

College World Series: Lexington Regional

Friday, June 2, 2023
Lexington, Kentucky, USA

Indiana Hoosiers

Coach Jeff Mercer

Phillip Glasser

Ty Bothwell

Brayden Risedorph

Bobby Whalen

Postgame Press Conference



TY BOTHWELL: I don't know. It was just a good experience for me and the rest of the guys. It's like everybody's first Regional basically. And we all want to go out there and have a lot of fun and play with a lot of pace and get a lot of things done and win the game.

Like every out is going to be a determining factor. You've got to celebrate the small victories, win the battle in the end. That's basically how I treated it. I'm sure everybody could back me up on that. It was just a fun experience all around.

Q. Ty, after the Ball State game, struggling, 0-for-9, the (indiscernible) of the game, stellar outing. What changed after that?

TY BOTHWELL: I started playing around with arm slots a little bit and just being a little weird and playing into who I am as a person, I guess. And I guess it started taking over and helping me get my stuff back.

Q. Brayden, when Luke goes down in the third, abrupt exit, you're the next person in line. What was the hurdle process for you to get ready so quickly?

BRAYDEN RISEDORPH: Nice thing is you have as much time as you need. That helped, the coaches made sure I cooled it down a little bit. You don't want to go too fast and mess everything up.

It wasn't too bad. Not a whole lot of thinking going on behind that. I was just solid. It was my time to come up and did my best.

Q. Not a lot of tournament experience on your roster, but you didn't show it today. Is the mindset any different and what was it like for your first experience?

BOBBY WHALEN: I would say Luke gave us a great start, he went down, Risedorph, a freshman, came in and he kind of calmed the whole group down. It was really impressive from a freshman.

He calmed us down and we rallied behind Luke. And the pitching, they threw well and our hitting came late. Luke

Indiana - 12, West Virginia - 6

COACH MERCER: First, I'd like to thank Kentucky for hosting a terrific Regional. People have been wonderful. Everything that we need we've been taken care of. First I want to thank everybody here for all their hard work.

And obviously baseball is a crazy game and guys played well, did a really good job and find a way to pull it out in the end in some tough circumstances. I was proud of them. It was just a tough game. Did a really good job.

Q. Phillip, you lose Luke in the third inning feel for him as a teammate. How do you switch off the emotion to get back on your mission? And what was the approach and how did the team generally handle that?

PHILLIP GLASSER: Luke has won us a lot of games this year. He's been an unbelievable competitor for us. Obviously in that moment you're emotional for him to see him go down like that. But we had the guys come up together and say, at the end of the day, we have a ball game to win.

And we were all rallied behind Luke. And just playing with that emotion and just rallying with the guys we were able to pull it out.

Q. Ty, you had a lot of emotional moments tonight coming off the mound, a lot of celebration a lot of triumph what was a night like, what does a night like this mean to you?



and Risedorph really slowed it down and let all of us play loose.

PHILLIP GLASSER: I would say we've been in the arena a lot this year. Coach Mercer does a great job getting us in great environments early on in the season. We played a lot of close games. Being in those close games knowing how to pull it out like we did today it's kind of how we did it.

Q. Bobby, fifth inning you guys realized small ball hasn't been much of your MO this year, I'm sure. I'm sure Coach Mercer was kind surprised right on the bunt (indiscernible).

BOBBY WHALEN: I'm sure Coach Mercer was kind of surprised, laying down a bunt. I told him I'm a great bunter, but in all seriousness just saw that the third baseman was back and was able to put a good bunt down.

And Bob comes up, does the same thing. Just applying pressure on the defense is our main philosophy as an offense. And any way you do that, through small ball, hitting the ball that day, whatever it is to put as much pressure as we can on the defense is what we utilized today.

Q. For any of you, how much did it change you mentally to be able to come here on a bus not have to fly a long distance, to be in a close Regional rather than having to travel farther, how much did that help you relatively close to home?

