

College World Series: Lexington Regional

Sunday, June 2, 2024

Lexington, Kentucky, USA

Kentucky Wildcats

Coach Nick Mingione

Mason Moore

Émilien Pitre

Grant Smith

Postgame Press Conference



you guys thought you had a chance, (indiscernible) wanted to make it to Omaha. Is it the expectation now or how does it feel compared to a year ago?

GRANT SMITH: I think it's awesome every time. I think both of us or all three of us being here last year, a little bit more experienced. So it felt a little different, but winning it, it still feels the same.

Q. Mason, you got to throw tonight. You ultimately get the win. What's it mean being from here? This is going to be the first time you host a super regional here, and the fans coming out being like they did. But you just being from the state, what's it mean to you to have that opportunity to bring home a win to send, to host a super regional?

MASON MOORE: It means a lot. I'm grateful that Coach Ming and the staff have put their faith in me to go out there and win us a game.

And being from the home state, I just want to go out there, give my best effort and give our team the best chance to win.

Q. Grant, you made a ton of great plays in your time here at Kentucky. I want to know where you rate the one in the outfield tonight on a personal level?

GRANT SMITH: That was pretty good. I don't know where I would rank it, definitely top two or three probably. Just a crazy play. I honestly don't even remember. I kind of blacked out. I thought me and Waldy were going to collide, so I'm grateful that didn't happen, and just the feel he had to see me go after the ball. But yeah, good play.

Q. What was going through your head on the seventh inning home run? Did you think it was gone or what were you sitting on?

ÉMILIE PITRE: I had two strikes. With two strikes we have a team approach -- backing up the ball. And that's what I did. And fortunately I hit the ball hard enough for it to go over the fence.

Kentucky - 5, Indiana State - 0

NICK MINGIONE: I want to congratulate Mitch and Indiana state. What an amazing team -- what they've been able to accomplish the last two years.

And I told Mitch this. He's as good a coach as anybody we've coached against this year.

What he's done with this team, with his program, what he's gotten out of his players, that's a really good team.

Proud of our guys. I'm just so thankful for the BBN. We have a saying in our program that we do not move. And when that weather came in and it started raining, and I looked out there, our fans did the same thing. They didn't move. They held their ground and they just waited.

So thankful for them. Thankful for our staff. I thought James did a great job with the weather. It's not an easy thing. I want to thank Scott Geisinger, his staff, the operations staff. We made the right decisions with the weather and that can be tricky. So thankful for them.

My heart is just filled with gratitude for Mitch Barnhart and Tim Bernal and our administration, all the way down to our coaches, our staff, our players and the Big Blue Nation. Just proud of them. Proud of them.

To win three of these in seven seasons, after having zero in, I don't know, a hundred and how many years, I'm just so thankful for past players, coaches, staff and everybody. This one's for you, Big Blue Nation. Thank you.

Q. Does this feel different than last year? Obviously



Q. Mason, have you been sick? There's been some talk that you weren't feeling real well in the last 24 hours?

MASON MOORE: It kind of hit me yesterday right before the game in the morning I had a stomach bug. Richie (phonetic) and the trainer, they got me right. They put two bags of IVs in my arm yesterday. And I actually didn't watch the game much; I was at the house resting up.

They got me right. All thanks to them. And they got me ready for today.

Q. Mason, 20 and a third innings in the tournament you haven't given up a run. What about these situations makes you pitch the way you did today?

MASON MOORE: It's really the defense. When you have guys like Grant and Petie and Nicholson and Mitch out there and Waldy, everybody, it's easy to go out there and pound the zone and let them make plays for me.

Q. Grant, I don't know if you remember this, but you told me first of the year, there were guys coming back, some new faces. You thought you all could be better this year. Obviously you've made more accomplishments. But why do you think this team -- nothing against last year's -- but how did you guys improve?

GRANT SMITH: That's a good question. I felt it, I think we all felt it from day one, just how close the guys started to become and how much we were pulling for each other. There's definitely uncommon selflessness about this team, much like last year's team. And I think that's why we were both able to be successful.

