

# College World Series: Lexington Regional

Sunday, June 2, 2024  
Lexington, Kentucky, USA

**Illinois Fighting Illini**

**Dan Hartleb**

**Ryan Moreman**

Postgame Press Conference



Indiana State 13, Illinois 2

DAN HARTLEB: Obviously a difficult day for a number of reasons. One, you come in hoping to get back into a championship game situation, and we weren't able to do that. Then the fact that your season is over makes it that much more difficult.

I thought we competed well. Just made some mistakes today and couldn't overcome them.

**Q. Ryan, you've had a great season, a championship season. Obviously you didn't want it to come to an end like this, but what was it like to play here this weekend with a lot of people from Champaign that made the trip here watching you on a big stage?**

RYAN MOERMAN: Yeah, it was a ton of fun. It was some of the best atmosphere I've ever played in, and I couldn't ask for a better group of guys that we have to do it with and enjoy it with. We had a bunch of fun.

I mean, we didn't end the way we wanted to, but that doesn't take away from everything we did this year.

**Q. What was Indiana State's starter throwing that kind of kept you guys -- they're a potent offense -- kept you guys quiet today? What were you seeing throughout the course of the game? Then talk about your home run in the ninth.**

RYAN MOERMAN: He did a good job commanding both sides of the plate. He had multiple pitches working for strikes. He did a good job.

**Q. Were you sitting on the fastball there in the ninth?**

RYAN MOERMAN: Yeah. I wasn't trying to do anything else but homer.

DAN HARTLEB: Maybe you should try that more often. (Laughter).

RYAN MOERMAN: Yeah.

**Q. Ryan, Dan said last night that he felt a lot of guys were scuffling just because they were trying too hard. Did you get that feeling that guys were kind of pressing and needed to come out loose today?**

RYAN MOERMAN: Yeah, we probably did press a little bit. I don't know, we just kind of got cold, I guess. That happens. We couldn't -- not saying we couldn't hit, but we didn't hit to our full potential.

And it sucks that it happened at this time of the year, but like I said, it doesn't take away from what all those guys did the whole season.

**Q. As a leader on this team with eligibility remaining, how do you build upon this for next year with the guys?**

RYAN MOERMAN: We talked about it at the end of the game today. I think a lot of the younger guys can learn by what we accomplished this year and what the older guys did as leadership. I think we're in a great position for next year with the younger guys seeing what it takes to win at a high level and what needs to be done on and off the field.

**Q. There was a lot of talk in preseason this year about trying to do a little bit better than you have the last couple years. Looking back at what you guys were able to accomplish, how special is it to know that you guys flipped that and got it back on track?**

RYAN MOERMAN: Oh, it was awesome. If you look at how we started this year and you would have told me this is how we would have ended up, I would have been smiling ear to ear. It was great. They had a ton of fun this year. So proud of all the guys and what we accomplished.

**Q. Coach, you won the Big Ten, you don't win seven out of eight Big Ten weekends by accident. What were**



**your thoughts on the overall season? I know it's not the way you wanted it to end, but it's hard to count this as anything but a success.**

DAN HARTLEB: Well, our guys do a great job. It's difficult to win. It doesn't matter at what level. As you said, we won seven out of eight weekends. We had to go into Purdue and win on the road against a good team to clinch a championship. Our guys handled it. They did.

You look at where we were a year ago, you look at where we were after 15 games, and then you look at the fact that we lost some pitching throughout the second half of the year and guys still found a way to win. Special group, so really proud of them.

**Q. Overall just the idea of what you said last night, trying to get the guys loose today, short of the outcome today, did you feel like you were back to being loose a little bit?**

DAN HARTLEB: I don't feel like we were tight at all. When I say that, the entire weekend, because if you watched the way guys went about their business, they were laughing, joking, having fun throughout batting practice, breakfast, lunch. I didn't feel like they were tight from the standpoint of -- sometimes you get tight because you have so much apprehension, and I don't want to say you're afraid, but you're looking at things that could go wrong.

I didn't ever feel that way. You just get momentum at times, and we had a lot of momentum.

Then the last two weeks, who knows why that happens. To win late, you have to be hot. You can see that throughout this entire tournament. You see it in the Big Leagues. You see it in athletics. It's the hot teams that win. For some reason we weren't hot the last two games, so it came to an end for us.

**Q. From a pitching standpoint, Dan, since the season is over, is Cooper going through something injury-wise that didn't allow you to go to him today?**

DAN HARTLEB: He's had some soreness. We've had to manage that for a month. I guess five weeks, somewhere like that.

If you look at our history and my history, I'm not running anybody out there that's not healthy. We'll never do anything to hurt an individual based on my ego. That's not going to happen. It's unfortunate, but it was opportunities for others.

Our guys did a good job. I thought everybody competed.

We had a terrible outing today, and that comes down to you walk a couple guys, you hit a guy, and the biggest play was the fact -- we talk about this all the time -- you have to get an out on a bunt. We didn't get an out and it always leads to a big inning and it just snowballed on us.

You take away that one inning and it's probably a much different game, but you can't take it away.

I didn't think those guys gave in at all. Just unfortunate the way it unfolded, and it's part of the game.

**Q. Coming into the season, knowing how many guys could possibly come back for you and what they accomplished this year, got some signees and transfer portal guys I know you're excited about, to be able to build on this, is there positivity going back home?**

DAN HARTLEB: Absolutely. I tried to stay it out there and I couldn't get it out. Tough endings. But I'm excited about the guys that can come back. I think we'll have a lot that will come back. We have some -- the biggest loss that we're going to have -- there's a lot. You have pieces. When I say the biggest thing, all those pieces with the leadership.

Guys like Ryan Moreman and Payton Hutchings, some of those guys that helped this year, they're going to have to take a bigger chunk of that. It doesn't matter what a coach does from a leadership standpoint. If you don't have leadership in the locker room, you will not be successful.

That's a piece that I don't want to say I'm concerned about but that's a piece that we need to get right. This group coming back is capable of doing it. A lot of different personalities that need to mold together. There's going to be a lot of new pieces coming in because we lose some guys from graduation, and so they're going to have to fit into a certain culture, and we'll have to mold that.

But I'm excited. It's something we need to build on. It's been too long since we've been in the NCAA Tournament. It's an expectation of mine every year and it has to become an expectation of the players. That's when you get things accomplished.

I think we have a chance to be a good team a year from now, but we've got a lot of work to do between now and then.

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