

June 18, 2013



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An Interview with:

**LSU
COACH PAUL MAINIERI
MASON KATZ
BRENT BONVILLAIN**

THE MODERATOR: Paul, can you give us an overview from your dugout, please.

COACH MAINIERI: Obviously it's a very disappointing day for all of us associated with LSU baseball. Like I told the players, you have to deal with two disappointments. You have to deal with the disappointment of losing a singular game that you felt you could have won. It was a very frustrating game. We had so many opportunities and just couldn't come through with a big hit or some of the things throughout the game that happened that just were very frustrating for us.

So you have to deal with the loss of a singular game, but at the same time, you also know that it's a loss that ends your season. And we have to come to grips with that as time goes on. We'll have time to do that when we get back to Baton Rouge, and I can meet with the players a little bit longer.

But this game itself was just very frustrating for us. I thought Cody looked really good to start the game. His sinkerball was working good. He was pounding the zone, and we thought we had the kid struck out with two strikes, 2-2 pitch and didn't get the call, and, boom, lays one in there, two-run homer on the next pitch.

So it put us in a hole right away. And then they started to get to Cody there a little bit. We got pretty fortunate to get out of the one inning on the line drive double play.

And I considered making a change right there after the second inning and bringing Brent in. I wish I had, quite frankly. Probably cost us another run, the hesitation to bring him in, but I thought Brent just did a phenomenal job for us and gave us a chance to win. And that's what you ask for.

Then Chris Cotton came in, did a super job, went down to hit a change up to give them that one run that proved to be pretty important for them. We had so many opportunities. We got guys on base and just couldn't come through with the hits that we needed. And so we didn't play our best out here. We know that. We're disappointed in that, and we came here to win, came here to win a championship. And we came up a little bit short.

But in time, I'm not going to let that fact take away from these kids and what they accomplished this year. They are champions, and we won several championships this year. We just didn't win the big one, the big championship. And we went two and out and we're going to have to deal with that.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

Q. Coach, your last three seasons ended once watching TV, once back at home and once back in Omaha. And two, does it always feel the same or can you compare the three when the season comes to a close?

COACH MAINIERI: I've always said that's the great thing about our sport, one of the great things about our sport is you win the championships on the field. If you're fortunate enough to be in the 64-team field, you have a chance to win championships by avoiding losing twice in a weekend.

The sad thing about our game is that you lose two games on the last weekend of the season, unless you win the big one, unless you're holding the trophy up above your head. And so the finality of it makes it hard no matter when it is.

I'm proud of this team. It was a

phenomenal year. We did all kinds of things that had never been done before. But right now, this just stings a little bit. We expected to come out here and play better than we did. And even though we didn't play great, we lost a one-run game and a two-run game, we were in position to win the games.

It wasn't like we came out here and got blown out of games. We were right there and just couldn't come through with the play here or hit here or a pitch here. And it stings a lot. It doesn't matter where it is.

But as time goes on, you sit back and you analyze the year and you realize all the great things that you did accomplish and just getting to Omaha is a tremendous accomplishment. But right now it just doesn't feel like it.

Q. Paul, looking at Thornton, obviously flirted with trouble a little bit at times, but what was about him that was able to kind of keep you guys from getting into a groove?

COACH MAINIERI: I mean, he came right at us. He is a competitor, obviously. And came right at us and I thought at times we did okay against him. I mean, we ended up with -- how many hits did we have in the game, ten or so? We just couldn't capitalize. And we left a lot of runners on base. I don't even know what the total is, but it had to be several. And we just couldn't finish off rallies.

We got ourselves in positions where we needed a two-out hit and we couldn't get the two-out hit. But the age-old question, Kendall, was it him or was it good pitching or was it us with poor hitting? I don't know what the answer to that is. He competed hard. Our guys competed hard. We just didn't get the big good at-bats when we absolutely needed them.

Q. Coach, obviously Bregman and Rhymes were so good for you all season long, and I'm sure it stings a little bit for those guys, kind of struggling here this weekend. Any reason you think those guys didn't perform their best here or just a bad couple of days?

COACH MAINIERI: Just hard to say, really. I'm just going to say it was a rough couple of days for them. First of all, let's talk about Alex Bregman. This is the first time he's been at the College World Series, first time as a freshman. He hasn't played like a freshman all year. And I don't think necessarily he played like a freshman today.

The other night I thought he looked a little bit nervous on defense, and some of his at-bats he was kind of flailing away. But today was different.

I thought he was in there taking some good swings. The last ball he hit was a line drive right at the right fielder. He'll be better for this experience. I don't have any doubt about that. I love the kid. I think he's a great player and his best days are ahead of him.

In Raph's case, Raph's had just an up and down season. We've grown accustomed to him being so consistent. His year last year was off the charts. It was just unbelievable, the level of consistency he had. And this year he just hasn't been able to repeat his swing on a regular basis.

And we've worked hard with him. We've tried our best. He's the greatest kid in the world. I love them like my own children. I just feel bad for him. Knowing that kid he's going to -- he's going to blame himself and he can't do that.

Q. Mason, can you talk about the couple of situations when you guys did have a chance to score, did Thornton do something different? Did he reach down? What did he do to get out of those situations, and the reliever also?

MASON KATZ: He wasn't really doing anything special I saw. He was just mixing his pitches up. He wasn't really pinpoint accurate on the couple times we had rallies, when I was on base, looked like he kind of got a little bit more pinpoint. He hit a couple of corners.

Couple of Raph's, he got in there on Raph with two strikes and really hit a spot. But the reliever was just throwing change ups. That's all it was. Just keeping us off balance the whole time. And when he's getting there, throwing it down in the zone. The ones he's throwing to me, they were up in the zone. I was able to take them. They were easier to recognize, but the ones he threw to the rest of the guys, he threw his perfect pitch changeup starts at the knees and dives out of the zone.

Both of them were just keeping us off balance, and they competed hard.

Q. Brent, talked a lot before the game, North Carolina's left-handed heavy lineup. But lefty, righty, they seemed to be hitting pretty well away from the splits. Just what can you

say about their lineup and how tough it was to go through them today?

BRENT BONVILLAIN: You know, everybody in the World Series is great hitters, and I just tried to go out there and throw strikes. And I didn't have my best stuff today. And their hitters are pretty good. They fought off a lot of pitches. I think I only had one strikeout. But they didn't miss too much. And if they did, they still somehow found a barrel and made contact with it.

Q. Brent and Paul, to kind of follow on that. You all do a pretty good job of keeping that offense to four runs. But every time they scored, Moran was in the middle of it. What did he show you that kind of makes him such a tough out?

BRENT BONVILLAIN: He just -- he's very selective about what he wanted, and when he seen the pitch that he liked, he just attacked it. And the times that he actually had it the ball, he didn't miss that much. He's a great hitter. He's batting three something. It shows.

COACH MAINIERI: What I can add to that is he draws a lot of walks. He's got a good eye at the plate and he's got a good, flat swing.

He was fortunate the couple of balls he hit found holes. That's the way baseball works sometimes. He's a good hitter, though. You could see that.

Q. Mason, what do you think about this season? How would you relate what I'm sure you feel are two poor games by your standards to the things you guys did this year?

MASON KATZ: Going to let it sink in first. It's pretty devastating right now, I mean for myself, Brent, the other six seniors, this is it. This is our last run. So definitely goes back to his question. For me, this one stings more than any of them because I'm done now. This is why we came here, this is why we came back. But as time goes on, we'll get back to Baton Rouge, we'll be able to kind of sit back and look at the great things we did do this year.

This is the closest team I've ever played on. I'm best friends with 34 other guys, not even the other 26 that are here. The other ones that aren't here, I'm just as close with.

Eventually we're going to look at what we did do -- pretty remarkable season besides winning the big thing. We had expectations of winning it all, but there's only one team that can win it all. So it's unfortunate that we didn't. But overall, I have

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zero regrets whatsoever. It was the best baseball season of my life, regardless of winning it. I never would want to play with another group of guys.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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