But just the depth the team has, the commitment to winning this team has, I think will go -- I think it's paid off pretty well.

Q. And did Waldy call for that ball at all or was it yours all the way?

NICK MINGIONE: He told me, take it, take it, take it. I don't know if you heard that. You said you blacked out but --

GRANT SMITH: I originally, right off the bat, I heard Nolan say, G, take it. And so I full speed go. But the crowd was loud enough that I couldn't hear Waldy at all. So just running through my mind I was either going to get knocked out by Waldy or make the catch. Fortunately I made it.

NICK MINGIONE: That's exactly what's amazing about

this team. Think about what he just said; he was going to get knocked out. He was going to do everything to get an out. He wasn't scared. He was fearless. It was amazing.

Q. Nick talked about it, you've talked about the crowds. The crowds you've gotten down the stretch and here for this regional. Do you have any kind of feel what it's going to be like next week and how much you are looking forward to have this fan --

GRANT SMITH: It was awesome. The second half of the season, the whole season, honestly, just so special with BBN. And tonight was incredible. I can't remember that feeling of having a crowd like that.

But those stands in the outfield are awesome, and BBN showing out and filling them up. Next weekend should be even more fun.

ÉMILIE PITRE: I'm seeing 5800 right there as the attendance. It felt like 10,000. I can't imagine what it's going to feel like next weekend.

Q. Émilien, you got that big hit today. But yesterday you made that fantastic play, also snagging that liner, doubling the guy up. Do you get more pride out of defense, offense?

ÉMILIE PITRE: I'd say it's about equal. I personally think I'm a defensive player over an offensive player. But, yeah, I feel like I do enough on both sides of the ball to help the team win.

Q. Émilien, following up on that, did you know when the ball left your bat, did it feel like a homer? It barely cleared. At what point did you think maybe this is going to go out?

ÉMILIE PITRE: When I saw the left fielder backing up. He had no clue where the fence was behind him. He kept backing up, and I thought, that has a chance.

I saw G, he wanted to tag. I had to (indiscernible) for me not to pass him. But, no, right off the bat, I knew I got it good, but I didn't know it was going over the fence right away.

Q. You guys turned that double play there in the middle, made that diving catch. Seemed like (indiscernible) the fans, (indiscernible) spark from that moment? I know it was an exciting moment for you guys, but could you kind of feel that, the team and fans getting into it at that point when you turned the double play?

GRANT SMITH: Definitely, I was feeling it with all the chants, how loud they were. But that obviously elevated it. Throughout the whole game, just continued to do it.

ÉMILIE PITRE: I had a flashback because first game of the season, G and me made the same exact play. So I thought about (indiscernible). But I had a flashback there. It was awesome.

Q. Mason, you mentioned you didn't even watch the game yesterday, resting up. When did you know you were actually going to be able to go? And how much doubt was there yesterday that you would even be ready to go?

MASON MOORE: There was a little doubt I wasn't able to go because how bad I was in the morning. But like I said, the trainers did a really good job of getting me healthy. Like I said, I went home and just rested. The coaches, they made me leave.

I wanted to stay and watch the game but the trainers, they made me leave. I kinda knew this morning that I was able to go, even last night because I was feeling back to normal. So I give all the credit to the trainers and the staff; they got me right last night.

NICK MINGIONE: Can I add to that. I just pulled it up on my phone, that's what I was looking for. At 7:36 my phone goes off. It's a text message from Mason. This is what he said: "Here we go!" That's what he said. "Just to update you, I'm feeling better and back to normal. I'm ready to throw and win us a ball game tomorrow, Coach."

That's what he said. That's what he said. Want to know my reply? "Got it. Get some rest. I can't wait to watch you," in all caps, "dominate tomorrow. Call me if you need anything."

I went to bed knowing, it made me feel real good. I slept real good. But he might have known before but what's that say, 7:38. It was exactly 7:38.

MASON MOORE: I waited until after the game.

Q. Mason, how much does adrenaline help carry you through when you're not feeling your best and everything being on the line in this game?

MASON MOORE: It was huge tonight. I could tell a little bit in warmups I wasn't feeling the greatest. But like BBN showing out really, and family and friends coming out, really wanting me to perform good.

I think that helps out with adrenaline because I wasn't

obviously at my best. I think with all that it helped me get through the game today.

Q. Émilien, earlier this year, you did a mid-game interview with us and we asked you about being down here from Canada to play and what your message was for the folks back home. And you said come down to Kentucky and check out Kentucky baseball. What do you think they're saying north of the border now about Kentucky baseball, what's the message?

ÉMILIE PITRE: All good things. My parents got a chance to come down about three weeks ago. It was awesome. They felt so welcomed by everyone, and they tell me every day how proud they are of me.

And they're super grateful of what I've accomplished here. And they're super grateful of all the people that support me here.

Q. Are there UK fans now in Quebec? Are they wearing your gear?

ÉMILIE PITRE: I see my grandparents wearing shirts, but hopefully we're getting more fans in Lexington.

Q. Mason, you worked out of a lot of jams tonight. What do you think about your stuff allows you to never give up that big hit today?

MASON MOORE: It just kind of reminded me of last year in regionals. When I get in jams like that I have to make one pitch. And I think that's what I did good tonight.

And when you have a defense like we have, I wasn't afraid to make the pitch down the middle or where I needed to. I think that's what helped me out the most tonight was just trusting my defense, trusting the guys behind me and knowing they'll make plays.

NICK MINGIONE: I do want to take a minute to talk about these three guys because Mason, what he's been able to do for us and to watch his growth, from him being in high school, sending us videos of him dunking, and me wondering, better show some videos of striking some dudes out (laughter).

Just the commitment and the growth that he has shown and how much better he's gotten. I mean, he has the clutch gene. You guys know that. And to have a guy from Kentucky do this two years in a row, two years in a row -- to have somebody from his state school that bleeds blue. He and his family have been awesome.

And Pete, to go from -- he was 130 pounds when we

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

committed. 130 pounds. How much do you weigh now?

ÉMILIE PITRE: About 190.

NICK MINGIONE: He weighs 190. To watch his growth. It was during the COVID era. He left, moved from home. Didn't live at home, and trained. Just ate and got bigger, faster and stronger. Got four at-bats as a freshman.

In a day and age where people just leave in the transfer portal, he did not do that. He sat there, coached first base, served our team, and just waited his turn.

And then a year later, Second-Team All-SEC. And you saw what he's been able to do for us. He's as good a player as I've ever coached. Coached 26 guys to make it to the Big Leagues. He's as good as any player I've ever coached because he's focused, he cares, and he's honest. He's really honest.

He's brutally honest with our team, our players, himself. He can self-evaluate himself as good as any player. And it's a gift.

And you saw it the last two days how he can literally impact the game on every single level. Even in the first inning he draws a walk, they try to pick, the ball gets away. What's he do, he ends up at third base and he's barely safe. The threat of the stolen base got him that and his speed got us that got us on the board because he got a sac fly, every hit. He impacts the game at every level.

For Grant, there's nobody that's ever met Grant that doesn't look back and go, man, what a dude. What a dude.

I want to tell you a story about Grant. He shows up to my son's school to read to little kids. And one of the people who works at the school says, hey, my son is a huge baseball fan. What's his name? Grant.

And he says, hey, he might be a little shy. Can you maybe sign something for him. And Grant's, like, does he go to school here. She goes, yeah. He's like, let's go find him.

So Grant seeks this little boy out and signs something for him and just talks to him. Fast-forward a couple of weeks later, that boy shows up to our game. And Grant's, like, hey, Grant, how are you? And the kid is just baffled that Grant remembered his name. So Grant gives him a baseball.

Okay. Well, that's the game that Grant hurt his hamstring. But would you know that kid waited after the game and Grant Smith wasn't happy with how nice of a baseball he

gave that kid. So Grant, when he could have been feeling sorry for himself, what did he do? He got him a better baseball and gave it to the kid. And that kid cherishes this baseball.

And I want to tell you something, his mom ran into me and said, "Would you mind if I could reach out to Grant's parents?" I was like I maybe have their phone number. I don't know how I feel about that. I said I can relay any message. They said I just want to tell his parents that they did it. They raised a kid that I want my kid to be like.

And then you watch what he does on the field today. It's truly amazing. He's an amazing person, and he deserves every bit of success he gets.

So I'm proud of these guys, all three of them -- and our entire team.

Guys, there were so many stories like that that I could share about these guys. It is a special team, regardless of whatever happens. They did it, just like that mom said, they did it. Proud of them.

Q. A guy we haven't even touched on is Cam O'Brien, after Mason gets out, Nove comes in, gets big outs. And Cam strikes out five of the nine guys he faced. How big was he?

NICK MINGIONE: He was amazing. I thought Jackson did his job. Jackson got the three guys. They had the run of lefties right there at the bottom; I know you knew that. It was perfect. He was going to face those three, and Cam is going to go to the top.

He did -- Jackson Nove did his job. And Cam, I mean Cam had the look tonight. He had the energy. He rammed multiple pitches in the strike zone. That's a guy that's thrown a lot of college baseball games.

We looked at, we met as a staff today. What do you think? He's doing good, keep going. Keep going. We had good arms in the bullpen that we could have brought in, too, but he was throwing the ball so well.

And we needed it. But we had other guys behind him that would have had his back but he was special tonight.

Q. You said to the crowd, we're not done. Does this feel different than the last two, or the expectations are obviously higher? But what are the emotions going into next weekend, knowing it's going to be here and you're No. 2 seed --

NICK MINGIONE: I just keep going back to my heart being



filled with the amount of gratitude. And the reason why I said we're not done yet is because we have another game. And whoever it's going to be, whoever we're going to play, we know it's going to be a great opponent.

We'll respect them, but this one does feel different because we've been able to do it two years in a row. I think anytime you have a team that can experience something and to be able to do it again, I also notice that our team didn't dogpile. They just high-fived and they made it feel different.

And we've always said that the path to Omaha, the easiest path is through your home field. And we're, again, for the third time in seven seasons we're two wins away, and it's going to take a total team effort. It's going to take the BBN to show up just like they did regardless of the weather. That was amazing.

Reminded me a little bit of '17 when we had to clear the stadium, not as much lightning and thunderstorms. But yes, it does feel different.

Q. You talked about the other day in the interview on the SEC Network about how far you guys have brought this program post-COVID. When you have a chance to host this super regional, taking this program to places it's never been, does it kind of make it feel more special that you went through some of those tougher times and everybody stuck around with you, and you guys made it through it? And now you're getting to see the fruit from that?

NICK MINGIONE: Coach Madison is our former head coach of 25 years. And he leads our coaching staff in a bible study every week. He's taught me a lot of unbelievable lessons. And he said, he talked about valleys, and he said, you're in one of three situations: Either you're in a valley going through a hard time, as you mentioned, in '19, '20 and '21, you're in the valley. You just got out of the valley, (indiscernible) have to go into the valley. You're one of those three. And be ready and be on guard.

And there's no question in '19, '20, '21, we were in the valley. And it was amazing group of people, committed people. We made adjustments.

I mentioned that COVID, it was really hard for a lot of people, and I actually used that time to evaluate every area of our program. And I believe that feedback is the breakfast of champions. And I called former players and asked them about me, what the players thought about me, our culture, what I could do better.

I met with some. I got some really tough feedback. And things I didn't, quite frankly, want to hear. But I believe the feedback is breakfast of champions, I made adjustments, we made adjustments on how we recruit, how we evaluate, what fits into the ballpark.

And it took time and it took effort and intentional energy by a lot of people. But we believe that we had come out of that valley, and we had to get feedback, a lot of us, all of us involved in the program at that time. And some of it was not what we wanted to hear. But more importantly it wasn't what we wanted to hear but it's what we needed to hear. And we made adjustments.

And I will tell you this, everything rises and falls on leadership. And there's a man (indiscernible) by me and the rest of the coaches who believed in us. And his name is Coach Barnhart. When other people maybe didn't see it and didn't understand.

