

College World Series: Lexington Regional

Monday, June 5, 2023
Lexington, Kentucky, USA

Indiana Hoosiers

Coach Jeff Mercer

Bobby Whalen

Devin Taylor

Ty Bothwell

Postgame Press Conference



you were tossing balls. When did you know that you were going to start, and how were your emotions going into it?

TY BOTHWELL: I knew before the day, but baseball is a game. It's a kids' game that we're playing. There's no reason for me to treat the day differently than I've done any other day.

Being there for the kids, just like I would have when I was going around, going to games and stuff, I know how much it means to them. And I just try and treat it like it's just another fun day out on the mound, like going out there and competing, that's what comes next.

I'm able to kind of turn the switch a little bit. But the biggest thing for me is just being there for others, like no matter if it's teammates or fans in the stands and helping out with the kids.

It kind of warms my heart. So there's no other reason to ignore them. I'd rather be on their side and make sure another kid is having a good day and having fun than just kind of ignoring them. So I don't know.

Q. After allowing a couple runs in the first couple of innings, how were you able to settle in and find your groove?

TY BOTHWELL: Just we talk about it a lot but we have a good offense, and I knew that at some point, like, the statistics show that our team was going to turn it on. And I knew that my team had my back, whether it be rain or shine, however I was throwing, that was irrelevant.

The fact that our guys have, day in and day out, like behind closed doors, I see them working every day. And I know like all that work is going to translate to the game.

And just knowing that our guys are behind each other in the biggest moments, like that's all I needed to have in my head to be able to go out and compete.

Q. You gave up a single to start the game and a couple walks, then you retired 15 in a row, or 14 out of

Kentucky - 4, Indiana - 2

COACH MERCER: I thought we played really well. Really proud of the way we showed up today. We put a plan together, and the boys did a great job of executing that plan really down to just leaving some guys on base.

But everything else that we lined up the guys did an awesome job of. Sometimes baseball goes that way. But I thought we played really well, competed hard. I was really proud of them. May not be much of an opening statement, but that's mine.

Q. Ty, there was a period this (indiscernible) where you didn't pitch for a month, and then last outing you go five strong. May not have been the result you wanted but what did the outing mean to you?

TY BOTHWELL: It meant everything. Being in a hole in the beginning of the year, like, everything wasn't working out right. But the fact that I was able to go out and compete and lay my heart out for this team meant everything to me.

Like, Hoosier born and raised. And I've loved these guys and this team. I've always been out there for the boys whenever I need it, or whenever they need me. And just to go out there and compete for my teammates and do what I could for as long as I could meant a lot to me.

And I'm just proud of the guys that I had behind me and how much everybody else competed and laid their heart out today, too.

Q. Ty, before the start you were interacting with fans,



15. Did it just take you a while to sort of relax and get command, or what do you think happened?

TY BOTHWELL: I don't really know. Like I said, just the support from my teammates to back me up when I needed it, it just kind of translated over.

Q. Devin, the entire team has done (indiscernible) fouling off two-strike pitches. It's something you've been doing really well all year. Could you talk about the team approach and what did you guys talk about going into this game?

DEVIN TAYLOR: We really established it before the season with Coach Mercer being the main one that's expressing it every day -- get to first base, hit by pitch, barely get a hit, get hit in the back, we get a little blooper, a chopper -- our goal is to get to first base.

Of course if we hit home runs, woo hoo, we're scoring, but first base is the goal and if we get bigger, then that's even better.

Q. How much has this group of students, including Ty, meant to you guys?

BROCK TIBBETTS: Meant the world to us. We knew we had a younger group coming in. And they have just done an amazing job of mentoring all the older guys and being a great leadership component and just rallying all the younger guys behind them who didn't maybe have this much experience as some of the older guys.

And such a great group of seniors, that I think I speak for everyone that we're going to miss a whole lot.

DEVIN TAYLOR: Tagging onto that, Phil Glasser being the main position player that's been helping us, he was my guidance when I first got into the summer.

Like I was, like, hip, hip, hooray, when he passed the draft and came back. I remember because Mercer FaceTimed him and I was really happy that I was going to have a mentor like him to come back. And it just really spiraled on after that.

Q. Devin, you got a taste of what this means and what you can do and kind of (indiscernible). Internalize that and take it to the next step, what do you feel you learned from this experience?

DEVIN TAYLOR: We experienced a really young team. Of course I'm one of the young ones, but we all know what this experience is. We've been here now, got this under our belt. But now we're just going to embrace it, embrace

this loss and then carry it on for motivation for next year with everything we've got, for sure.

Q. Your two-year (indiscernible) -- postseason, year four to five, making it to the postseason. What's that turn around experience been like for you?

BROCK TIBBETTS: It's awesome. Winning is fun. Winning is more fun than losing. Whenever you can win a few games that definitely helps.

It goes back to the mentorship of the older guys, the belief from the coaching staff, the belief of all the guys and each other to just be able to put it all together and win a few more games than last year.

I think it just goes back to the fall. I just kind of felt something special kind of within the locker room. I think we all internally kind of felt it. Just kind of knew that this year was going to be a pretty special one.

And it sucks to end this way, but I think it's been a pretty fun year.

Q. Going off that kind of building block (indiscernible) the select group, now you're going to be one of the upperclassmen, what does that kind of mentality give you (indiscernible)?

BROCK TIBBETTS: Just staying the same that have been the last two years, and just kind of helping the younger guys the way the older guys helped all of us. And just kind of helping them to stay level-headed and just let them know that they put in the work, they put in the time. Once we get in the arena we'll be able to have success.

Q. For a couple of years this program, when it had the good years, 2013-2019, by the end of the year -- because baseball is the last thing going on -- how you start to notice it becomes the big sport at IU, and then the last couple of years haven't gone so well, so it hasn't been in the mainstream IU discussion in the same way. But this year it's been back into it with a big season this year. So how big is it to just get back in IU fans' minds and have a big year and have a bright future after the last couple of seasons?

DEVIN TAYLOR: Like Coach Mercer brought us up after the game in the bullpen, he's like we really changed this program. Which I really believe that. We're one of the best teams, we made it far.

We were really good group of guys. We've all bonded the whole year, and made it better when we all bonded. Just using that like, it basically just makes it a lot more fun.

Q. Devin and Brock, this was the biggest crowd in Kentucky baseball history. Looked like it bothered you guys at all. What was it like in general to be part of this scene for college baseball, and did you feed off that energy?

BROCK TIBBETTS: Absolutely. It's a lot of fun playing in front of all the fans. This is why you come to Indiana. This is why I feel like we all chose to come here and play for Coach Mercer and the rest of the coaching staff is to play in environments like this.

And this is just a little taste of postseason baseball that we all were able to get and just that little taste helps keep us hungry going into next year.

Q. Brock, you've been part of a big improvement last year to this year as a team. What have you taken from that and work on improving next year?

BROCK TIBBETTS: I would just say just staying consistent with kind of year to year and taking the knowledge that the older guys have instilled in us younger guys and kind of helping the next group of guys to come in just to get them back on the same track and kind of let them know that this is now the standard for Indiana baseball, and this is just a taste for what's to come in the future.

Q. I notice in the dugout -- (indiscernible) on one knee in that moment?

COACH MERCER: Terrible. Terrible. It's awful. There's a lot of great things about this job and that's probably -- that might be the worst. That sucks, to quote Brock. It does.

I mean, that guy gave his heart and soul, he gave everything he had. And I know at the end of the season everybody talks about stuff and how great guys are. And all of a sudden we lose the reality of what it actually means when you have a great leader.

Like everybody's the best and everybody's awesome and everybody works really hard and it's like you lose the sense -- it doesn't mean anything anymore.

Except for that guy. That guy's different. He's different. He's the most passionate. He's the most focused. He's the most motivated.

When guys get to their fifth year, this guy's played every day for five years and turned the draft down two or three times. He's played every day for five years, and he's still

the most motivated, laser-focused, dutiful player I've ever coached. It doesn't happen. It's not normal. He's just wired different.

He's elevated everybody else around him to be like that and to understand when you're trying to explain what it's like to work and to be invested and to be the absolute best that you can be at something, to pour all of yourself into something and you don't have a role mold that says, that's what it looks like, it's really hard.

And you come across, as a coach, you come across that you're asking something that's outlandish or you're asking for something that's too much or it's too hard.

Then you have a player like Phil, and it's like he's not supposed to be doing this. Like physically he doesn't have the ability to do some of these things that he does but he's so diligent and he works so hard.

And it's, like, when you can say, be like Phillip Glasser. Work like that. Think like that. Be invested like that. It changes everything. And so that's what is difficult. When you're looking at this guy who is broken and now you have to try to console him in this moment and you know how much he's invested and how much he's given to everybody around him, and you just wanted to give him one more thing. You just wanted to give him one more.

It's just I just wanted it for him. I wanted it for those guys. You wanted to send him away in his last college baseball game to go to a Super Regional. You wanted that. We got to a Super Regional you would say at the end of that I wanted one more game for Phillip Glasser to get to the World Series.

You're selfish, you're greedy. We all are. That's what's hard for him. I know how much he's changed everybody around him, how much he's blessed me to coach him. To see him hurt that, it hurts you as a coach because you love him and you care about him. And sometimes we throw those things around too loosely. But with that guy, he's the real deal.

Q. Two-part question about (indiscernible) pitching. You had some balls nailed pretty good. Starters (indiscernible) probably didn't get as much as you would have liked. Then once they brought in Moore seemed like not a lot of great contact?

COACH MERCER: Yeah, he's really good. It was going to be tough. You have to score early. You get to today and we had to do what we had to do to keep our arms safe, but also to put us in a position -- if I run those guys out yesterday, they're not going to be as good.

And then you probably lose yesterday's game with -- or your good guys aren't going to be as good and you lose today because you don't have anybody left.

But by doing that you also realize that you're going to end up getting their arms back up, too. So it's the role of the dice. You'll pitch it better, but so will they.

And we had to get to Williams and we just didn't do a good enough job against him. We had a bunch of guys on base. We had six hits and a walk, that's seven base runners. And we had guys in scoring position, bases loaded and nobody out and only scored one.

We had a runner on third base, one out and didn't score him. We had second and third, one out at least once and didn't score them. You just can't leave guys on base because when you know when you get to Moore he's really good. He's throwing a bowling ball at 94 miles an hour. He's excellent.

We still had chances, still had chances against him. We still had four hits and we had five base runners. And typically we've done a good job. We've done a good job. We've scored runs. We're probably the second best offense in the league, I think, statistically in the Big Ten. And probably top 40 or 50 in the country.

And they did a really good job of getting the tough zones to drive in runs. Elevated sinkers are really hard. They're hard to get to. They're hard to lay off and flatten off.

That's what Ryan Kraft does. That's why he throws an 89 mile-an-hour elevated sinker and nobody can hit him. It's just hard to get to.

He did a really good job every time he had to knuckle down and execute pitches he did. He got in when he had to get in, he got up and in when he had to get up and in. And we couldn't drive him in.

That was the difference in the ball game. Pitched it really well, and he just -- Williams executed pitches, Moore has great stuff. Moore has great stuff.

Q. You were so close this year, and as I said to them you've turned the program around from the last couple of years. And you're back in the mainstream discussion of IU sports again being a (indiscernible) sport after a couple of bad years. But how much does seeing here being here and singing (indiscernible) make you hungry to host a Regional in the next couple of years -- (indiscernible) IU fans just take that extra last step?

COACH MERCER: I would quantify having a bad season as finishing fourth is probably not a bad season. Last year we obviously did have not the season that we want to have. We also had the guts to go through, what I would say, a pretty well executed rebuild in one year. And so I would quantify that.

You have to understand that -- this I think will be my sixth or seventh time playing in the postseason. You're not more hungry, you're less hungry. You're hungry all the time. You work in this industry, you work in this business, if you're not starving hungry every day, the whole operation passes you by.

And so you have to look at what does that mean? How do you build? So the first thing you have to do is you have to evaluate where you're at and how you build success at where you're at.

So while we're building, I'm looking at this year and next year and the following year and I'm saying how do we get to a national level. Get to a national level and stay at a national level every single year forever and ever and ever.

And so I'm not more hungry than I was yesterday. I was starving hungry four, five years ago when we started this process. I'll be starving hungry tomorrow and I'll be starving hungry in 10 years.

So I've been a player in front of 10,000 people. I've been an assistant coach in front of 10,000 people. I've been the head coach in front of 10,000 people. I've won and lost games.

I think if you ebb and flow based on how loud the crowd is or what you did in this pitch or that pitch, I think if you ebb and flow in that, then you're not consistent. There's no more or less motivation than there was before.

Now, do you learn and adjust? Sure. Do I get better at running elevated sinkers on the spin ball machine next year? Yeah, probably. Do I get better at running team defense? Yep, maybe. Do you get better at calling pitches? Whatever it is you can learn.

