

2025 Men's College World Series

Thursday, June 12, 2025

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

Louisville Cardinals

Coach Dan McDonnell

Eddie King Jr.

Patrick Forbes

Press Conference



they get to the postseason then they don't know how to handle it. I'm glad we could handle it at the beginning of the year. So, then now it seems like it's easy.

EDDIE KING JR.: Like Pat said, it's hard not to have adversity playing a baseball season. We had guys stepping up all the time. For an outfielder, Michael Lippe stepped up big time when we needed him.

Just having guys that can back people up, step up when we need them, that's just really huge for us.

Q. Patrick, I know you both were on the team last year and it was a pretty rough season. Was there a point that clicked for both of you that this could be a special team?

EDDIE KING JR.: Yeah, I think all of us knew in the fall that we were a special team. We had to put everything together at the right time.

And then the season started. We had a really good first weekend, and then injuries started to happen. I got injured, too. But we lost Klein.

We knew we had a special team no matter who was in the lineup. But we just had to put it all together at the same time. And we ended up doing it even though we got knocked down, but we fought right back.

PATRICK FORBES: Like he said, in the fall we could really tell this was kind of just a different group. I don't really know what specifically it was, but there's kind of just a different feel. And then once the season rolled around, you kind of saw us had a few walk-off wins. The group never really gave up at all. So, I think that just kind of shows what kind of group we are and how competitive we are.

Q. You guys have already touched on it in the first two questions about the injuries, but specifically, Patrick, and I know, Eddie, you mentioned his injury as well, Matt Klein comes back and all of a sudden the pitching staff has really found its groove right now. One, you're

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Louisville head coach Dan McDonnell and student-athletes Eddie King Jr. and Patrick Forbes.

DAN MCDONNELL: This is awesome to be here, awesome to be back. Because of these guys to my left who stuck with it and fought through some hard times, super proud of these five or six juniors and seniors that really steered the ship in the right direction. No matter what, it was a fun year because getting to coach these guys every day.

For them to enjoy the success of a postseason run, it's awesome because it puts them in the history books and it puts them on the CWS wall in left-center. It puts them on the brick building when you come in and out of practice. So it's something that they've had to look at every day for years.

And to be a part of that history is awesome, but they want to add more. That's why we're here, to play good baseball.

Q. Patrick and Eddie, could you speak about overcoming adversity this year? I know you guys had a lot of injuries. You seem to have come together as a big team down the stretch. Everybody seems to be healthy going in the right direction. Speak of overcoming all that adversity with a bunch of injuries to key guys.

PATRICK FORBES: Yeah, we definitely overcame some adversity for sure, but I think in this game it's hard not to have some adversity at some point. But as Coach McDonnell likes to say, we're battle tested.

Some teams don't have to go through adversity, so when



healthy. But, two, what kind of impact does he have on the pitching staff?

PATRICK FORBES: He's had a huge impact. It's definitely great to get him back. His bat in the lineup is huge, not just what he does behind the dish. Everybody feels comfortable throwing to Matt. We know he's going to give it a 100 percent when he's back there. That's all you can ask for.

It's great to have him back. I think it's a big reason why the pitching staff has had a lot of success in the postseason.

EDDIE KING JR.: On the offensive side, it's great to have him in the lineup. You have a very strong bat in Matt Klein. It makes us as hitters feel a lot better about ourselves. I feel it takes a lot of pressure off of batters. Just having him back is really key, and he's like one of the biggest parts of the lineup, so I'm glad he's back.

Q. A lot of injuries this year. We talked about it. Could you speak a little bit about Matt Klein, what he's meant for this pitching staff? We know what he could do offensively, but defensively it feels you've reached a new gear?

DAN MCDONNELL: We had such high hopes for Matt going into the year. Had a strong summer in the Cape Cod League. And clearly looked like our best all-around hitter, team captain, a catcher back there with a reputation we have for success with our catchers.

And we got off to a really good start. I think we were ranked in the Top 25. And then that HBP second weekend of the year.

But like Eddie and Patrick said, we met in the outfield. We were on the road. Had three young catchers there. And I just looked him in the eye, said, man, we're not taking a step back. It's time to step up. That's why you're here.

Matt did a great job. Probably, in the long run, is probably going to be a better baseball player for it because he had to lean over the railing. He really got to kind of see it more as a coach, probably. And he coached up -- he helped Coach Snider with those three young catchers. And he got to see all the things that we preach in coaching offensively and defensively.

