

2026 Men's College World Series

Sunday, June 14, 2026

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

Ole Miss Rebels

Coach Mike Bianco

Hunter Elliott

Will Furniss

Postgame Press Conference



Troy - 12, Ole Miss - 8

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Ole Miss head coach Mike Bianco and student-athletes Hunter Elliott and Will Furniss.

MIKE BIANCO: First, congratulations to Troy and Skylar Meade. What an amazing job they've done. They played so well today and competed so hard.

On the other side, obviously, you know, it always hurts to finish, to the finish of the season. Our reporters have heard me say it, because everybody loses their last game except for the team that wins the national championship. And so when you lose, it stinks and it stings because you don't expect it to happen.

With that being said, if you're going to lose, this is the best place to lose at. And right now I'm sure it doesn't feel that way to our team. But my hope is, as the days pass and the weeks pass, they realize what a tremendous year they had.

To the seniors, just unbelievable to be here four years ago to win the national championship and then have some tough times, fight through and two tough years of injuries and not being good enough.

The seniors hung together, and last year we're a national seed and hosted. Got punched in the gut. Weren't able to get out of our own regional, but hung together again, came back their senior year to get us back to Omaha.

So just so proud of those guys. Just told them on the field how indebted I am, the coaches are. And Ole Miss and all the fans are indebted to these guys for righting the ship

and getting us back here. So disappointing, but just very proud.

Q. Hunter, your coach kind of alluded to it. You pitched here as a freshman. Two long years of rehab to finally toe the rubber again in Omaha. What went through your head during your start?

HUNTER ELLIOTT: Good question. Lots of gratitude. I was grateful to have another opportunity to step on that mound on this stage of college baseball and just kind of showcase myself.

Yeah, I'm just really grateful that we, like he said, righted the ship those couple of years, got this program back on track and we're ending our season here.

Q. I know this is all very fresh right now, but what did this season mean to both of you? And why do you think this team was able to accomplish the things that it did?

HUNTER ELLIOTT: Yeah, this season was special. I think some because of how hard it was. We had a tough schedule. We had really tough road trips. We had really just tons of tough games.

And I think that's why this team was so special and why we were so good late in the year is because we were able to stick together through it all.

This team means so much to me. Those teammates on that bus right now, they're brothers for life. It's hard to find the words right now, obviously. But it was a special season with a special group of guys.

WILL FURNISS: Just all that what he said. And I've been with a lot of these guys for a couple of years. Obviously, like, there's some new guys around. But I think we had 19 returners or something like that. And some of those guys I've been with for four years.

They mean a lot to me. They'll be friends for life. And I think it just means the world to not only me, but the rest of the guys because we worked so hard for it. Just sucks that



it ends the way it does.

Q. Hunter, like they said, you've been here before. But this year, how are you different as a player but also as a person? What kind of growth have you seen while being at Ole Miss?

HUNTER ELLIOTT: As a player, I'm not a ton different. I think I'm better in pretty much every aspect. I think I'm better in a lot of ways on the field, and that's just all the credit in the world to our coaching staff, our strength coach, John Carello, everything like that.

I feel like the biggest difference is kind of how I am as a person. I feel like with this year's team I was much more of a leader. Last time I was here, it was kind of following the likes of all of the older guys, and my role was more on the field.

This year I felt like it was a lot off the field. We had a lot of really good young guys this year. A lot of guys that weren't as experienced, and I feel like that's where my role was a lot this year.

Q. Hunter, did you get an explanation on the balk? Is that something you were surprised about? And was that a moment shift at all?

HUNTER ELLIOTT: No explanation on it. Surprise, maybe a little. But it is what it is. I needed to make the next pitch, and I didn't get off the field there. The balk doesn't kill you if you don't give up the base hit right after. So it is what it is.

Q. What's kind of the scouting report on Troy? That lineup has really heated up during the postseason. And they stacked those lefties in the lineup. And today we saw you kind of attack them with southpaws on the mound.

