

College World Series: Lexington Regional

Saturday, June 1, 2024

Lexington, Kentucky, USA

Western Michigan Broncos

Billy Gernon

Greg Budig

Randal Diaz

Postgame Press Conference



have to get put in that leadership position, and I feel like I've grown along with it and helped a lot of guys out this year.

Q. What were you seeing from the pitchers today, particularly Luke Thelan who threw very well today. What were you seeing from behind the plate in terms of him in particular attacking the hitters today?

GREG BUDIG: Him in particular, it's just one of those guys that I've said has had tremendous growth. This is the first year he's really completely dominated some guys, and it showed today.

But I mean, his stuff, when he's on, he's on. He's going to strike a lot of guys out. He's not off very often.

Just the growth that he's had this year and the past few years has been great to see.

Q. Cade, you've been with this program and you've accomplished quite a bit individually and as a team. What has this season meant to you to get a MAC championship ring, to represent the region in the MAC and a regional?

CADE SULLIVAN: That's been our goal for the last few years, we just wanted to get rings, and to finally come out with one was pretty amazing. I was just thinking only one team in college baseball goes out on top, and the rest are feeling like we're feeling right now.

It's just tough to go out with a group of brothers that you've been with the last four years. But I guess life goes on.

Q. Coach mentioned you didn't come here, you guys didn't come here to just have a good showing. I know you wanted to win, but two games in a row you fell down early, and what I was most impressed with is the lack of quit. What do you do as leaders to make sure you guys stay up? You were in both of these games until the last out. What do you guys do as leaders to make sure that that energy doesn't fall behind when you guys fall behind?

Indiana State 6, Western Michigan 4.

BILLY GERON: I'll just open with what I told our players at the end of the game, that new beginnings are often disguised as painful endings, and that's what we're experiencing right now, is a painful ending.

But I also reminded them that we're going to get together here shortly, and these two guys will be part of helping us design our championship rings that we more than deserve and more than earned. So I look forward to that opportunity with these two outstanding young men that have been part of my leadership council for a couple of years.

I'll personally thank them in front of you guys today for helping keep the outside out and the inside in, and in today's world that's even more tough to do, but these guys have been incredible ambassadors and will go on and be great Broncos and potential donors. (Laughter.)

Q. Greg, Coach talked about the leadership council yesterday, and as a catcher, it's just intrinsic that you have to take on by your position. Talk about what this year has been like, winning the MAC tournament championship, running through that tournament, and then playing in a regional?

GREG BUDIG: It was a great feeling obviously the whole season. I feel like from a leadership position it's great to be able to see a lot of guys grow over the years and to kind of help them through that, obviously along with the coaching.

But to see guys grow like that and then perform through the tournament like that and come here and play hard, that's what we did. Just really proud, and like Coach said, the catcher you can see the entire field, so you kind of



CADE SULLIVAN: I kind of touched on it a little bit yesterday, just the attitude in the dugout that we're never out of it no matter what the score is, 10-0, if we're down 20-0. You've just got to treat every single pitch like it's a 0-0 ballgame.

When you have that attitude, you can string together at-bats and get runs on the board and make the game close.

GREG BUDIG: I would say it's kind of the mentality we've had all year. Very few times are you just going to be able to come into a game and not going to get punched in the mouth and get hit hard.

Unfortunately the last two days it was early, but if you know it's going to come, you're always ready for it, and you get hit in the mouth and you're going to have to punch back. That's kind of the attitude we've had as a team the last few days and I would say the whole year, as well.

BILLY GERNON: Can I say one thing real quick about these guys? I don't know that this guy has never not had a 4.0 and this guy is a finance major, and they exemplify what leadership is, what the student-athlete is, and academically they've led our team to a 3.5 GPA we're pushing like 12 plus semesters in a row.

These guys for me -- you get into coaching because you want to impact people's lives, and just like anything else, if you give, you usually get more back. I want to publicly thank these guys for having such a profound impact on my life right here in front of everybody. So proud of you guys.

Q. You talked yesterday, again -- similar question. You talked about not coming here to just put on a valiant effort. You wanted to win, and that showed. How do you feel about your performance here today or this weekend?

BILLY GERNON: Well, it's bittersweet, right. It's an oxymoron to be disappointed and proud, but I am those things because there was this expectation and there has been all year. We've actually been training just a lot of different things all year, and one of them was just the adaptability.

Sometimes we wouldn't hang a practice schedule, sometimes we'd hang it and change it and just try to get guys used to the difference, because in the Mac and in the Midwest, it might be sunny on Friday and 50 and you might have four inches of snow on Saturday and you might hit inside, you might hit outside.

I think in the Midwest you really have to be adaptable and

be adjustable and just fight through a lot of things, and what they're saying when you ask about what do we do, well, we're kind of conditioned and trained to that. We hung six straight zeros after we were able to settle the dust, and uniquely we've been hanging our hat on quality starts from Miller and Vlcek, and they've been doing it all year.

I've called these guys boys with beards for many years. They look like men because they're bigger and physical, but they're still young guys, and they make mistakes, and you saw it at the end.

You know how much pain C.J. is in because of that.

But they're just such a special group. For me as a coach to know that you don't have to go down there and light a fire or give a motivational speech in the dugout, that your team is calm and they're poised and they can take punches but you know they're going to be swinging, we did that.

If there's a silver lining in this weekend, that their legacy -- the words in our program are trust, unconditional trust now with the portal, legacy and championships, and their legacy embedded in my soul and on their teammates, and they're going to pass that down.

That's what helps manifest and keep a culture vibrant, when guys like this pass that type of attitude down to the players that are waiting, and that's what makes me feel so good about the guys that I get to coach.

Q. Two pivotal plays in the game. One I think was the runner's interference in the sixth inning, so I want to get your thoughts on that. Then there was a double up on a hard line drive to first base. Really kind of changed the momentum of the game. What were your thoughts on those plays?

BILLY GERNON: Well, even before that we had bases loaded and we were able to draw a walk. The big hit was elusive this weekend. It has not been all year. These three guys, and Greg has had a great offensive year, too, and Dylan, and the numbers we put up, you start to expect the big hit, and we didn't get it.

To your question, though, that led into the L-3, which was a rocket into the double play, which was tough, but I thought the bunt for Harry, you've got to trust the guy in the booth I think in Pittsburgh, but that's not what we saw and that's not how we had it, and Harry was very adamant because this happened to us in the fall when we were playing a fall game and we were shocked by it.

So we spent time in baserunning because we got burned



by it in a fall game, which is what you want to happen, right.

So we worked on that.

Like I told the umpires yesterday when they gave a sportsmanship warning about something that happened, I just said, I trust my player, and I trust my player on this, but they obviously saw it and they made the call, and it was a reviewable call, and that's the way it sits. But that flipped the card big time, and so did the L-3 that C.J. hit.

Even though that kid made a tough mistake that he's going to struggle to get rid of, I think these guys would tell you he's a big reason why we're here, and he's a special, special young man and a great teammate and remarkably coachable. I'm in pain for him because he -- a lot of guys dragged us here, but he was a monumental piece in why we're here.

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