

# 2022 College World Series

Thursday, June 23, 2022

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

**Ole Miss Rebels**

**Coach Mike Bianco**

**Dylan DeLucia**

**Tim Elko**

**Kevin Graham**

Postgame Press Conference



Ole Miss - 2, Arkansas - 0

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations on the win. Give us an overview.

MIKE BIANCO: Just wow. I mean, another really great baseball game, I thought, by both teams. Another really -- I was going to say well, but I don't think that does it justice. Another great pitching performance by both clubs.

I don't know how many times that happens where both clubs pitch it so well two days in a row. Both Connor and I thought Dylan pitched today like Friday Night aces in the Southeastern Conference and were terrific and really kind of matching each other pitch for pitch.

They played great defense, like Arkansas can. There's a couple when you're so -- when hits are at a premium, some plays by Moore and others that shut down innings, Stovall and Wallace at third and some double plays they turned to kind of squelch out what rallies you had, rallies where if you had a guy on today.

I thought it was a super game. We got a couple of huge hits by Kevin and Calvin Harris, the timely hit that we talk about so much. But the story of the day was Dylan, just legendary performance.

THE MODERATOR: Yes, it was. Questions for the student-athletes.

**Q. Dylan, your coach just said it was a legendary performance. What was working so well for you today?**

DYLAN DELUCIA: I thought I didn't really have command of my fastball that well until later on in the game, but I was

committing the slider so well, so we just stuck with it. Throwing it for first pitch strike, throwing it late in the count. But just attacked them, at the end of the day.

**Q. Tim and Kevin, Tim, you in particular, this is why you came back to Ole Miss to play for a National Championship. For both of you in your senior years, just talk about the emotions and what it feels like to be playing for a National Championship this weekend.**

TIM ELKO: I mean, the emotions are great. We're excited to get to play in the National Championship series. Like you said, this is why we came back. We knew that this team had the potential, and obviously we had a little bit of a rough patch there in the middle. Through and through, we always knew that, if we just kept believing and stuck together, we could be right here. Excited to get to play this weekend.

KEVIN GRAHAM: Just so proud of everybody. Calvin, big day today. But all the guys. Fun group of guys to be around. I think that's one of the big reasons why we had the turnaround.

**Q. Dylan, was there ever any doubt for you that you were going to finish this thing?**

DYLAN DELUCIA: I just stayed with it. I didn't even -- I just looked up and saw all those zeros going into the eighth, and I was just like it's my time to finally finish this game.

**Q. For Tim and Kevin, just playing behind Dylan in a game like this, just what are y'all's emotions and just the confidence you have in him, especially what he's done this week?**

TIM ELKO: Yeah, just so much confidence. As you can see, he can just put on quite the pitching performance, just gets the outs one after the other. So we have a lot of confidence playing behind him.

We obviously can make some plays behind him, but he takes care of a lot of it. Just hat's off to him. I don't know if I've ever seen a better pitching performance in a clutch



game like that. So just really proud of him and really proud of how the whole team played today.

KEVIN GRAHAM: Yeah, he makes it easy on us, keeps us in a rhythm. He's filling it up. That makes it a lot easier playing defense when you know he's going to be around the zone and keeping you in it.

**Q. Dylan, what kind of prep went into today on short rest? Did you come into the day thinking you had nine innings in your arm? How much did you think you had to give today?**

DYLAN DELUCIA: I just went out there, just kind of put as much zeros as I can. Last time me and Noland had this matchup again. So it was cool to have ace versus ace again. Noland's a great pitcher. Last time it was a dogfight. This time it was a dogfight. So it was just really cool to have that again.

**Q. This is for Tim and Kevin. What made Connor so difficult today, and what did you see from him?**

TIM ELKO: He had all of his pitches working. He had that curveball working, his cutter, and would throw the fastball in there too to keep you off balance. Just hat's off to him. He pitched really well. Kept us on our toes. We were just able to put enough of a couple innings together to get those big hits from Kevin and Calvin and score a couple of runs.

He pitched really well, but at the end of the day, DeLucia just kept us in it the whole time and put up all those zeros. So just proud of how we all played.

KEVIN GRAHAM: Yeah, that was an incredible outing by Noland. He was really sharp, mixing it up with that fastball/cutter. Mixing in the big breaker, tunnelling that thing well. Just one of those days you had to take care of your opportunities when you got them because there weren't going to be many of them.

**Q. Dylan, can you just describe kind of what this journey has been like for you personally this season from not being part of the starting rotation to now, starting today and getting the win?**

DYLAN DELUCIA: It's been interesting, a fun ride. Coach B always says enjoy the ride, and that's what we've been doing, and that's what I've been doing, just taking every chance I get, kind of running away with it. Just not looking back. But, I mean, this team has just played so well the last couple weeks, and we turned it on so far.

