

# 2024 Men's College World Series

Monday, June 17, 2024

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

**Kentucky Wildcats**

**Coach Nick Mingione**

**Nolan McCarthy**

**Ryan Nicholson**

Postgame Press Conference

Texas A&M - 5, Kentucky - 1

NICK MINGIONE: I thought, give their starter credit, Prager, what an outing, what a time to pitch a game like that. Give him a lot of credit. He kept us off balance. It was the fastball, the breaking ball, the change-up. He just threw an absolute great game. Give them a lot credit.

We had some opportunities and did not cash in. As you know, in a game like this, all those opportunities matter. The big inning is just about -- maybe the biggest factor in whether you win or lose a game in college baseball. They were able to get one and we weren't. That was the difference in the game.

But give them a lot of credit. They had a great offensive approach, especially in the sixth inning, and it was too much for us to overcome.

**Q. When you walked in the ballpark, you see the flags flying, coming in at 20, 25 miles an hour, and you're going against a pitcher who is notorious for keeping the ball low in the zone, do you feel it's one of those things where two or three runs might win this thing in those kind of environments?**

RYAN NICHOLSON: I thought, no question heading into today, the ball is not going to fly to center or really much of the bigger part of the ballpark. So offensive approach we're really trying to keep the ball down.

I just thought he did a good job keeping us off balance. And just the fly balls really weren't going to fall. Just kind of not a great offensive day to probably hit.

NOLAN MCCARTHY: I think Mason gave us a good first



few innings. I think, second time around against Prager we took better swings, but we didn't make that adjustment quick enough. I think if we would have attacked earlier, we would have come out differently.

**Q. Seemed like every time you did put the ball in play it just happened to be right at a defender. One of those games where there's no breaks. How do you balance out the mentality of, hey, we're making good contact here, but also just not getting down on yourselves knowing only four or five hits came out of tonight?**

NOLAN MCCARTHY: This team does a good job of that. We have ultimate confidence in each other. This guy in ninth inning, he gets a hold of the ball with the wind blowing straight in.

Hit the ball right at people, you can be okay with that. We could have hit the ball on the ground a little more. But we have ultimate confidence going into our next game.

**Q. It's been a while since we talked to you guys after a loss, and yet Coach Mingione says that one of the strengths of the team is just your ability to move on. How difficult is that going to be knowing that you're facing that elimination game tomorrow?**

RYAN NICHOLSON: I don't really think it's going to be difficult at all. Same approach as we came into today. Just tomorrow we're playing Florida, I guess. Other than that, just the same mindset.

We're going to come out. We're going to try put the ball on the ball and play good defense and pitch it well. I wouldn't say there's added pressure or anything like that that we're feeling going into tomorrow.

NOLAN MCCARTHY: I think if we got down on ourselves we wouldn't be in this spot today. There's going to be no sour faces in the locker room tomorrow. We're going to come out ready to go. And back against the wall, but it's the same game, same baseball game.

**Q. You've got three wins in three games. You've done**



**it before. Is that the mindset you've got to put through the locker room now?**

NICK MINGIONE: Yeah, we just reminded the guys in the last five years, no team has swept through the College World Series. The last five national champions lost at least one game.

Sometimes playing every day and back-to-back days you can get your momentum going, you can get in the rhythm and flow. If that's what it takes, you've got to do it.

**Q. Curious about your thoughts about getting Florida again. It's a team you saw five weeks ago, couple extra inning games. And the familiarity, how does that play into the match-up tomorrow?**

NICK MINGIONE: They've played great of late. When you just think about what they had to do to even make the postseason, you give them so much credit. That last weekend what they did in Georgia, and obviously they've been playing really good since.

And you know what, they took the hard path here. They were on the road for both the Regional and Super. And this league, you know this, but every week and every -- every week it seems like teams can change. And this is a team that we're facing tomorrow that's been there, done that. They're well-coached as you know.

Yeah, we'll definitely have our hands full. But they're not the same team from when we played them a couple of weeks ago.

