

College World Series: Lexington Regional

Saturday, June 3, 2023
Lexington, Kentucky, USA

Kentucky Wildcats

Coach Nick Mingione

Hunter Gilliam

Zack Lee

Postgame Press Conference



we're excited. One of the guys was, like, we get more games together. So we're excited for the road ahead.

Q. Zack, after the first-pitch home run you seemed to settle in, retire the next 12, 13. Is that hitting the reset button executing the game plan?

ZACK LEE: That was the biggest thing, I just had to lock in a little more and trust the defense behind me to get it out. So I just filled up the zone.

Q. Looked like you got Darren ready in the seventh there. What was the thinking keeping Zack in the game?

COACH MINGIONE: He was throwing the ball so well. He was landing his slider, landing all his pitches. He was just throwing the ball exceptionally well. We wanted to get through that last hitter, get out of it and give Dub a clean inning.

Unfortunately, the guy hit the home run. But we had him ready, but we thought Zack was still a good matchup and we trusted him.

Q. With the catch of the ball in right field and then the barely foul ball in left in the ninth inning, how do you and your team avoid thinking what could have been and moving on?

COACH MINGIONE: Our sport is so unique. A lot of times you can do everything right and you don't get rewarded. I mean, Devin, that's about as hard as you can hit a ball on a line and the guy made a great play. And they made great plays throughout the game.

Even sliding down the line to start the game. That's two games in a row that opposing teams have started off the game making some really good plays against us.

But they played really well defensively and they threw the ball exceptionally well. I thought Yoho gave them some good innings. And obviously Foley threw the ball exceptionally well.

Indiana - 5, Kentucky - 3

COACH MINGIONE: I thought it was a well-played game by both teams. Give them a lot of credit. Four of their five runs were on home runs. And it was one of those days looked like that's what it was going to take.

We had our chances, offensively. Give their right fielder a ton of credit, even right there in the last inning. If that ball gets over his head it's a tie baseball game.

I thought Zack threw the ball great. Obviously the home run in the seventh, but that does not take away how well he threw. And he cruised for a really long time. And he attacked the strike zone. No walks. Got our defense involved.

But give them a lot of credit for coming back late in the game. That's hard to do.

Q. Zack, how were you feeling in that seventh especially after the long top of the inning?

ZACK LEE: I felt good. I told Coach I was good to go. So I was good to go.

Q. Hunter, you all have relied on your leadership and ability to stay focused all season. Now that you've got this long road ahead of you this week, how important is it falling back on that the next couple of days?

HUNTER GILLIAM: It's really important. We've got the right guys in the locker room. We have a whole bunch of older guys, we love playing together. Every moment we have with each other is super important.

So I guess people could look at this as a bad thing. But



Like I told our team, you don't get to look back or second-guess or do that. Don't leave the dugout until they flush this game. And this is a good group of guys. And I told them, I said, hey, look, the bad news is we lost. The good news is I've been here and done this. This is exactly what happened in 2017.

We won the first game, lost the second game. Proceeded to win three in a row. That's what it's going to take to do it again.

I thought our fans were awesome. Golly, how many people did they say showed up? It was over 6,000. What a crowd. They were amazing. So thank you to the BBN for showing out.

Q. You mentioned you did this in '17. What's the strategy going into tomorrow?

COACH MINGIONE: What I told the guys, it's going to take 18 innings. The way we're going to do that is one at a time. We've got to get our bodies ready. We've got to get focused on that. They've obviously got to get something to eat and get some rest, make sure they stay hydrated. We have to do it literally pitch by pitch. I know that sounds like coach-speak but that's how it works.

We have to be able to dominate and win 18 innings tomorrow. If we do we get a chance to play on Monday.

Q. Can you afford to hold guys back pitching-wise, thinking I'll need this guy for five innings in game two?

COACH MINGIONE: No, you've got to go. Every game, this is it. There's not a lot of strategy involved. You gotta do whatever you can to win that first game, then whatever you can to win the second game.

Q. You mentioned 2017 where you came back and won it. It was Indiana that was eliminated in the losers' bracket. This time you'll have to come from the losers' bracket to beat Indiana. How much of an oddity is that?

COACH MINGIONE: Baseball is weird. Even though we played these guys earlier in the year, a bunch of older guys who sit exactly where you are sitting. This team did an amazing job mid-week all year. We may have lost one mid-year all year long.

Our guys sat in this very room and spoke up. Guys like Darren Williams and just said, listen, every team we play in the mid-week, there's a really good chance we could play them again in a Regional.

That was spoken about with Indiana and that was spoken about with a lot of the mid-weeks that we played. Pretty ironic. And here we go again. Feels like déjà vu.

Q. Have you named a starter for tomorrow?

COACH MINGIONE: We have not.

Q. With Darren, you've been careful using him only once a week. He threw 27 pitches tonight. Do you know if he'll be able to go again soon?

COACH MINGIONE: I'm sure he'll be tugging on my jersey to get in. Definitely he's in. He'll have his body ready to go and he'll be available.

He'll be available to throw multiple games tomorrow. I know he is. He's super tough and he's going to want the ball. So he'll be available, yes, sir.

Q. You mentioned some of the missed opportunities offensively. How do you go about converting those tomorrow?

COACH MINGIONE: Some of the things -- we had runners first and third, we put the guy in motion. Smashes the ball right to the shortstop, turned into a double play.

If that ball is maybe 6 feet one way or the other it's a game of inches. That's how today's game was. That's how it should be.

Indiana is a great team. They're well-coached, super talented. And it's a game of inches literally, like, multiple times. What about the stolen base where we slid past the bag and, boom, they tag him. Inches. Inches.

We were safe at third where we stole the base, barely inches. That's how it's supposed to be. That's how it's supposed to be when two really good teams match up.

Q. Nothing you guys have done this season has come easily. You're grinders, just the style of play. Does that give you a little bit of optimism going into this situation that you could keep battling and fight through it?

COACH MINGIONE: It does. I've said it all year. It's an unselfish group of guys that just want to win. That's what they'll do tomorrow.

I'm really confident they'll show up with a desire to win that dominates. They believe in each other. They believe in this team. They believe in the program. The culture we have is super strong. We have an opportunity to prove it

tomorrow.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