**Q. Kevin, I wanted to ask you about two things. One,**

**the play you made in the second inning, seemed like that ball carried forever. And then your at-bat in the fourth inning.**

KEVIN GRAHAM: That ball hit by Moore, I wasn't really sure if the wind was going to push that thing all the way back because you never really know how it's going to play out there in left. I just tried not to drift, turn my back and run and make a play.

That bat in the fourth, I know Noland likes to get ahead. He was going to try to pump in strike one there, and I knew that was my chance to do some damage. He left a cutter just a bit up that I was able to get enough of.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations, guys. We'll see you this weekend.

**Q. Mike, you just made program history for this team. What are the emotions like with you right now considering that?**

MIKE BIANCO: Just proud. You know our story as well as anybody. I think as we continue to win games and move forward, it was neat. A lot of people have the goal to be here, right? One of the challenges we talked about is to not just come here, but to win. This isn't a bowl where years from now people know if you went to a bowl, but they don't know if you won or lost. You went to the Gator Bowl, the Sugar Bowl, whatever.

This is a tournament where it's like basketball, you're supposed to win and move on. Just proud that they continued to believe in one another. They've played well.

Yesterday was tough. When I sat up here -- you might have asked the question, I wasn't sure at the time, because you could see they were pretty down last night when we went out to left field. That's to be expected because it was bases loaded. I'm sure the players and the Ole Miss faithful in the stands and all the fans that we've had here were thinking some ball's going to squeak through an infielder hole and we were going to win a game, and we didn't.

So to be able to bounce back and play like this today, another tough one. And that was one of the challenges we said this morning, that nobody said it was going to be easy. Right? It's not supposed to be easy. You've got to be tough enough to handle it. Maybe somebody asked, and it might have been you last night, maybe some of that April toughened us, weathered us a little bit to be able to handle last night and be able to bounce back today.

**Q. First, congrats on the win. I know you've been**



**focused on Arkansas, but can you give me some initial thoughts on your Championship Series opponent, Skip Johnson of the Sooners?**

MIKE BIANCO: I don't know much about them. They're on the other side. I've watched some of the games, innings, not in their entirety. I have some work to do over the next 36 hours. We all do, the coaches. The great thing is with technology today, we can get that done.

I know that they've had a terrific year, especially similar maybe to us. Maybe not as big a hole, but one that they've played their best baseball down the stretch, winning a Big 12 Tournament, and then going to Gainesville where we all know it's very difficult to win and to win there and then win another Super Regional on the road.

They've had a similar path to us. So we know they're weathered and tough to get to this point, and they've played really well. That's about all I can do as far as the scouting report.

**Q. Mike, you had Mallitz ready. Did you check on Dylan at any point?**

MIKE BIANCO: I went out, I guess it was the seventh when I had some traffic. We made the error. I wasn't going to take him out at that point. I wanted him to face Slavens with the breaking ball. I asked him if he was okay, and he said, Yeah, I'm fine.

Another one where, hey, just kind of check his emotions, kind of get him back, grounded, and how we wanted to approach Slavens' at-bat and what we were going to do. Of course he throws a good slider. First pitch gets off the field.

Then after that, I felt in my heart that, if we got to the ninth, it would be Brandon Johnson. Brandon's been the guy that's closed the close games, and as good as Mallitz has been, I was going to go with Johnson at the end because he's been terrific. It's not his fault that we've won by some spreads and he hasn't been in the game. Earlier in the eighth, it would have been Mallitz.

They were on go, but he just ran through it, six up, six down, I think. There was really no reason to make a move, I didn't think. He was too good. He just didn't look like he was taxing himself. He didn't look like he was running counts. He just looked like he was in total control.

**Q. You guys have only given up nine runs in the four games here. Can you just talk a little bit about the pitching performances you guys have gotten here.**

MIKE BIANCO: I think very similar to the way we've kind of made the run in postseason and even the SEC Tournament, the loss against Vanderbilt, I thought Dylan pitched great. A couple mistakes, and they made him pay for it. So we've pitched it well for over a month now.

One of the things is our guys have really attacked the strike zone. Another game with no walks today. When you get good starts like Dylan and Hunter -- but even Gaddis last night, Gaddis gets through the fifth inning with a couple runs. The starters have been terrific. We know the bullpen, how good they've been. I think on the front end and the back end we've really pitched it well.

**Q. Mike, how does Dylan's performance compare with Drew Pomeranz's performance in 2009?**

MIKE BIANCO: Similar. A bigger stage, obviously. That was a regional final, but that was at home, school record in strikeouts, I think 16 on two days' rest, complete games, very similar.

But when you start splitting hairs and you're comparing yourself to Drew Pomeranz like a ten-year Big Leaguer, pretty good for a guy from Daytona Beach.

**Q. This kind of pitcher, having to advance, needing to get to the next level, is it better to have the DeLucia style or the power style of Pomeranz?**

MIKE BIANCO: I don't know that there's a better way to get through it. It shows you that there is different ways. Drew is more of a power guy, fastball, hard breaking ball. Dylan is three pitches, and you don't know what's coming, and it's on each side of the plate and totally flooding the strike zone and can keep the pitch count really down.

I thought that was one of the differences today. He threw a lot of -- which he can. He's got a lot of arm-side run, and sometimes it can play almost like a sinker. He throws these fastballs that are like at the knees, and he was getting a lot of ground ball outs today, a lot of choppers.

Yeah, to answer your question, I don't know that there's a better way. They're both pretty darn good.

**Q. Coach, going into the Championship Series, what's the challenge or the approach to managing a pitching staff? Best two out of three as opposed to maybe a single game?**

MIKE BIANCO: I don't know if you want to get too far into playing in the three games, especially when it's tournament-like. Meaning we just played four games. So unlike a weekend series, now Oklahoma may have more of

that, where they're going to play more straight-up like a weekend series, just the way the pitching will set up. Ours obviously is different.

We'll meet as a staff tomorrow and kind of game plan how to navigate through the three days. So a little different for us. Proverbial one game at a time, and you try to win the first one and go from there. You're playing for a National Championship. So you don't want to leave anything on the table. You want to go for it.

**Q. Considering both guys were on short rest, did you anticipate Dylan and Connor would both perform like this, or did you think it would play out like that?**

MIKE BIANCO: I did. I didn't know if I thought it would be 2-0, but I thought both of them would get deep in the game. Which one could get to the bullpen, especially with the wind blowing in today, a little different than yesterday.

Yesterday, as I mentioned, it was blowing in, but Slavens hit one, I've never seen a ball hit like that here. And not taking anything away from him, but that wouldn't have happened today. Would it have gotten out? I don't know. But not like it did. So it looked like it added up to what was going to be a pitching day with both Friday Night guys.

And you say short rest. It wasn't that bad. It was Thursday, they pitched on Saturday. It wasn't, as Parrish was talking about, Pomeranz on two days' rest. I thought both of them would get deep in the game.

**Q. The ground balls in the eighth and the ninth, given the intensity of the two-game series, the environment, the pressure, Bench and Peyton, it was like they were in an intersquad game and no one told them.**

MIKE BIANCO: Did you see Bench's throw? He got it on the back foot.

**Q. Is that because Dylan, they're so confident playing behind him? Is it because these kids are such veterans? If you had to pinpoint that calmness, those are tough plays with the National Championship series on the line, how would you pinpoint that?**

MIKE BIANCO: I think it's a combination of all of that. I think, one, you're talking about older guys that have won a lot of games here, guys like Bench and Chatagnier, and you look over at Elko, Graham that was up here. So a group that has been in a lot of fights, maybe they haven't been to Omaha, but they've been in some Super Regional dogfights. So I think that's part of it. I think experience.

Then I think the other part is just how loose and confident

they are at this point, knowing that they can make plays.

Then lastly, what you, I think, pointed to is you're going to get those ground balls with DeLucia on the mound. You've got to be ready. So another reason why we've been playing with the McCants, Wood, third base, center field, but a little better defensive lineup today with the McCants in center and Bench at third.

**Q. I saw you and Laff had a moment there after the game. You, Laff, Clem, have been together for so long. What does it mean for you with these coaches you've been with forever to be playing for a championship?**

MIKE BIANCO: Just so cool. A lot of national media -- and this is not throwing stones, but I don't know why they don't get more credit than they do. This is the best staff that we've ever had, and we've had some great ones. We've had some great coaches come through.

I don't remember ever having and feel as comfortable as I do with my guys. Laff is the longest tenured assistant coach in the Southeastern Conference. He's been with me since 2006. He played for me my first year in 2001.

Just a cool moment. You work so hard. It's all about the players. This is their moment. You never want to take away from that.

This is what we do for a living, and it's great. We're so blessed to do it. But it's not easy, and it's a lot of hard hours. And we've talked so much about this year, that's our year too. To get to this moment is pretty cool in your occupation.

THE MODERATOR: Mike will be back with us tomorrow morning approximately 11:30. Oklahoma will be first, and then a photo-op. Thank you, Mike.

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