**Q. First impressions of going up against Texas A&M for the first time this season, I'm curious what maybe jumped out actually going up against them in person for the first time rather than just what you were able to scout, maybe more so than what the film shows?**

NICK MINGIONE: I was super impressed with Prager. You watched the film -- and I know he didn't have the outing he wanted to last outing, but obviously when he pitches they typically win.

But, boy, he got our guys to take uncomfortable swings. I give them a lot of credit. You know the stats. In SEC games you know what our offense has been able to do. So, just give them a lot of credit for the job they've done.

I hope for them that LaViolette is okay. I got a chance to spend some time with -- Montgomery, they're staying in our same hotel. And try to encourage him. I hate that for them.

So for them, you don't ever want to see another player get hurt. I mean, especially him.

But very offensive. Their pitching staff, I told their pitching coach after the game he's done an awesome job with their pitchers, just playing them a year ago, and not playing them and watching some of the video, he's done a great job. I was very complimentary of them and made sure I paid him a great compliment.

**Q. When you get into the fourth, fifth, sixth there's still a zero in the hit column. Is this a team that likes to mix it up superstitious, are they superstitious? Do you talk to them, not talk to them? What does the team do in those situations?**

NICK MINGIONE: Our team in our dugout, there's times, I've got to be honest, I don't want to look over my shoulder because I don't want to know what's going on over there. This group is just having a good time.

It sounded like they switched some things up. But I give their team a lot of credit. This was a tough day. They had a guy -- he had induced vertical brake and we hit some balls hard in the air and they're not going anywhere.

He's a great pitcher for a day like today. I mean, he threw a great job.

But, no, didn't really have to switch anything up. He just did a good job mix and keeping us off balance. It was hard for us to get anything going, especially with the way that he attacked the strike zone.

**Q. Even in the bottom of the second inning you had the two runners get on. Lopez reaches on a error. Daly gets hit by a pitch also, not having a hit then until the later innings. What does it take to work the counts effectively against the Gators' pitching staff on Tuesday?**

NICK MINGIONE: We had a couple of chances there. And we laid down that bunt, and it just got off the grass and rolled foul. And we had some chances that we didn't cash in.

So every day is different. We'll figure out who they're starting and we'll have to figure out the umpire zone. We tell our guys we try to figure that out in the first 20 pitches, as soon as they get settled in. And we'll just have to figure out. Each day's different.

As far as controlling the strike zone, that's something we put a lot of the good kind of pride in. We'll see what tomorrow has in store for us from that standpoint.

**Q. You've emphasized this word "gratitude" all year. Knowing you, I assume that goes whether there's highs or loss, wins or losses. What did you like about your team today? What did they do well?**

NICK MINGIONE: We didn't stop competing. We had opportunities. In a game like today, that's what it was going to take. It was going to take our guys just continuing to fight, and we didn't cash in. We had some chances, didn't cash in. But I'm thankful for the way our guys -- are we two or three inches -- how far was that ball fouled in the ninth? I don't know if you saw the replay. It was inches. Three. Very close. That's two more runs and all of a sudden it's we're a runner away.

So the margin of victory is so small. It always has been. But you're right, I'm just so thankful, and I had a thought today that I hadn't had all year, and I know you guys know this, I love my team. Like, I love my team. They're amazing.

We talk about the student, the person, the player, they've crushed everything. They had a 3.2 GPA this spring, the way they treat the kids, had so many people in the hotel come up to me about what kind of character our guys have.

I had a thought today, all right, if we win the national championship, how many more days do I have with these guys? Like, I literally thought about that. And it made me sad. Like, I was like, man, I was, all right, stop, for two seconds. I got back to being thankful that I get to continue to be around these guys because they're amazing. Amazing people. Amazing guys that are super competitive. They love each other and have fun and they do generally anything they can to help Kentucky win. That's their goal. They're not worried about anything else but helping Kentucky win. So I'm thankful that we get another day together and we get another opportunity to play with them, because these guys, they love each other. They respect the game. They respect our opponents, and they really play as hard as they can every day.

We didn't cash in the couple times we had chances, but I'll be thankful to be around them another day tomorrow, that's for sure. Thanks for following us. Go Cats.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports