

College World Series: Baton Rouge Super Regional
Sunday, June 11, 2017
Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Andy Cannizaro
Brent Rooker
Cody Brown
Josh Lovelady
LSU 14, Mississippi State 4

Reporter: Brent, you got drafted late last year and you have a chance later today to get drafted right away. What did Coach Cannizaro do to help your game and how do you feel like you improved over the last year?

ROOKER: "I'll start by saying, that Coach Cannizaro is the best college baseball coach in the country and that's a statement that none of you should take lightly. He is the best college baseball coach in the country and he will take Mississippi State Baseball to places that it's never been before. He's going to win the first national championship here and he's going to win multiple national championships after that. I can't speak highly enough of the type of leader he is, the type of man he is and the type of coach that he was to me and the rest of our team this year. He helped develop my game into places that I never thought I could reach. He's molded me as a person and as a player too throughout the course of this year. It's been an unbelievable experience to get to spend my fourth season at Mississippi State playing for him and I can't thank him enough for what he's done for our whole team this year.

REPORTER: Coach, did you consider going to one of your short relievers earlier in the game to try and stop LSU's momentum?

CANNIZARO: "No, man. We took a 4-3 lead into the fourth inning. In reality it probably couldn't have worked out any better for us. We had the lead, we send out our Saturday or Sunday starter, Denver McQuary, out there to the mound. We did everything possible. You can see the number of guys we threw today. It was all hands on deck. That's the way it's been every single day this year. Every day our guys show up to the park, they expect to pitch and they've done a great job. In terms of that short-reliever guy, if you're talking Riley Self or Spencer Price, no, because we did everything possible. We had a 4-3 lead with a starter on the mound. Unfortunately, it didn't work out tonight."

REPORTER: Coach, now that it's over and you can reflect back, was this experience weird or difficult? What was it like for you to come back here and try to beat these guys?

CANNIZARO: "It was awesome. To be able to lead this group of guys into this ballpark, was a really cool moment for myself and my family. These guys laid it all on the line every single day. I think everybody here knows the relationship with the players at LSU. There's so much time you spend with those kids during the recruiting process and coaching them every day. I think most of all, the awkwardness got out of the way several weeks ago when we played each other in Starkeville. Those guys know I'm there for them, but you put your feelings aside for these two days. I honestly believe that I have the greatest head coaching job in America at Mississippi

State. I love representing these guys sitting on this stage and everybody that's played at Mississippi State and everyone that has coached before me. I came here and we came here this weekend to win the Super Regional. We've got the rest of the summer and fall to catch up with everybody, but we fell short of our goal. These guys gave me everything they had, every single day. We just weren't able to get it done this weekend. I really believe LSU is the best team in the country right now and I expect them to go win a national championship.

REPORTER: In the fifth inning do you think it would be fair to say that you guys just ran out of arms?

CANNIZARO: It is what it is. There are no excuses. We won 40 ballgames this year with those same arms. I don't want to say we ran out of arms, we just weren't able to get it done tonight. The majority of those guys that threw tonight will be back next year and we will be a better team next year for having come to LSU, playing in this environment, having to beat these guys. The kids that return next year will be better for this weekend and will play better next year when we're back here this weekend.

REPORTER: Going back to the draft, Jake Mangum and Ryan Gridley are two players that could get taken in the range where they might consider going. Have you had conversations with them yet about that?

CANNIZARO: Sure, it's something that we talk about all the time. It's certainly a subject that I never shy away from. I'm a gigantic believer in college baseball and kids going to school and earning their degree, which allows them to have a lifetime of earning power. I feel that college baseball is the greatest place where you can develop your game to one day be able to play in the big leagues. Gridley and Mangum will certainly have a decision to make. We'll see what happens in the next day or two with the draft. We've had great meetings back and forth with both guys. We certainly look forward to sitting down again tomorrow. Both of those guys love Mississippi State University. They do everything right. Both of those guys are tremendous leaders for our program. On a selfish note, I hope to God both guys are back next year. You're talking about a first-team All-SEC shortstop and a center fielder who will be an All-SEC player next year when he plays with a non-broken hand for half the season.

REPORTER: Coach, there's a lot of rivalries in the SEC, but is this the start of something between these squads that's good friction?

CANNIZARO: Dang right. There's nothing like competition. There's nothing like putting yourself out there. If you're going to be the best, you need to beat the best. If you're going to become the best program in college baseball, this one that we're at right now here at LSU is the one you have to go through. Look at all the national championships out there on The Intimidator (billboard in right field). We are looking forward to competing with LSU for many years to come. I can't begin to tell you how excited I am to play them. At some point, one day in my adult life, I'll figure out how to beat them.

REPORTER: Josh, whenever you had that final out, the whole dugout came out and greeted you. What did that feel like and what were your words to some of the younger guys?

