

Atlantic Coast Conference Baseball Championship

Saturday, May 28, 2022

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Truist Field

Pitt Panthers

Jr. Ron Washington

Baron Stuart

Mike Bell

Postgame Press Conference



NC State 8, Pitt 3

MIKE SMALL: Thanks everybody for being here. Great atmosphere. Found a home here. Atmosphere here tonight, I think the ACC and everybody have done a tremendous job hosting this event in Charlotte. We do enjoy coming here. It's been a great opportunity for our guys this week and I couldn't be more proud of our group, the way they played, the way they fought.

Obviously things didn't get off to a great start for us tonight but I think our guys showed what Pittsburgh and what being part of the Panthers are all about, the way we stayed in the ballgame. Just couldn't get the big hit tonight. When you look at it, I think the difference in the ballgame, not the home runs for them early but their ability to put the ball in play with two outs, two strikes and our lack of ability to do that. I think we left 14 guys on base in some key situations.

Not to take anything away from the guys on my right or down in the clubhouse. Couldn't be more proud of the fight, the effort and everything they gave us this year.

Q. Obviously that first inning, they came out and just jumped you a little bit. Down 5-0, they settled in --

MIKE SMALL: I told Elliot before the game, really, this is a home field -- it's an away one for us. We didn't do a good job of fighting the crowd. Really the two solo home runs are not going to beat you.

I thought the key part of the inning was the walk, the double. J.T. Barrett not striking out and putting the ball in play. Then they comeback with two outs and tack on another home run. Those are the big at-bats. The fans

everyone and gets excited about the solo home runs but that's not what's going to beat you. When guys are on base and you're extending innings and you're making things tougher -- it is tough for our guys, going down five, yeah, we can come back, we can chip away and do that.

But it made it tougher for us and you saw it in our at-bats early on, not to take anything away from Silver, did he a phenomenal job, mixing his pitches, tempo, timing. Being a former left-hander it was beautiful to see. He did what he needed to do for five and two thirds and keep it at bay. We could have been a little better early on but love the fight in our guys.

Q. How do you feel about your chances at the NCAA Tournament at this point?

MIKE SMALL: That's in somebody else's hands. I felt like coming into this thing, we've been down this road before, we talked about it last year, you don't ever want to leave it in somebody else's hands. Can we play with anybody in the country? No doubt about it. They have the hardest job in the world. They have to play 64 teams to go play in a tournament and have to look like they are not biased and they have to award mid-majors, as well as the Power Fives, and the rivals in the conferences, who should get 11, who should get nine. There's no right answer.

This team will give a dogfight with any regional in the country and for that fact, anybody in our conference will. That's what I think about our conference. That's why I chose this job four years ago. If you can survive the grind of this league, it prepares you for championship baseball. If you can compete with these guys here, you can make a run to Omaha. It just takes the time to get hot. And we're that close to busting through, and we will.

Q. For the players, this team fought hard to the end and you hit that speed bump late in the year, comeback here, you guys handle yourself pretty well. What do you think that says about just the heart of this team and how much have you enjoyed this run?

RON WASHINGTON, JR.: I think that just shows how much we love each other. We really stay with each other



all year long, even through the ups and downs. There was a little point in the season where we really had to come together and we really -- inaudible -- I think we did that. We definitely showed it out here in this tournament and we can play with anybody.

BARON STUART: I agree with what he said. We had a few hiccups in many mid-week games but I agree, I think we compete with anybody. We're a gritty team and we love each other.

Q. If this is your final game at Pitt, what do you make of your career so far?

RON WASHINGTON, JR.: If it is my final game, I've loved every second of it. I wouldn't take anything back.

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