then all the people that showed up. They could have easily sat at home. Yeah, it's raining, it's wet. And they didn't. They came out.

That's one of the neat things about this tournament is the people. And our league, they are the best; and the fans, we have the best fans.

It was good to be out there, and there was clearly more of them than ours, right, being basically a home game for



them, but that's what makes this thing special all the way around, especially everything that their program has been through.

For the fans to come out, I know that means the world to them, and they need to keep being there for them because these are 18- to 24-year-olds. I guess Tommy and Dub are 25-year-olds.

But I want to brag on Darren, guys. This is a guy that bleeds Kentucky blue. And when he came to Kentucky, he said, Coach, all I want to do is get this team back to the postseason. And last year this is the guy that, when we went on a run late in the year, he was right in the middle of it, even though he was hurt and injured.

And he sat in our postseason meeting and he said, Coach, we're going to build off of this. This team right here has set the standard, and I know we're going to come up short, but next year, you watch, watch what we're going to do. We're going to do special things.

He called it on a great season where we peel off 17 in a row, No. 2 RPI in the country, all these things. But that wouldn't have happened without this guy. This guy is an absolute winner, and I'm thankful he's still with us.

**Q. Nick, after the video they played of you in the second inning, it looked like you and a member of the Alabama dugout shared some words, umpires sent warnings to each dugout. Can you explain what happened in that situation?**

NICK MINGIONE: Yeah, I was trying to figure out where I was supposed to be because normally on a replay you're supposed to be in the box, and then I was going back, and then I was going back and forth, and there was some chirping going out and things like that. That's all. It's a competitive game. I mean, people are going to have emotions and things like that. I thought the umpires did a good job.

**Q. Nick, when you built your schedule during the offseason, basically it's selection days in mind when you're doing that. Season is over now, waiting on selection day. How do you think that that schedule has set you up, and what do you think the committee is going to do when they evaluate it?**

NICK MINGIONE: They'll reward us for it. When you think about our RPI, where it's at, we have the No. 1 strength of schedule in the country. We played 40 percent of our games against top 25 RPI teams. 40 percent. There are teams out there that they've played two against the top 25. We've played 40 percent. We have the No. 1

non-conference RPI in the country, non-conference strength of schedules under 10.

There's a lot of things that the committee looks at, and I know sometimes they can get accused of moving the goalpost and things like that. But one thing that has never changed is they're looking at scheduling intent. Right? You have to.

And we have the best. We have the absolute best. They'll reward us for that.

Another thing they look at, and you guys know this, it's like how do you do against the teams in the field? How do you do against the teams that are actually in the field? And we've tied for the second most quad 1 wins in the country.

It's definitely been the foundation of what we've been able to do, and not only do you do that, you've got to go out and win, and I give our team a lot of credit. We've won a lot of games against a lot of really good teams.

That's one of the reasons why I believe in this team. We're battle tested, and we'll have a chance to do something really cool in the postseason because of the schedule we played.

**Q. You guys faced Alabama I think back in March. Now they've won nine of their last 11 games. How different of a team do you see them tonight as you did this March?**

NICK MINGIONE: Well, I've always had a lot of respect for them and the type of team they have this year. I think even talking to Brad earlier in the year, he just said, This is the best team I've ever had here. And that's saying a lot because they've had some really good teams.

There's a couple -- when you go look and you look at the box scores, the lineup, there's a couple guys that are different, but they've always been able to pitch, they've always been able to defend, and they've always been able to score runs.

So they just have a lot of guys that have a lot of SEC experience, and as you know, that's a really good thing, and it's good for them moving forward.

**Q. Kind of building on what he said, when you're on KSR this morning you pled your case. Do you still remain really confident that you guys will be awarded a regional?**

NICK MINGIONE: I am, yes, very confident. Yep.

**Q. You've mentioned it a couple times, but Alabama has been through a lot. Do you have any thoughts on what happened involving Brad Bohannon?**

NICK MINGIONE: I don't, I don't have any thoughts on that. I don't.

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