BOBBY WHALEN: I would say the fans are the biggest help. I wouldn't say it's the flying or driving. Our fans got to travel being so close. And it's easy to play for the people in Indiana. They've been amazing fans all year. It's awesome they get to experience this with us.

So I would say just the emotion the fans had and we got to rally behind them. It was a lot of fun.

Q. Phillip, what was the feeling like, top of the ninth inning, the sophomores coming with Brock, Carter and Dobb? What was it like in the dugout watching them?

PHILLIP GLASSER: It was a sense of relief, but also -- I was on third base when Brock was up. There's just this confidence that he was just going to get the job done. He's an unbelievable player.

And guys behind him they've had great seasons. And we all just believe in each other. That's why I think our offense is as good as it is because we're willing to take a walk or something because we trust the guy behind us. We all trust each other one through nine. When you have that on

a team you have a really dangerous offense.

Q. Brayden, you talked a little bit about the physical preparation when Luke went down. Talk about the mental side. As a freshman I'm sure that's now you envisioned making your NCAA Tournament debut. Talk about what was going through your head when you took the mound?

BRAYDEN RISEDORPH: Honestly, I didn't think a whole lot at all. I'm just happy to be out here. I'm just enjoying everything I can. Anytime I get to go out on the mound it's still a game at the end of the day. And to be here to be able to compete with all these guys behind me it's just a fun time.

Q. Ty, you mentioned the change in your pitching assortment. Looks like you went back to normal levels (indiscernible). Can you talk about that?

TY BOTHWELL: There was something that Glant and Mercer talked about with me a month ago or so. And it was more or less just like trying to figure out a way that I can get back out there and help out the team.

And eventually the hope was that me finding the strike zone from the side would help me come back over the top and get the feel back for my over-the-top release point. And I think it's been helping quite a bit.

COACH MERCER: Your confidence. Just getting your confidence back.

TY BOTHWELL: That too. It's definitely been a big confidence booster to be able to go out there and compete like I did last year. And just finding a way to attack hitters with my stuff and be able to put guys away now has just been very big. And it's definitely helped with the confidence and being able to go out there and compete for my teammates.

Q. Now with coming in after Sinnard getting hurt after two innings, seems like as a freshman you've been put into every single different situation there is. Is it hard to adjust to different situations this season, close situations and starts?

BRAYDEN RISEDORPH: There's not too much difference honestly. If you have a start it's a little different compared to relief role. Any relief role you just gotta wait for your name to be called at any moment. More mentally being prepared than physically.

Q. Mentioned a little bit about attacking, that way, West Virginia attacks. Did you see something looking

at them, that you felt you could do that or is that a case of, hey, I'll see how they react to ways they usually attack other teams?

COACH MERCER: Phillip was laughing because I've urged him to do that. I've urged those guys to do that. A lot of the Midwest kids, they don't grow up by nature bunting and drag bunts and whatnot. You have to really teach it. You have to force them to do that.

And the hard part is I try not to put my hands on the game too much. I'm more like a pro model that way. I'd rather teach them how to go play, and let them play, and let them go play, and let them have the feel of the moment and the confidence in it.

If I'm forcing it on them, the guy's not confident in it. And Phillip and I have not gone back and forth but I've encouraged him to do that, Hunter and Phil, and Bobby was always willing to do it.

But he pulled it out in the right moment. I told those guys if the third baseman is back in that situation, you have to be confident in your ability to just advance base to base, and everybody wants to hit a two-run double and hit two-run homers, but you have to advance base to base.

We've done a lot of bunting the last two or three weeks. I put the machine on the field. We got back home this past week. We have the long two week road trip. And I put the machine on the field and just said, you're just going to bunt until you be more confident.

If the situation arises, I didn't put it on. He put it down. Now with Bobby, I did. So I was going to give him one pitch. He said what do you want to do. You can either drag or swing the first pitch, and then I'll make the decision after that on the second pitch. The second pitch I put the sac down.