And so the goal was to hopefully right the ship, play good enough and put ourselves in a position. And fortunately getting in the postseason, he was back just in time.

The Monday after the injury, I met with V and the captains and we talked about Eddie and other guys having to step

up. When they left, I called Matt back into my office, and I pulled up on my phone the story with Warren Morris and what he went through and having to the comeback and helping his team win a national championship.

I said, Matt, looks like the timeline is you're going to play in the postseason, then you have to see it, you have to believe it, you have to do it every day. I always share a little message when guys get hurt. My wife's a huge music fan. In the movie "Queen," he says, "Good thoughts, good words, good deeds."

So anytime one of our guys gets hurt I always send them that little clip because the power of the mind can go a long way. So feeling sorry for yourself is not going to get you back.

I give Matt a lot of credit because he was a great leader. I think he was better prepared when he came back and how well he jumped in and just helped us on both sides of the ball.

Q. Obviously it's a special season. For you, personally, seems like there's more going on. Could you talk a little bit about your faith and even the culture of faith that seems to be kind of permeating your program?

DAN MCDONNELL: I think it starts with our FCA program. Chris Morgan, he's been there as long as I've been there, 19 years. We just have a strong faith component.

You don't have to be a Christian in our program. If anything, our whole motto is to love and to serve. So you can be any religious faith. You can be any nationality. It doesn't matter. We're just going to love on you. We're going to serve you. That's what we're called to do.

But I'm sure we attract a lot of spiritual kids from spiritual families. But like I said you don't have to.

So that presence, maybe even in the transfer portal, bringing some older kids, 22-, 23-year-olds, that not only have a strong faith but you're much more mature than you were probably at 18 and 19.

And so it's just who we are. It's impressive. I think about that age, I wish I had more wisdom and a stronger faith and made better decisions. It's really neat.

And they know from me at least when we talk about being a Christian, they know I'm not perfect. They see my best and they see my worst.

When they see my worst, I usually have to address it as to,

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

like, hey, that's who I am. I'm a sinner and at least I'm aware of it. As many times as I make God do one of these [hits head] or shake his head, like, man, he didn't just say that, he didn't just do that, did he?

I believe we have an obligation to make Him smile. There's times where I try to make Him smile or at least our program is able to make Him smile.

Q. Last year, four teams from the ACC, four teams from the SEC. All the talk was it was going to be the high-spending power schools will be at the College World Series forever more. What's your take on that? Did you buy into that last year? When you look at the diversity of this year's field, how do you think that's played out?

DAN MCDONNELL: As we've seen in college athletics, it's just changing every year. So I wasn't in a good spot last summer because I just felt like, uh-ho, looks like it's getting harder and harder.

And I don't know someone made the reference about a tough season last year, and we were the 6 seed in the ACC. And four teams ahead of us went to Omaha and the fifth team was a national seed that lost in a super regional. I was also looking at it as we're so close. But we still have many challenges and many obstacles.

And I just think they're great valuable lessons in life. I always say it if the stars have to line up for you to have success you're probably not going to be a really successful person. Now, I do believe some people start on first base, second base and third base. I try to be real about that. I understand some people are, man, they're starting in the dugout.

And it might be tougher on others but the lessons I'm trying to teach our kids is we have an opportunity to win every day. So let's just, tonight when you go to bed and we like to say sleep in on the front end, so get to bed early. And get a good night sleep.

When you wake up tomorrow morning, just be ready to win the day. We obviously did it as a program. But I'm super happy as much as I wanted more ACC schools here and I thought we were going to have more ACC schools here, it's hard to not be happy for the six conferences and a school like Murray State, where I played at the Citadel. And to dogpile, to go to Omaha, man, the greatest baseball experience of my playing career. And it's going to go down as one of the greatest experiences of my baseball experience.

But I just remember that taught me, if at a military school

you can go to Omaha, you can do anything.

So I took that work ethic from my dad and my experience at the Citadel. And going into coaching, it was like -- I was blessed because I got to coach eight years at the Citadel. So sell kids to come to a military school and you can sell.

So I learned how to recruit and connect. What I learned as a player I've taken into my coaching experience.

So a year from now, who knows? It could look a lot different than this year. Just do the best you've got with the resources you've got and try to win as many days as you can.

So, like I said, it's pretty neat to see these schools. I shook a coach's hand -- I don't want to say the coach and I don't want to say the school -- but I shook a coach's hand. We looked at each other in the eye last night, and it was, "man, I didn't know if we were going to get back here" kind of look. Like, two coaches in schools that have been here a lot just had a look of, like, whew, it's been interesting the past few years.

