

2026 Men's College World Series

Sunday, June 14, 2026

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

West Virginia Mountaineers

Coach Steve Sabins

Armani Guzman

Maxx Yehl

Postgame Press Conference

North Carolina - 5, West Virginia - 2

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by West Virginia head coach Steve Sabins and student-athletes Armani Guzman and Maxx Yehl.

STEVE SABINS: Guys played really hard, competed. Maxx Yehl, tremendous outing. Seven innings. Seven punch-outs. Allowed two earned runs. Really gave us a chance to win that ball game. Had some great individual performances.

Didn't play our cleanest baseball. When you give great teams opportunities, North Carolina was able to take advantage of that.

But good game by North Carolina. Our guys have been in this situation before, similar to the regional where we lost the second game of the regional and were able to scratch back and claw back into this thing.

So get a little bit more rest in this event. So guys get rested, recover, come back, try to eliminate a team in a day.

Q. Maxx, after they scratched against you a couple times in the first inning, how were you able to settle in and extend your outing there?

MAXX YEHL: Felt really good in the first. Felt I was executing my pitches. They were hitting ground balls in spots we weren't at. So it was kind of out of my control, out of everyone's controls. It just happens. So it's just going out there, feeling good and trying to replicate that. The next inning was my mentality.



Q. Armani, that play that you dove out, it was a throw from Tyrus, just walk us through that play. You really saved on that play. What was that like?

ARMANI GUZMAN: I was just a little late getting into the bag because where I was playing. And Tyrus threw it near the bag, and outside of that, I just kind of reacted and tried to keep my foot on the bag while catching it. It turned out to be a really cool play.

Q. Armani, one of the team's strengths all year has been staying present, putting big wins over tough losses behind them. How do you know that's the case going into the game against Troy Tuesday?

ARMANI GUZMAN: Yeah, I mean, even at the end of that game, you can see like we weren't out of it. We'll never be out of any game. We'll practice tomorrow, do what we have to do tomorrow.

And then when it comes to Troy, we're just going to win a pitch when it comes that time.

Q. Armani, what was your perspective on that play at third?

ARMANI GUZMAN: Yeah, he had his foot on the front of the bag. I don't really know the rules on that. But the catcher made a really good throw. I thought I got a good jump as well. But it was a bang-bang play.

And when I asked the umpire after about the review, he said they review everything, and they ended up calling me out.

Q. Armani, can you talk to me a little bit what you saw from the North Carolina pitchers because you had some pretty good success today?

ARMANI GUZMAN: Yeah, they attacked with all their pitches. They located pitches where they needed to. I happened to hit the ball where they were. I've hit a lot of ground balls up the middle where it's been ground-outs. And, so, for me personally, I just got lucky today.

And then as our team, we took really good swings, good at-bats and we kept building innings. And that's what we'll continue to do.

Q. What do you make of the defensive miscues tonight?

STEVE SABINS: Just baseball. I think over the course of 62 games, that stuff happens. I think we have the best fielding percentage in our league. Tyrus is one of the best defenders in the nation. So we've had really good success.

And that's kind of part of it. You don't want it at that time. But I feel very confident that any mistakes that are made are made because mistakes happen in baseball, not necessarily the moment or the situation. I feel like our guys have played really free and aggressive this entire time.

So Maxx did a really nice job. I thought we were definitely going to get out of that inning. We had two errors in that inning. So when you give a great team five outs, it's hard to get through it. But they ended up being the ground ball that kind of broke our back there.

But Maxx was awesome. After the second error, Maxx looked at Kresser and was, like, hey, I've got you. It was very confident, in the moment. I really believed he was going to get out of it. We didn't because I mean North Carolina's a good team, and eventually that stuff kind of stacks on top of each other.

But in general, yeah, errors happen. I think it's the mental errors, as a coach, can drive you crazy and you try to get those out of there. The physical stuff happens.

Q. As West Virginia continues to play on the biggest stages, a guy that you have said plays his best in big moments is Armani Guzman. And to those that are just now seeing that you have an uber athletic first baseman making diving plays over there and breaking school records for stolen bases, getting on base his first three at-bats and stealing home, your thought overall on the ball player that you have at first base right now?

STEVE SABINS: Yeah, I don't know if he's a first baseman that plays right or a right fielder that plays first. Or he tells me he's a shortstop. So all of those are probably true.