MIKE BIANCO: Yeah, we thought left was good. Originally, you know, the reason Hunter was pitching because we thought Rabe was the best match-up for North Carolina. But as we delved into it, we felt that he would be a good match.

And he did. He pitched great. Unfortunate fifth that, when you look at the box score, I don't think it's reflective of how well he really pitched and pitched out of some jams.

But credit them. They got all the big hits, and that's happened in our two games. When you get to this point and everybody's so good, it's about the at-bats and making pitches and getting off the field. It's about having a big hit, as Hunter said. He's so mature. To accept your question

and to just say, hey, it is what it is, I just didn't make the next pitch and get off the field. At the end of the day, as frustrated as everybody is, he's right.

But credit Troy for getting the big hit and time and time again. And you look at the back half of the game, we scored runs but we just couldn't stop them. They just continued. And it didn't matter. But certainly we're able to make adjustments, hit a fastball out. Hit a slider out. I think might have hit a change-up out.

Just a great job by them. And at the end of the day they just beat us.

Q. Walker hadn't been hit like that all year this weekend. How much was just their offense or was he a tick off this weekend?

MIKE BIANCO: You know, it's hard. At some point, probably, dive into Trackman and where the pitches were. We knew North Carolina, we probably didn't -- they had swung so well against left-handers and we really didn't -- but at the end, when you're closer's left-handed, you're kind of stuck with that.

And he's handled every situation. And, again, we didn't want to bring him into the seventh today. We thought that was a lot of outs to ask him to get, not necessarily physically, but the adjustments that they've made, that they started to make against Hunter. You know, could he get through the lineup and a couple hitters, because it's hard to go 9 up, nine down?

I don't really know. I know when he came in today, it seemed like a lot of balls just missed middle. You know it's hard to tell from the dugout side. But you're right, I don't really have the answer for that.

Q. Hunter and Will said they both took on major roles off the field. Both of these guys were with you for four years, which in college baseball is extremely rare. How have you kind of seen them mature off the field, if you will?

MIKE BIANCO: Yeah, Hunter five and Will four. And Utermark, another four-year guy, as you mentioned, in an era that that doesn't happen. They're either getting drafted or transferring, especially when times were tough.

So we're forever indebted to those guys for making us better, for making the program better. But as Hunter said, they've become leaders. Most guys don't come into the program as leaders. It's tough.

Tim Elko, I don't think anybody, as a freshman, thought he

was a leader. But when you look up at the faces of the program, Will and Judd and Hunter, they've been awesome. They've been awesome for their teammates to lean on, guys that do it the right way.

I've said this a ton about Judd, but it's to all those seniors, as a parent -- my kids are grown up -- but if you have younger kids, that's what you hope your kids are going to grow up to be like. They're all good students. They're all great kids. They're neat to be around. They do it the right way.

Just so proud of them. But I really believe our sport, and I hope it does, it continues to do that, that it's different because you can really lean into those leaders and those great teams and sometimes that's the difference maker, the secret sauce, if you will, to being a great baseball team when you get enough guys like that.

Q. I know that every team is different, every year is different, but what did this team, this specific team and this postseason run mean to you?

MIKE BIANCO: That's tough. I don't think of it that way. So it's hard to answer questions like that.

Maybe in another week or two we can revisit that question, because it's not about me. I've said it many times. This is my 26th year here. All the teams are different and they're all special. There's different kids. You have Hunter Elliott as a freshman or Will Furniss as a freshman, and you watch those guys grow, and that's why you've got the coolest job in the world, is you get to be a part of that. You get to be a part of their maturation as a baseball player and as just a person.

So it's really cool. But I'm proud, as I said, those guys -- it stings, again, when you lose, but it's different when you lose here.

And I hope they know that. It's tough. A lot of tears out on the field, but my hope is, as time passes, they'll realize what a special group of guys and what a special team.

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