I'm obviously happy right now for college baseball and hopefully we're moving in the right direction.

Q. You kind of touched on it with the transfer portal but this team is built with a lot of homegrown guys. What's it say about your staff and program that Forbes and Eddie King and Zion don't enter the portal, that they stay and build something?

DAN MCDONNELL: I'm not sitting up here this afternoon -- we had three teams on Team USA, and it's not Team USA's fault because I love Team USA, and when your kids get a chance to be part of it, it's awesome.

But it's sad too when the best players in the country get put in front of the schools with the most money -- maybe not for that kid individually. I don't know; I'm not here to judge every kid, but just not fun.

Yeah, there was a realization. This time last summer, our program could have just crashed. We were low. As I said we were in the valley, but that's why I have so much appreciation for those kids who could have taken more money. They could have taken schools that were selling, I guess you say, more than us.

You can only sell more money than us, I'm sorry. I'll go toe to toe with any coach or school in the country. If you're chasing more money, good luck. But you want to list the other 25 qualities, let's go toe to toe and let's see whose resumé stacks up.



So fortunately we were able to keep those older players. We recruit at a high level. We coach and develop at a high level. As I like to say, since 2014 -- somebody might have passed us in the last year, so 307 schools -- but going into spring training or when opening day started in 2024, we had the most big leaguers in the last decade and we had the most big leaguers on opening day roster.

At the end of the day you're asking kids, what is it you want? What is it you're chasing?

So we just had to be who we are, but we had to dig in. "Transformation" was a word in our program. But thankfully those kids stayed. We hit right.

What's cool about those transfer portal kids was they were walking into a tough situation. That was made very clear. Like, A, you see where this program's been at. You see some of our challenges. You have a chance to be a part of something special. You've got a chance to revive us and help us restore the tradition and what this program's been for a couple of decades.

I just thought it was fitting. I wanted Justin west to get the last out because he was one of those older guys that went through injuries, and he stuck with us. But we flipped the ball to Brynner Cutts.

And Brynner Cutts was in the transfer portal because his head coach left. I'm never like anti-transfer portal because I think there's a lot of good reasons for a lot of players. But there's obviously some reasons that just they're shady.

And you've heard coaches talk about them and it's just it's amazing that we've allowed that to happen.

So we'll continue recruiting at a high level. We'll coach our tails off and we'll develop. When I say "develop," we're trying to help these kids in a lot of areas on and off the field. And we've got a track record that's proven that we're pretty good at it.

Q. Feel like there's been a proliferation of guys who can really, real power pitchers in the last couple of years -- 98, 99, 100 miles an hour. Do you have anyone on your staff who regularly hits the 100 miles an hour? What are your thoughts on how that's being countered by all the data that you have now on pitchers that you can give to your hitters, and to see what a guy's tendencies are even before they ever play them?

DAN MCDONNELL: Technology has taken over. I'm sure -- I hear them say it on the broadcast, 25 years ago you could count on your hand how many guys hit 100. Now

you can name how many guys are throwing that hard.

I think these pitchers are throwing harder. A lot of kids are chasing velo. We have several guys that throw really hard. Patrick Forbes will start game one and he throws hard.

But we have an obligation, right, to teach these kids how to pitch. I think the data can be very useful. You're talking to somebody with a degree in mathematics, and I like numbers. I like crunching numbers.

But you can't lose the ability to help kids compete and pitch. So a lot of data and a lot of metrics and that stuff is really good, but there's something about seeing it on the mound and having to make a pitch when it's second and third and there's two outs and you've got runners in scoring position. It's the same for a hitter.

So I think we're all challenged with that balance of technology and information. A lot of information out there. But this is about roll up your sleeves and get your hands dirty and compete.

So we preach -- last year our book was "Toughness" by Jay Bilas. This year it's "Chasing Excellence" by a crossfit trainer. So I like to teach the principles that I think are going to help you win now, but they're going to stick with you for the rest of your life.

I give those hitters a lot of credit because, man, there's a lot of pitchers throwing really hard. It's impressive how good hitters are being able to compete.

Q. You mentioned Brynner Cutts in the transfer portal, but this year coming in, this was a group that had just been on the outside of the NCAA Tournament the last couple of years. But it seems like such a loose group. You run through the Nashville Regional. Then you host a regional with a huge fan base that was rowdy, great atmosphere. And this team looks like, all the different hairstyles, they just had a very loose feeling to them. Just describe the way the team's been playing the last couple of weeks.

DAN MCDONNELL: I appreciate you noticing it, especially the hair. My wife's into that, too. I just think it shows a lot of unity when you do things like that. Hey, if you do it, I'll do it. You do it and we'll do this together, whether you think it looks great or you might think it looks ridiculous. I just think stuff like that is really cool.

This group has been very close. Like I said either way, no matter what happened in the postseason, this group got us back on track, and it's been a lot of fun.



I like where we're at. I've talked about schools that have won a national championship that really don't have much experience being out here. Experience is a coin flip. I think there's good and bad with it.

My job is to feed off of these kids and what makes them go and where they're at and just support them in that.

So even though we use that phrase, man, we're enjoying the journey. We are enjoying the journey. How much fun was that practice today? And how much fun is it going to be tomorrow to run out there and compete against a storied program?

So we won't talk a lot about that phrase and I won't want use the W word a whole lot. We're going to have fun. We're going to play fast. We're going to throw the ball, catch the ball and hit the ball, and let the scoreboard kind of take care of itself.

Q. Just a follow-up to what I was asking you earlier. With the House settlement and the scholarships now, potentially maybe 34, that's what the number's going to be, whether teams maximize that or not, there will probably be more at some of the bigger-budget programs. What do you think that means then as we move forward? Because you mentioned you were happy for college baseball to see some of these teams get here. As we take the next step with the money, is that going to block out some people from chasing championships?

DAN MCDONNELL: Unfortunately, we'll always have this gap. The rich get richer, and I think I'm not negative as to what's going on right now with the settlement and all the things. I have my own opinion that I wish, as an Olympic sport, I wish the first 2.5 of the 20.5 had to go to scholarships and more scholarships, but it doesn't.

So I have no idea what the future holds. Have no idea the mid-major baseball program to the power four. I really don't. I don't know what's going to happen to all these other Olympic sports.

And I hope we don't look up three to five years from now and we just killed eight to 10 sports.

I mean, we know who makes the money. Like I've always said, you cannot be a college coach in any sport and not understand where the money comes from. But don't act like you're supporting the other sports if you're really not.

The way I read the legislation, the way I'm trying to understand this, there's no guarantee for all the other sports, none. And I'm prepared myself and I think we're

going to look up, and they're not going to get more scholarships. Blows my mind -- 20.5 million and we couldn't take the first 2.5 million and put it, like, you had to put it towards more scholarships?

So, in an equivalency sport of 11.7, I'm assuming that's why it's on your shirt, but when I played that's what it was. There's a lot of gray going on here. And to see baseball families over the years and borrowing money and the loans and fighting to make this work, yeah, it's awesome to think we got 34 kids that could be on a full ride, but I'm not going to have 34 kids on a full ride. And 307 Division I schools -- I see my friends from the ABCA here -- I'm sure Craig will share with us how many of those schools are at 34 and then how many are over 25 and then how many are under 20.

And I hate to say it, but I think there's a lot of schools that are still going to be, whether that's 11.7 or close to that, and that saddens me because as much as we act like we're doing these great things for athletes, it's a small percentage is what we're doing great things for. That small percentage, hey, good for you, it's a Quicken number and it's another 0, another 0.

I just hope we didn't kill off a bunch of sports, especially with what we've done in Title IX, right, the last 20-plus years. Like what's going to happen to those sports? Because I know what athletics does.

I know what being part of a team does, how you help young men and young women, how you prepare them for life and the lessons and the things we talk about and how they could go on to be a great husband or a great wife and a great a mom and a great dad, and if we robbed a bunch of these boys and girls an opportunity to be part of a team, part of something special, I don't know who's going to feel good about this three to five years from now. And that's, as people who know me, I'm just going to speak my peace and what I believe.

Q. Just more immediately, what are your thoughts on Oregon State?

DAN MCDONNELL: I made a little comment about them. But such a winning program, great tradition, and even though they've been through something really bizarre with their league breaking up and not having a home, you knew they had a lot of talented kids.

So now you just took a team, really talented, who I think, like us, a different path to get here but a chip on our shoulder, I don't know how you're part of the athletic program and you don't have a chip on your shoulder. There's a reason they've done what they've done this year.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

I don't know if it really surprises anybody; I'm impressed by the adversity and what they had to go through being on the road and traveling all that. It doesn't surprise I don't think anybody in college baseball as to why they're here and how good and dangerous they are.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports