

# 2025 Men's College World Series

Sunday, June 15, 2025

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

**Louisville Cardinals**

**Coach Dan McDonnell**

**Kamau Neighbors**

**Tucker Biven**

**Zion Rose**

Postgame Press Conference

Louisville - 8, Arizona - 3

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Louisville head coach Dan McDonnell, student-athletes Tucker Biven, Kamau Neighbors and Zion Rose.

DAN MCDONNELL: Congratulate Arizona on a great year. I know it hurts. It's tough on them, but really one bad inning for them. They deserved to be here. They played their tail off in the postseason.

They went on the road. Tough on the road, and played really good here. These games, they're one inning, sometimes one pitch, one-out type of games.

But I do want to congratulate them because it was a great run. We saw them early in the year. They got off to a slow start, but, man, they got it going.

This is a fun spot to be in, especially on Father's Day. I got to play here, I got to coach here on Father's Day in '07, first time. And a lot of those '07 guys were sending me text messages today because we won that day. So it's just special.

Just a lot of great memories, great memories of my dad supporting me around the game. And that's what I've tried to pour into these guys, just enjoy it and realize what your parents do to get you to this spot and how much fun they're having. They're having a lot of stress, too, but man they're having a lot of fun. So really happy to be in this spot and celebrating these guys.

**Q. Kamau, two days ago Jake said that performance**

offensively would not happen again. Obviously for you to have a career day like that, what was, I guess, going through your mind? How much urgency was there today in terms of knowing it was a win-or-go-home situation?

KAMAU NEIGHBORS: Nothing really changed, I'd say, as far as mindset and routine. You guys know how baseball is. Today just happened to be my day. These guys always picked me up throughout the year. I'm just lucky that I was able to pick them up today.

**Q. Kamau and Zion, that eighth inning felt like as guys were getting on base, you guys both obviously had the two big hits in there. What was it sort of like in the dugout? Obviously you're running out of outs in your season. Can you talk about how you built sort of into that inning and took advantage?**

ZION ROSE: Like you said, a lot of things happened before that inning to make it that inning. Jake with a hard ground ball running it out. Eddie, who has been hot all playoff, getting a base hit. And then Tay, bloop shot, me. It's funny how baseball is. Everybody's hitting hard line drives to center but they're getting caught, but the little bloop hit gets down.

That was big on the energy, our confidence. We knew Tuck was going out for that last inning. So, it was shutdown after that.

**Q. Tucker, you've been starting the last couple of times you made appearances. You came out of the bullpen today. Just talk about the mindset going into the game as well as what was working for you today?**

TUCKER BIVEN: Coach Williams told me yesterday at practice, they're just a little better against righties and not so much against lefties. I was fine with it. I trusted him. I trusted Eberle. Even though he's a freshman he's a dog. Mindset is just whenever I get my name called, go in and give this team a chance to win for these guys next to me.

**Q. Kamau and Zion, second time seeing Smith Bailey.**



**You saw him opening weekend. What do you remember from that outing? And without seeing him in between, how has he developed?**

KAMAU NEIGHBORS: Our mindset as an offense is we play against the thing in between our ears and the baseball. Obviously we have a scouting report, but our preparation, we're trying to move the ball with two strikes. We're trying to be aggressive, take what the defense gives us.

I wouldn't say it's necessarily we remember anything like that, but our approach stayed the same.

DAN MCDONNELL: I'll build off Kamau, man, that guy's good. And we've seen back-to-back freshmen. That's a four-pitch mix. I don't remember doing damage against him at Globe Life when we played him. I think when we knocked him out we got to the bullpen.

But today he was tough. The ability to throw offspeed what you would think is fastball counts. And that's an impressive year for anybody, but especially a freshman.

**Q. Defense was really good today. Every time that Arizona tried to take advantage of another base, you guys seemed to find another way to get those guys out. Could you speak how well you guys prepared defensively?**

DAN MCDONNELL: Pitching and defense gives you a chance, and as we say, it travels. So we felt all along we were great up the middle with Alicea and Kamau and Lucas Moore. When we got Klein back, the older catcher. But really everybody -- I'm so impressed with Tague Davis, his growth from when he got here in the fall, how good he is defensively.

Even a guy like Zion, who has been a catcher most of his life, and made a decision last summer that he wanted to convert to an outfielder. And he makes a diving catch today.

So you preach it a lot and you talk about don't take your bat to the field and all these things that you just pound home, in February, in March, in April. And you hope it sticks.

And for those teams that allow it to stick and show their toughness and respect the game, you know, you give yourself a chance. You don't always win, but at least you give yourself a chance.

**Q. The other day in a press conference you mentioned the name Muhammad Ali, heavyweight boxing world**

**champion. Your last two at-bats -- this may not have fit the narrative on Friday after the result, unfortunately -- but you totaled eight runs and nine hits in the bottom of the eighth today and the top of the ninth against Oregon State. Is there like a simile, a metaphor, a message you send to the team? You mentioned it in the press. I wondered if you use it with the team.**

DAN MCDONNELL: We mention it because we are very fortunate we come from the city the same as the greatest. And they're connected to our family, and actually I hugged Lonnie Ali before I got on the bus. It's pretty fricking cool to hug Lonnie Ali before you get on the bus to come to the stadium.

But you really have got to give a lot of credit to our support staff. When we talk baseball and we talk about finishing, it's the strength coach, Nieko; it's the trainer, Josh; it's the nutritionist, Savanah; it's the mental performance coach, Katie; it's our academic coordinator, Rachel; and all the people that we challenge these kids, man, finish, finish, finish. And don't just run out there on the field and be great for an hour and a half.

Finish in the classroom. Finish at the end of the semester. Finish the day out. And we address it in practice. We call them up late in practice. We talk about the last three innings. We talk about extra innings. It's great to say it as a coach, but they're the ones that have to do it. They have to buy in and they have to believe.

And so I think it's just a combination of everything. I said it might not show immediately, but as we rotate our books, toughness, Jay Bilas is one of the great Books for everybody, not just student-athletes, because he makes it clear that toughness is a muscle. You're not born with toughness.

Now, you might come from a tougher background than others. I might get you, you might be a little tougher than others, but give me a couple of years and I'd like to think, not just me, but the program, I can help you become tougher if you're going to succeed in our program.

As a coach, you're just really proud when these kids buy in and take pride with the Muhammad Ali analogies. But they earned it. They worked their tail off and that's why they've shown -- first game of the year, I think we scored two in the ninth and then we won it in extra innings.

It was good because they saw the fruits early in the season, and so we haven't been perfect this year, but we have played well in the last few innings. I appreciate you noticing.



**Q. Moving Alex up in the batting order, what kind of look did you want from that, or what was kind of the goal in kind of mixing up that lineup a little bit?**

DAN MCDONNELL: When you talk about toughness, Alicea is such a tough kid. As I brag about toughness on Father's Day, let's make sure it really probably starts with their dads. Not taking anything away from moms, but I'm going to love on the dads today.

Alex is a tough kid. He's been playing. His thumb has been bothering him a little bit -- or a lot. So we dropped him to 8, 9, the last month or so to just take some pressure off, eliminate some at-bats. If he gets four or five less at-bats in a week, just try to keep him going.

But he's competed so well and he's looked so good the past few weeks that I thought he was more than capable of doing it, and I really wanted to just give Lucas a chance to, you know, he hasn't been necessarily rolling as he has been at times. So let's let Lucas stand on deck and swing the bat and get loose.

I don't know what kind of coaching I'm doing because Alex swung at the first pitch and hit a fly ball. I'm just sitting there going, man, the game's fighting us right now. But that's my fault because I don't make Alex take. I just want him to lead off and usually he sees a bunch of pitches. He just didn't in that at-bat.

So Lucas Moore takes a heater right down the middle because he don't want to swing at the first pitch.

It looks like it kind of backfired on me. I've said it publicly, and I don't say it to put pressure on Alex -- no disrespect to anybody in the ACC -- but he's a candidate to lead the league in hits. He's that good. If we can get him for a full, healthy year next year, he's that good. He's one of the better hitters on the team.

**Q. You seemed to have a message for the guys there in the dugout maybe around the sixth or the seventh inning. The rally kind of came around after that. What was said there and what was the mindset? Did you think of the team that you thought they needed something right there?**

DAN MCDONNELL: Well, you know, I can bring the Saban out of me with the best of them. As a coach my age, that's just who I grew up watching and admiring, the Krzyzewskis and Sabans and Parcells, so I definitely have a little bit of old school in me. I love on the kids. They know I love them. As I've always said, they've seen my best and they've seen my worst.

When I'm not happy, they're going to know. But it really didn't faze them as much as I need to kind of just be who I am, the same guy in March, right, on a Tuesday. And I had a lot of frustration in me just from when I was watching. I was waiting for the adjustment to happen. It wasn't happening. So I just kind of used the groundhog comparison as to what was happening.

As good as we are in the ninth and as good as we are in the last three innings, we're not waiting. You don't want to live in that world. And we're doing it now. Like, we're making the adjustment now.

There's no guarantee that it works, but I'm just going to be who I am. And sometimes because you claim you're a Christian in the way you are doesn't act like you're holy than thou and you're perfect and all that.

Believe me there's some words that will come out of my mouth, and there will be things, like my wife will not be happy that I necessarily say. But the kids know, man, I'm loving on them.

Sometimes just a little tough love. Sometimes it's a little kick in the rear. I always say you put your arm around them sometimes; sometimes, man, you've got to get them going. But I am blessed because we have a lot of tough kids.

You don't have to be from the Midwest, but we've got a lot of Midwest and Northeast kids. I don't want to act like my California kids aren't tough and all that stuff.

But just be who we are, right? Let's not put up a facade and act differently because we're playing in Omaha. We kind of have to be who we are. And I think -- I don't know if we can bust through the door now, but we got their attention. I do believe we got their attention.

We have a good practice tomorrow and we get ready to play another great opponent on Tuesday.

But if there's no more questions, and again, please, let me end with Father's Day wishes to all the dads out there. I'm so happy for my kids that they get to spend time with their dads, those that are still around and a part of this.

I got to take a picture on the field with my sons Jacob and Justin, which is going to be one of the all-time highlights of my life. To be on that field taking a picture with your two boys is pretty special. So, I'm blessed.

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