

Adversity part of latest Ole Miss season to end in super regional



Ole Miss baseball coach Mike Bianco talks to players before a workout at Hi Corbett Field during the Tucson Super Regional. Joshua McCoy | Ole Miss Athletics

By Parrish Alford Daily Journal
As Ole Miss baseball puts bats and balls away, the story of the 2021 Rebels is not a Cliff Notes read, coach Mike Bianco says. Ole Miss was eliminated

from the NCAA Tournament on Sunday night in a 16-3 loss to No. 5 seed Arizona.

In February, Ole Miss was in unfamiliar territory as the nation's No. 1 team only to find itself in June in the painful familiarity of another super regional Game 3 loss.

Arizona began the weekend ranked fourth in the NCAA in team batting average. The Wildcats pounded Ole Miss pitching with 20 hits on Sunday.

The Rebels climbed within a game of the College World Series on Saturday when junior left-hander Doug Nikhazy controlled the red-hot Wildcats with fastball location and big-breaking curveballs.

It was behind the emotional Nikhazy that Ole Miss had

its best offensive game in Tucson – winning 12-3 with 16 hits, their most ever in a super regional game.

There's no connection between the absence of Nikhazy and the Rebels' less productive pitching and hitting in Game 1, a 9-3 loss, and Game 3, freshman shortstop Jacob Gonzalez said.

"We all play the same. We all play as hard as we can to win the game. We always play with the same attitude, the same fire, and we're always trying to win," he said.

Senior right-hander Taylor Broadway was in the unfamiliar position of pitching at the start of Sunday's game instead of the finish where he set a school record with 16 saves in 2021.

Had Bianco held Broadway for his regular role and the Rebels had fallen behind Broadway's impact on the super regional would have been minimized. Bianco chose to avoid that risk.

Broadway wasn't the only

Ole Miss pitcher to struggle in the season-ending Game 3.

After Arizona coach Jay Johnson changed his batting order, "The bottom of their lineup was so, so good," Bianco said. "We struggled to get the top of the lineup out, and there were no outs at the bottom of the lineup either."

The end result was the end of the road for an Ole Miss team that won 45 games yet some would say under-achieved.

The Rebels were unable to navigate a tough early stretch in the SEC schedule losing series against upper-echelon SEC teams Florida, Arkansas and Mississippi State in three-straight weekends.

Many SEC games were played without two of the Rebels' best players. First baseman/DH Tim Elko sustained an ACL tear and missed a month of the field then required more time to regain his timing.

The Rebels played the last

month without right-hander Gunnar Hoglund, a projected first-round draft pick who when healthy combined with Nikahzy to give the Rebels a more formidable weekend rotation.

Elko and Hoglund were the two most significant names on an injury list that was much longer.

Eventually the Rebels would win half their SEC series – including against Vanderbilt in Oxford in May – and would reach the SEC Tournament semifinals.

The sum total of the parts produced an 18-12 conference regular season, a fifth-place finish, and a home regional for the fourth time in five complete seasons.

"When you look at all the adversity, all the injuries, if you just look at the book covers maybe you say, 'They didn't get there, and that's a shame,'" Bianco said. "If you look at the pages in between and know this team's story it's pretty special."

Here's how Mississippi spent \$1.25 billion in CARES Act funds

Mississippi Today by Geoff Pender
Mississippi received \$1.25 billion in federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act pandemic relief in 2020.

Here's a breakdown of how state lawmakers spent the money, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Housing assistance: \$20 million for rental assistance grant program, providing grants up to \$30,000 to eligible rental businesses that lost

rent income from March-December 2020.

Elections: \$1 million for pandemic expenses for elections

Higher education: \$10 million for private schools and colleges

Veterans Affairs: \$10 million

Health: \$10 million for Health Department to establish Mississippi ICU Infrastructure program.

Health: \$129.7 million for health care, including \$80 million for hospitals and

nearly \$50 million for other health providers and nonprofits, including food pantries.

Tourism: \$15 million
K-12 education: \$150 million for K-12 distance learning

Unemployment: \$181.8 million for unemployment trust fund.

Judiciary: \$2.5 million for courts and judiciary

Corrections: \$20 million for corrections

Small business relief: \$300 million for small busi-

ness relief grants (only about half of this was used for the grants, with the remainder redirected to other programs or the unemployment fund)

Health: \$4 million to the Health Department to reimburse specialty hospitals for pandemic expenses

Emergency/disaster response: \$40 million to Mississippi Emergency Management Agency for pandemic

expenses.

Higher ed: \$50 million for community colleges.

K-12 education: \$50 million for K-12 internet connectivity

Governor: \$50 million for governor's discretionary fund

Higher ed: \$50 million for universities

Workforce: \$55 million for workforce development

Local government: \$70 million for cities and counties

Broadband/technology: \$75 million for grant program for electric cooperatives and providers to expand high-speed internet access and \$10 million to the Mississippi Wireless Information network for communications for first responders and hospital ERs.

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Mississippi CARES Act Spending

In 2020, Mississippi received \$1.25 billion in federal CARES Act pandemic relief. Here's a breakdown of how state lawmakers spent the money, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures:

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<p>Emergency/Disaster Response \$40 million to Mississippi Emergency Management Agency for pandemic expenses</p>	<p><i>Graphic by Bethany Atkinson</i></p>	

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