In the future, I think he may even change positions for us. If he returns to West Virginia, he's a guy that could definitely play middle infield, could play second base. He played third base in the regional and the super last year for

us.

And so being able to put his athleticism in the middle of the diamond is a progression that I would really like to make. He's also one of the most selfless guys, with the highest baseball IQ guys that I've ever coached. So the reason he's at first is because he is selfless.

It was pretty early in the season when I texted Paul Schoenfeld, who played a little bit of first early in his career, and Guzman. And I said, who would be the best first baseman out of you two. And Guzman said, he responded in a text message, definitely me because I'm a shortstop. And Paul said, definitely Guzman; I don't think he's a shortstop, though. (Laughter).

But I think he's just really special. Like that utility of a player is so special. Gavin Kelly, that much of a utility -- you can say someone's a utility, but I found out today that Gavin's an All-American at second base and at catcher. That's unheard of.

And Guzman has that ability in multiple positions as well. So that's kind of been our identity of the team. But I'm glad that the country's been able to share in Guzman's success and excitement.

Q. How big of a confidence booster is it, even after a loss, for your guys to have the experience from the Morgantown regional, losing the second game and then coming back to win it?

STEVE SABINS: Huge. I don't think this team is fazed by much. They really like playing baseball. They like being together. So we get to do that. And basically the mindset is we get to rest, recover, go have a nice practice and then we get to play ball again.

Obviously we just want to keep playing together as long as possible. I think they've gotten rid of that pressure stuff and thinking about that too much because they think they're pretty good. And we've been in a lot of ball games against basically any opponent that we've ever played. And, so, I think they believe that they're capable of being the best in the country.

Things have to work your way. You've got to have quality at-bats. And you've got to play clean baseball. But I think they truly believe if their process is right and they play good, they've got a chance to beat anybody in the country.

So that belief isn't new to them. That's pretty rooted in there. So I think having the experience helps. But before we had the experience, we were able to pull it off because that belief is there.

Q. Can you just kind of assess the shape your pitching staff is in and what option you have for what you have lined up in the next couple of days?

STEVE SABINS: Yeah, normally like in the regional setting, you have to figure that out very quickly. We have a little bit of time to do that. So we'll have practice tomorrow and decide who the starter is.

But we have great arms. Estridge has thrown a ton for us. Montesa has thrown a ton for us. McDougal threw five innings for the regional -- Korn. Cole didn't have a very long outing. He threw 55 pitches. And Cole is really good, obviously. Troy got him a little bit, but my bet is they wouldn't have the same amount of success just because Cole can make adjustments and is a great pitcher.

But great options. We have guys that haven't thrown a ton in the last two weeks, just because usually pitching staffs this time of year shrink down to maybe eight guys. And then you start seeing some other rosters, and pitching staffs get shrunk down to about three, four guys, maybe, even in this event.

But I feel like we're in great shape. I was fired up to get Bass in the game, just to kind of get his feet wet. I think the more people that have that experience and play in front of 25,000 people and do well have a better chance for success if we have a chance to string this thing out.

Q. You guys were able to get the traffic on the base paths early in the game. But when Walker McDuffie came in, he was able to stack a couple of zeros. What made him so good tonight?

STEVE SABINS: He's got a really nasty slider, and the fastball is plus. I think he was in the zone probably a little bit more than he had been over the last two weeks. I think he's like a 41 percent in-zone guy. So he relies on chase. But he was able to get ahead with some swings.

And I think his in-zone number's probably a lot higher today, didn't have a great postseason up to this point. He'd given up some big hits and some big moments. But credit to North Carolina for kind of sticking with their dude and trusting their guy. He's a sophomore that kind of had some bumps and bruises throughout this postseason. But that's what this thing is. It's growth.

And so North Carolina's coaching staff's incredible, what they do with their arms. But they basically just entrusted that kid in the biggest moment, and he responded really well for them because he's a super talented kid. And failure's kind of part of this deal.

So yeah, McDuffie threw the ball fantastic. And then Glauber at the end, that guy's nasty, and they're riding him pretty good -- Glauber, maybe -- but that fastball, it was like 94, 95, 7, and it's kind of a low-arm slot. Almost side arm with some serious extension. So it's a little different look but it's a pretty electric fastball there.

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