But I think you're either motivated or you're out of the industry like that. And so you've got to be motivated. So it doesn't change in my mind it doesn't change those things.

Q. Twice this weekend you played to record-breaking crowds. Indiana-Kentucky rivalry. Do you think there will be weekend series at some point in next year or so?

COACH MERCER: No, Kentucky canceled the series last year. Kentucky and Indiana is no longer a series. They called and canceled it. It's done.

It's the last time we're playing unless we play in the postseason. They asked if we want to come down here. I'm not coming down here without a return trip. So it's done.

Q. You mentioned it's been a player-led group all season long. Obviously when Whalen was overcome with emotions there at the end, Josh and Sam went out to console him. What does that kind of say about the overall camaraderie between this group and this team this year?

COACH MERCER: They are, they're an incredibly close group. Like the boys said, their emotions and their feelings after the game today, where it's so, like, deep. Everyone's upset at the end of the season, but this group, it was very hurt and it's because they are.

All good teams are player-led. All good teams are player-led. They're all led from within. And they want to experience something special together. And so as a coach, you're trying to foster that growth behind the scenes.

When they start to see it and they understand it and they take the next step, as a program within, by taking the accountability themselves, then you see something really special happen. Then you're working together. It's not, hey, you're working for me.

They're not working for me. They're working with us. They're working with their coaches. They're working with each other.

And that's when you have a big jump. That's the difference. We lost a two-run game today, but we're 19- or 20-5 or 6, whatever it is, in two-run-or-less games. That's moxie. That's a team. That's not just talent.

Talent beats everybody by 10 runs. That's talent. A team wins close games. A team can communicate. A team can fight for each other and persevere. Team is guys like Ty Bothwell fighting his way back from not a good place six weeks ago.

That's a hard thing to do and those guys supporting him and showing up and continuing to encourage each other. That's what the team did. And they became that. They became that.

That's why it hurts so bad. That's why it hurts bad. Not

because we didn't win. I've lost lots of games. I'm sure I'll probably lose lots more. But it's because I don't get to see those guys anymore. They don't get to see each other anymore.

That's what's hard. Every team but one -- I'm not unique -- every team but one is going to have the same thing where you're sad because I don't get to see them anymore. But that's a beautiful thing. So it makes life beautiful. It's over. It moves on and it changes and it's different.

So you've got to enjoy the moment. That's why you've got them. I'm glad I got to experience a lot of great moments with those guys because it's a beautiful group of kids.

Q. You've been through Regionals before as you mentioned. First time for this group. What were the kernels of things that you saw that made you pleased about the way they handled their first time, especially for some of the guys who were coming back and get a chance to do it again?

COACH MERCER: That's an awesome question. How together they were to achieve something that was bigger than just them, I guess. Everyone will remember, and I'll remember Pete Serruto's home run, but how you got there. It's like 0-2 count, I think it was the Lee kid. He's drilling us. He's killing us. He's doing a great job.

And he just fights and they send him back out. I think it was the eighth. He just fights, he gets 0-2, he fights, fights, fights.

You could hear everybody just keep going, just keep going. Then he hits that home run and just seeing like the dugout erupt. Like, I stepped out at the end of the dugout. It's pandemonium, everyone's going bonkers, like, oh, my goodness, we did it.

And to see that moment will live with me for the rest of my life. I'll remember the view of the dugout and everyone going crazy forever.

Watching Risedorph come in from the bullpen when Sinnard gets hurt and knowing what just happened. We just had to use probably our next two starters to cover that first game. And knowing, all right, young fellow, you're going to have to get us out of this pickle and then you'll have to give us some length.

And watching those guys step up and seeing all those guys have that through the first two days come back yesterday, I can throw today. You're not throwing today, pal, you're not hurt.

But all those guys stepping forward and seeing their performances today, seeing Ty Bothwell go from where he was at six or eight weeks ago to throwing terrific in the first game and coming out today and giving -- what an incredible performance from that kid.

I just remember seeing him on the Wednesday off scrimmages throwing, trying to get it back, throwing to a stand-in dummy, throwing to kind of like the guys, the redshirt guys on Wednesday, trying to get it back, seeing so far away from it, to see him go out and pitching like he has.

Those are things I'll remember forever. I'm very thankful for that.

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