

# 2024 Men's College World Series

Wednesday, June 19, 2024

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

**Kentucky Wildcats**

**Coach Nick Mingione**

**Nolan McCarthy**

**Ryan Hagenow**

Postgame Press Conference



Florida- 15, Kentucky - 4

**NICK MINGIONE:** This is where you want to end your season. This is not how you want to end your season but this is where you want to end your season.

So congrats to Florida. They played a great game. Just so proud of our group of men. I mean, our team really is a group of men. That's what they are.

They're unbelievable in every sense of the word. And they made history. So this hurts. It hurts a lot because this team is fully capable of accomplishing our goal of national champions, but that wasn't the case this year. That's not what the Lord had planned.

But so proud of these guys for the way they represented themselves, our baseball program and our institution. Just amazing, amazing group of men. And they are winners in every sense of the word, every sense of the word.

I like to call them dogs. That's what they are, a bunch of dogs. Proud of them.

**Q. Ryan, Nolan, you've been here for a few years. What was special about this team?**

**NOLAN MCCARTHY:** To start with, everyone was committed to our goal. And we've had this goal of going to Omaha, winning a national championship. We fell a little short. But from the freshmen who got 15 ABs locked in doing a chart on every pitch, just giving it their all. They emptied their tank. Everyone emptied their tank.

That's what was special about this team. Everyone cared so much and they would empty the tank no matter if they

were playing every day, hitting .350 or if they weren't even on the roster, doing what they could do to make us better. Everyone bought in, unselfish. That's what made the team special.

**RYAN HAGENOW:** I agree with that. We paid attention to what we were doing the whole year and believed in ourselves no matter what was going on.

We knew our season was going to end here, winner or loser. Obviously we would have liked to have been winners. But we knew our season would end here in Omaha. I think just that belief that the whole team had in each other and the staff, whenever they made a call, just complete trust in every single person in our locker room. It's been pretty awesome.

**Q. Obviously you're devastated, sad to lose, but seems like the emotions hit when you walked over to your parents, when you walk over at the end. I don't know if you guys were crying specifically. But why is it that the emotions hit so much right there. Could you describe your emotions right now?**

**RYAN HAGENOW:** Yeah, my parents have been -- they're the ones who got me into baseball. They've been by my side the entire time. So obviously seeing them makes it pretty tough because it takes a lot of sacrifice from our families for us to be able to play at this level.

It's my senior year. So knowing that that was probably the last time I'll hug them after a game got to me pretty good.

**NOLAN MCCARTHY:** You get to go to battle with your brothers every day on that field and they're all feeling the same things as you. But it's tough when you go to your parents and, I mean, they're in the fight with you too. My dad's as into it as anyone. He also got me into baseball.

I can count on two hands as many games he's missed since I've started playing. And the sacrifices they've made, it's been unbelievable. And I love them for that. And that's why the emotions hit so much harder when you've got to talk to your parents after the game.

Man, they were happy to be here. It didn't go the way we wanted it to. But the whole parent group has been amazing and so supportive.

**Q. Nolan, obviously eligibility remaining, you want to get back if you come back. What's the feeling amongst the guys that are coming back? I know a lot of you guys are gone. But what makes you think that this program can get back here?**

NOLAN MCCARTHY: Like I said earlier, the freshmen who were locked in every pitch, bought in. With a group that doesn't buy in it's not going to work, you're not going to get into Omaha. With a group that buys in and listens to Coach Ming, the guidance he gives us, they'll be just fine. The guys will be fine.

Coach Cousey is one of the best recruiters out there. He's going to get the talent. If everyone buys in, the sky is the limit for this program. You saw it; we could have won it all.

**Q. For decades, the sentiment was when will Kentucky go. Now the sentiment is when will you be back. What is it like, and can you understand it now? Or is it an age thing when you get older to understand the foundation you guys have done for this program?**

RYAN HAGENOW: I think I understand it now. There's no reason that this program can't stay at the top and be among this group every single year. With the staff that we have, all around, not just coaching staff, training staff, our equipment manager -- I'm close with everybody -- and with the stadium and the fan base we have and Coach Ming leading the way, there's no reason this team shouldn't continue to have success.

And I think it takes years to build that foundation. But I think we definitely built it.

NOLAN MCCARTHY: Getting here for sure just broke the barrier. Like Ryan was saying, looking around at our staff, we just have guys bought in.

Ammo doesn't get talked about a whole lot, but he's one of the smartest baseball minds I've ever been around. He completely changed everything about my baseball career with swing-wise. He can get the iPad on you before a game and just tell you exactly what's wrong with your swing.

And just the incredible minds we have behind the program that go, not unnoticed but aren't talked about as much, I think that's the special part.