Bobby is a good bunter, he's very dutiful. He put a really good one down. I think their second baseman was late covering the bag. So he got double clutch. When a pitcher double clutches it makes it hard, so he threw the ball away.

It's one of the things we tried to do it encourage them to do it I don't put my hands on the game too much. And Phil's a great player. He's one of my all-time favorites. He saw an opportunity and put a good one down. We talk about using the last six inches of the bat and kill it. But he did it and it changed the game.

Q. Can you describe to us what Luke described in his arm? And also kind of the fire drill moment, you have to go in to your decision-making ability at that point?

COACH MERCER: He just talked about some discomfort. At that point you talk take him out for precautionary. He broke the school records in strikeouts in the first inning I believe. He's been terrific. Hasn't had any discomfort before.

You've got to get him out of there just to make sure that he's going to be okay. Like you said, you have all these plans in your mind, the best laid plans often go awry and they did. You look at Risedorph or Kraft, and you can watch all the video you want to watch but until you get in real time you don't know how their swings will react.

Seemed like the four-seam was a better matchup. Just the view at the top was going to be a better matchup. That's not a great matchup for Kraft, especially because Kraft has been out the last two weeks. You're in the middle of the a fire drill like you said.

You throw him in there, the first two innings have given you feedback and said the sinker is not as effective. That's when you go to Risedorph.

He has two fastballs, the four-seam and two-seam. The concern there is he's a good velo guy. He's low to mid 90s but when you rush a guy you usually lose a few ticks, that was my fear. Will he be it 88 to 91, instead of 92, 96.

He wasn't quite back up where he usually is, but he held is velo pretty good. He was able to get a couple 93s on the two-seam. So he was able to be effective in that regard.

And then we hadn't planned on throwing Ty tonight. That wasn't the plan. But then once the four-seam became effective then it was, who has the best four-seam left.

And it's Ty. Like you said he has the confidence. It was one of those things where you don't quite know, is he going to have to be side arm and side arm was not going to be a good matchup. But you knew if he get it cooking over top he would give them fits.

He threw one side-arm fastball. It got hit for a double to right field. We put it in our back pocket. He's got that low slot ride. When he gets going he's like a bowling ball down the hill. He was good.

So it was a lot of problem solving in the moment. Coach Glant does a great job. We always have contingency plans. That wasn't one we had. But we had three or four kind of guys we were looking at.

We wanted to see how the game played out. Once we realized that was going to be our most successful avenue

you have to switch out pretty quick and find your matchups. We did.

Dustin did a great job, but most importantly the kids did a great job. Really easy to panic in that moment. (Indiscernible) he's an all conference guy. He's going to strike out 15 today and give us seven. And now you have to switch gears.

Credit to the kids, to Risedorph, a freshman coming in at that moment. And the boys staying the course. Stay the course and stay the course. And just be too tough to quit. Just be too tough to quit. Too tough to roll over and feel sorry for yourself. There's problems in the world. Gotta get up and go to work every day. The boys did a good job.

Q. You guys were able to take advantage tonight of all the West Virginia mistakes, basically threw the ball away couple times on the bunt. They had the wild pitches and the bunts to score. Miss played a couple of balls in the field, how was it to be in that position late and the ability to take advantage of every mistake make them pay for everything wrong in the field for them?

COACH MERCER: We were fortunate. We took advantage of each of their miscues. They're a great team. And Coach Mazey is a great coach, they're very fundamental. That was very uncharacteristic.

But for us, we've got to capitalize. We had a couple two-out hits. They throw the double play ball away. We load the bases. They pitched around Hunter Jessee. Pitch eight, nine, we go strike out, strike out. And then Phillip Glasser comes out with a big two out hit.

You take advantage of the miscues. We get late there, they misplay a ball in right field for a triple and we go base hit, then homer. So they can give you a window and an avenue and an opening, but you guys still have to go through and walk through the door and capitalize.

We did a really good job of doing that, staying calm, staying collected in a big environment and finding a way to just be dutiful. You preach every day to the guys, the more fundamental team has the best opportunity to win outside of a heroic performance on the mound from one team or the other.

And if you can just take care of the ball. That's something that we didn't do. We did that the last two weeks. You could tell we were a little run down, tired, a little bit of mental fatigue. And we made physical mistakes. We made errors. We gave somebody else opportunities to capitalize and today we were able to reverse the roles a

little bit.

But it was out of character for them. They were a terrific team and very well coached. But we were able to come out the right side of it today.

Q. Didn't necessarily score a ton of runs in the first couple of innings but you were able to -- was that intentional in the approaches?

COACH MERCER: He's tough. My elbow hurts because I've been throwing side arm for the last week trying to get ready to go. But you know he's tough to square up. And this ballpark is beautiful but it plays big to center field. You're not going to leave the ballpark.

Josh Pyne hits a ball to left center as hard as he can hit a baseball. If you're not going to hit a home run to center field and you're going to have to string it together, then the one thing you can't do is you can't have early weak contact and give away outs.

And you're just going to have to work -- you're going to have to work the pitch count, foul for two strikes. You'll have to be okay with getting into the count and fighting a little bit trying to advance it.

And we did that. Like you said, we got in the counts. We fouled two strike pitches off. Competed well. Tried to take the ball the other way. They ran some good shifts, and we didn't hit into them, meaning like we didn't try to do too much with the ball. And it's easy to do.

When a guy has great numbers, great success doesn't throw very hard, variety of pitches and different slots, and you're just going to have to talk to them, we need to go into -- if we can go into it and have 12, 14, 15 hits, if we have 14 hits and 12 singles but we score eight or nine runs it's going to be a great day for us. We're not going to clobber this guy, hit three or four homers, we did that. Dutiful. Hit the ball the other way.

Bobby's base hit, double to right center, was big. And just kind of working -- you have to play the game the way the game is requiring you to play the game. And today the game was going to require us to just take your base hits the other way, take your singles, maybe a few bunts when the time calls for it and hope that the other team blinks first.

We did a really good job of that. It's kind of funny how the game is so different. Last week we faced Boyd Drecht (phonetic) throwing a hundred miles an hour. Have to have a game plan for that. Then you have him today, who his numbers are terrific, he's a really good college pitcher, you have to have a different game plan. We were able to,

honestly, execute both plans pretty well.

Q. You have a group of young hitters. I know they produced for you all season. In a Regional atmosphere like this with Sinnard's injury and all the adversity that goes through with that, what does it say about their maturity to be able to step up tonight?

COACH MERCER: You hit the nail on the head there. I know I've said this for those that have been in the meetings. When you go through the recruiting process and you recruit families, you are recruiting families with high character, recruiting kids with high character.

Because for us, we're going to play young models. That's our model. That's what we're going to do. We're going to play young guys. Go through the process with them. So good people, people of high character make good decisions. They work hard. They make good decisions.

And when you do that long enough, you're able to go and be ultimately successful. Baseball is just another facet of life that good people do those in any facet, any area. And they're very talented. They're very capable. And so when you've played -- I've told those guys the last two weeks, listen, you can only play the harp on being young for so long. You're sophomores, have played 120 games.

Carter Mathison played almost every game, if not every game of his career. Same thing with Tibbitts, same with Pyne. Those freshmen, Taylor and Cerny and Rise, those guys have played 50, 60 games, it's time to go. You're experienced now. You have to be an upperclassman, per se.

But I think it comes down to the content of the person, when you have really good kids from great families, they develop faster and they can handle moments. Then you have to throw them in the deep end. Have to throw them in the deep end. We open up. We go to Texas, Auburn, East Carolina. Play Kentucky this year and Louisville. Obviously our league is strong. Played Maryland and Iowa, all those different teams.