LOVELADY: Those younger guys I was just telling them hey 'This isn't your last game.' We played hard this year with everything we had. I told them to come back and be ready to go again. We're playing for the best university in the country. They're building a \$65 million stadium for them to play in. I was like 'Hey fellas, learn from this. Learn how we got here. Learn from what we did wrong to not get to Omaha. Make a run at it again.' We fully believe in Coach Cannizaro that he'll make a quick turnaround after this season and come back just like we did this year and be in the run to go to Omaha again. We have full confidence in him and the rest of our coaching staff that they know what to do to get back.

REPORTER: Josh and Cody, have you had a chance to reflect on your career here at Mississippi State?

LOVELADY: It didn't really hit me until Coach Cannizaro started talking to us out in left field. What a great university we got to come play at. I would have never picked anywhere else to come play at. We have the best fans in college baseball. You're playing with some of the best amateur players in baseball. We got to play with the best baseball coach in America and he will continue to be. With what he did with what he had is extremely impressive. Everybody out there doubted us. Nobody gave us a chance last week at Southern Miss and we won four in a row. We are here and gave it everything we had, but we didn't get to where we needed to be. Mississippi State has been everything I could ever imagine. I'm just thankful for everything that Coach Cannizaro has allowed Cody and myself to do and he'll continue to do that with the rest of the guys.

BROWN: I have no regrets. I feel like I left it all out on the field every single day. My teammates gave me everything that they had and we showed up every day ready to play. Being with Josh for four years, it's been pretty impressive. There's never a day that he took off. I can't thank the coaching staff, the coaching staff who brought me in and my teammates enough for the experiences and memories that I've made here.

REPORTER: Brent, have you really had a chance to take in the incredible season that you just finished?

ROOKER: It's been a cool year from many standpoints. From playing well to just being able to watch my team grow up throughout this year. All the young guys at the beginning of the year who were so inexperienced and to be honest, immature, and watching them grow up and developing into the people and players they are today, that's been to coolest thing for me. Apart from all the stats, I think that's been the coolest part for me, is just watching those young guys grow up and develop as both people and players.

REPORTER: What are your thoughts on the draft?

ROOKER: I'm excited to see what happens. I worked really hard last season after the season ended, throughout the offseason and during the season to put myself in the best possible position to begin my professional career. Obviously, it's not a done deal or anything like that, but we'll see what happens and try to make the best decision for me.

2017 NCAA Baton Rouge Super Regional – Game 2

Quotes

Mississippi State – June 12, 2017

Mississippi State Head Coach Andy Cannizaro

Opening Statement...

“First of all I would like to congratulate LSU. Outstanding weekend, outstanding season. They have played phenomenal. Like we mentioned last night I think it has been about a month now since they last lost a game. They are an outstanding club. The train is rolling. I anticipate those guys are going to go to Omaha and win a national championship. I think they have the most dynamic lineup in the country. Everybody is playing at a high level right now. They have outstanding starting pitching. Their bullpen is outstanding as well. One through nine in the lineup guys they just put so much pressure on you. They don’t ever stop coming. It’s just one after the other. So congrats to those guys. Like I said I think they are the best team in the country. I expect them to go to Omaha, win a national championship, and do all the things they planned on doing this year. They are an outstanding club and we certainly tip our cap to them. Guys, I cannot even begin to tell you how proud I am of my team this year. Our guys had an unbelievable ability to fight, never give up, and continue to persevere over so much that went against us this season. Our season is over and it is certainly a sad day, but in terms of big picture and what this team accomplished this year, I can’t speak highly enough about them. We were picked to finish somewhere at the bottom of the SEC. Nobody gave us any credit. Nobody expected us to be here this weekend and we are here because we have some incredible senior leadership by some of the guys sitting up here right now that I cannot speak highly enough of. I want these guys to know that I will always be there for them in any capacity that they ever need. What I saw these guys do for this program and our university is one of the coolest things I have ever seen. Josh Lovelady, our catcher, we are talking about an absolute warrior. He basically caught every single game this year, every single inning. He led us to victories. He did everything in his power every single day to lead a young pitching staff, a staff that was short on numbers. He rallied those guys, led them and I cannot speak highly enough about him. He and Cody Brown, two fifth-year seniors sitting up here right now that have experienced every high and every low that you can have in the SEC. They have won the SEC, they have been on teams that have not made the tournament before. Cody Brown had an outstanding senior year. He hit over .320 with nine homeruns, double-digit stolen bases, played multiple positions for us. These guys led our team this year and I want to thank them and our seniors for everything they did for our program. I will forever be grateful for every single thing they did this year for us. Our program is going to continue to get better and better and better. Our guys are going to continue to win ball games. We have the expectation level to be right back in this weekend next season. That is what our expectation level is and we are going to continue to work and grind and fight and do all the things you have to do to be one of the best programs in the country. Our goal is to do every single thing in our power and in my power to bring the first national championship here at Mississippi State University. There are so many great players and coaches that have come before all of us sitting on this stage and we want to represent those guys every single day and do everything we can to continue to do everything we can to win the SEC and win that first national championship. So I just want to thank our team for the effort. They were phenomenal from the bottom of my heart thank you.”