**Q. We know you guys ride on momentum so much as**

**a team. In the last couple of games when Prager throws six and two-thirds no hit innings and you guys fall behind 7-1 in the first, did you see your team struggle to get that momentum back? Or what happens when you get that deflated a little bit?**

NICK MINGIONE: Once you fall that far behind, you have to stop the scoring. You have to stop the scoring. And give them credit. They kept adding to it. And then when we scored, they immediately scored right after.

So we needed to stop the momentum on their end to try to get some on our side and we just didn't do it at a high enough level.

**Q. You switched up the lineup tonight with Nicholson going in the 3 hole, and he's had such a hot bat for you the last several games. But when you get down there, what do you think it does to the kids? I know they have that never-say-die attitude, but you've got to chip away, chip away. And the chips just didn't fall?**

NICK MINGIONE: You nailed it. The only way we were going to get back in that game was if we kept stacking good at-bat after good at-bat after good at-bat in a row, like you've seen us do a lot this season.

We were not able to do that. Give them a lot of credit. They were able to stop our offense and just break the chain of good at-bats and made it really hard for us to get back in that game.

**Q. Have you had an opportunity yet, maybe it's too raw, to realize how much this team has changed Kentucky baseball forever? Or do you anticipate that being something that hits you in the coming days?**

NICK MINGIONE: No, it's a really good question. I knew after that Kennesaw State series, you heard me talk about that, I thought after that series our team just really fell into place. They really created their identity. And we were behind that Tuesday mid-week game right after that, and they just fought back. And really we haven't looked back since.

And I've done an amazing job this year of taking all this in. I could just sense -- I knew how special they were. Their uncommon focus every single day, their unselfishness. I really dreaded this day because I just want to keep being around these guys. They are truly an amazing group of men.

And the way they represented this program, the institution and our state, like, the entire state of Kentucky, is really remarkable.



And when we started out, was it 14-1 in the league? It was just like, wow. And literally they never took their foot off the gas pedal. They just kept attacking and just showing up every day like it's a new day.

And they just had a true uncommon focus and belief in each other, in our program, in everything we were doing. And that's not normal. That's not normal.

And I can tell you this, that's what it was going to take for us to knock down the wall.

I've only told maybe Reeves this, and I just told Christen this. Our facility, it's unbelievable. And the job that Mitch Barnhart and everybody's built, well, all the graphics in every single spot in our facility has a story, and they're in the exact intentional place for a reason.

And on the way to the field, the last hallway, there's a sign that says "The Road to Omaha." It was there intentionally because I wanted the players to understand that every day they walked through that wall that that's where it was going to start.

And Reeves knows this. What did your dad do every time for the last two years, every time he's walked by that wall?

REEVES MINGIONE: It's almost like he punches it, like he wanted to knock it down.

NICK MINGIONE: I kept pushing on the wall for two years. Every time. I've never missed, Joe. Never missed. Just (punching) all the way down the hallway because I knew it was going to take a special group of men. For two years I've never walked down that hallway without pushing the wall down.

And it was a reminder to myself, every time I walk out there, these guys deserve my best. Every time.

It was like a switch that would just put me in the right mind frame that I would just give these guys everything I had.

And I just had one of our seniors tell me, Coach, the way you've loved us and the way you've literally poured your heart and soul into this, this is one of the reasons why we're here.

And I'm, like, no, it had nothing to do with me; it had to do with you because of the way you guys just represented this program, and man -- but I believed in this team. And I knew we could do it. I knew we could do it. And I'm thankful we got here. And I wish we would have accomplished the ultimate goal of national champions, but

they made history forever.

### **Q. How would you like this team to be remembered?**

NICK MINGIONE: As winners. I've been telling everybody all year, they're just winners, literally in everything they do, they just -- you can coach them any way. You challenge them; they respond. You love on them; they love you back. You get on to them; they look you in the eye and say, yes, sir.

They literally have done everything from the way -- we talk about the student/person/player, in our program, they've crushed it in the classroom. They're unbelievable. Like our staff members that have children just telling me yesterday, Coach, watch these guys get on the floor and play with our kids and do all this. They're just winners.

And it's something we talk about in our program all the time. We talk about being a family. We were that. Boy, that should have just screamed out.

We talk about winning, but not just on the field, in every area of their life I want them to be winners. The way they go about their business, the way they treat their teammates, the way they go about their diet, the way they approach the weight room, the way they treat women, all of this has to do with winning. They've been unbelievable. Then their development is really important to us.

I can look you all in the eye today and tell you, we've done the best job we could to develop in every single area of their life, and therefore they've made history, and I just want everybody to know what kind of winners they are.

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