You have to roll with the punches with young guys. If you do that, you'll build a program. You'll build a program. You'll build something that's sustaining in perpetuity. And it's built on the foundation of really good kids, talented, from great families, able to go and handle failure and grow up and become great players through it.

Q. Today marks the first win in the opening round of the NCAA Regionals, baseball since 2015. How important is that for you from a program perspective?

COACH MERCER: It's my first one, too. So at least my sixth time as a player, assistant head coach, and first time I've done it too.

It is. It's a big deal. It's a big deal. We've worked really hard the last couple of years to stick to our plan, to stick to our process and to build this thing the way that we think that we need to build it to be able to compete at a national level at Indiana.

Sometimes that's hard and arduous, grueling, painstaking. You have to be committed and be willing to go through the hard stuff to get there.

Every now and then you get these little moments where you get to really enjoy them. It's a big day for us. I'm proud for the kids sticking to it, fighting through it and doing those things.

You're right. I'm not going to give you the cliché talk, say it's another game. It's not. It's a big deal. And I'm very proud for the kids. I'm really proud of the program for sustaining itself and being able to go back and compete at this level.

Q. Carter Mathison, like Ty, started out a little slow this year after a big year last year. Incrementally better throughout the year. 12-game hitting streak. Tonight barreled two balls the other way. What are you seeing from his adjustments to allow him to have the success he's had over the last 10, 20 games?

COACH MERCER: Exactly what you said.

No, exactly what you said. He started a little slow last year and caught fire down the stretch and there's not much of a scouting program last year. He kind of takes off. Kind of the same thing this year. A little pull happy, a little bit pull-side dominant. Not recognizing offside pitches. Not using the other side of the field.

You can see where they have those shifts, massive pullside shifts on him. They're not quite as accurate as they once were. He's able to use that part of the field more so than he has earlier. He's a supremely gifted and talented player. Physically he's as gifted and talented as a player as I've ever coached. But you have to match the wherewithal and the understanding of the game what's happening around you to your physical ability.

He is a great rotator, the way his hips and body moves, how twitchy, the strength and twitch, great rotator. He has the ability to hit the ball the other way with great velocity.

He burns the left fielder on that double; that ball is

hammered. He's gotten better at being able to hit the ball the other way, stay on the ball.

And it's your sophomore year, there comes, especially when he very easily could have been Big Ten Freshman of the Year last year, that wouldn't have been a bad selection, especially as a true freshman.

But when you go through that, now everybody's got -- there's a target on your back when you're an All-American and everybody knows and everybody has TrackMan and all the hot and cold zones. You perform like a top 50 or 100 player in the country except your experiences don't match that. You're not a third- or fourth-year guy. That takes time for those things to work their way out. Understanding what his hot zones and cold zones are.

He's made a little bit of an adjustment with his hands. Sometimes he can get really tight to his neck and get a little bit rapped and pushy, and that exacerbates the problem.

It was good to get back home this week where he was able to free himself back up and we were able to -- he was able to make that adjustment and hit the ball better the other way again. But I think just knowing who he is as a player, understanding how the game was going to be played to him and trusting himself to use the middle of the field. A lot of times your pull-side homers are off-speed pitches.

Pull-side homers off-speed pitches. Middle to the other way are going to be more fastball-dominant. Home run to right center, balls over the plate are going to be more fastball-dominant. He's made a good adjustment doing that.

Q. Risedorph, Sinnard made a lot of your starts the last few weeks. (Indiscernible)?

COACH MERCER: Not too much. Not too much. I'll go ask Coach Glant. I'm sure -- he's the Mad Hatter. He's got his notebook and he's got 15 different scribbles, all those different things. We've got enough guys to go and do it. It's just going to be young, and we're going to have to fight it out and we're going to have to chop it up.

But you've got to win today. You can't leave it on the field. That would be great to have a starter tomorrow, like Ty or Risedorph or what have you. But if you have an L next to your name, it doesn't matter too much. Great question. I would tell you if I knew. But I'll go ask the boss, see what he has to say.

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