I'm forever grateful to him for what he's done to bless my family and this program. When he said we don't move, he didn't move. And he did not flinch. And we made adjustments. And I'm just thankful.

Q. I don't know if it was the fifth or the sixth inning, but Mason starts out walking, I think, two guys. Start hearing murmurs in the crowd -- two (indiscernible) leash, get him out. You knew you had the guy for the job. Why was Mason able to work out of that situation?

NICK MINGIONE: Because he's been there. And he's been there. And the thing about Mason is whenever somebody gets on, he's just literally one pitch away from a double play. That's what he does. He produces ground balls when he's at his best.

And he produces weak contact. Those are a couple things he does. And this is a team with tremendous power. And the way we were going to win was by keeping the ball in the ballpark.

So I give Coach Roszel a lot of credit. He's called this tournament. He's done unbelievable about calling pitches, evaluating the opposing teams, how to attack them, along with the other coaches; they've done a great job.

But even after the fifth, I was thinking a lot like other people. I'm like, okay, he's at 88 pitches. If he goes the next inning, we're going to get him over a hundred. After everything he went through yesterday, all of that was going through my mind.

I look at him, he goes, he's going back out there. He's like,

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he's got to give us another inning. And he was so confident. I'm, like, he's going back out there. He needs to give us another inning. Sure enough, it was the right call.

And his confidence and belief in Mason, Coach Roszel, I thought that had a lot to do with it. And Mason having been there, done that. To be able to draw on that experience like he said earlier, just like last year, I've had to dig deep. And I just know he's one pitch away, and he was able to do that.

Q. You've already been asked a few times about how this feels different. You even touched on it. But for you as a coach how do you balance telling guys, hey, celebrate this, this is an accomplishment while balancing hey we don't play this just to get to the regional; we've got bigger goals? How do you balance as a coach getting that message across?

NICK MINGIONE: This facility is an amazing facility, and my favorite thing about this facility is actually the people in it. You can have a building, a beautiful building and facility. But if you don't have the right people on the inside, what good is it?

And all of the graphics and everything in this facility was intentionally placed in the spots that they were in. And a guy by the name of Kevin Saal, a good friend of mine who was here; he's now the athletic director at Wichita State. We sat down and looked at every wall and everything. And we knew that when they came in in this classroom -- that's what we call this, our classroom because we believe we're teachers and we're trying to teach them and trying to lead them.

We made that decision, when they walk through that wall, the first thing they would see is the Kentucky sign. And when they got to their seats they would see that sign. That was placed there intentionally for them to be a reminder that it was all about Kentucky. And as they walked to their seats, the goal was to go there and eventually be national champions.

So that's what our goal is. That's what the goal is. And I'm just thankful to be in this position. But they understand the goal. If you were to ask our players what the goal on the field was, they would tell you that our goal was to be national champions. This was one step.

And anytime you can win a championship of any kind -- obviously we won the SEC; we're now a regional champion -- these are experiences that they'll never forget. And as a coach it brings me the greatest joy to watch them celebrate and have experiences that they'll never forget.

And because of that, they'll have a bond with these guys and they'll be in each other's weddings and do all that. So that gives me peace. That gives me peace and happiness for them.

Q. When you look at a guy like Ryan Nicholson, transfers here from Cincinnati in the offseason, maybe doesn't get off to the start that he wanted, but gets red hot. Hit his 20th home run tonight, the most by a player since you've been here. And now he's named Most Outstanding Player in the regional. Just some thoughts on him how far he's come as a player here.

NICK MINGIONE: Number one, again, a guy from Kentucky, from Louisville, Kentucky playing for his state school. It's just awesome. It's awesome. And the thing about Ryan is he always believed in himself. He knew that he didn't a lot of times get off to good starts, but he fully believed in himself, and there was a time where he was going through a hard time. I met with the coaches and I said I'm going to meet with Ryan. I need to talk to him individually. Ryan doesn't know this.

I said I want to check his heart. I just want to make sure that his heart is right. And we had an amazing conversation. And I went back and I'm, like, guys, he's going to be fine. That guy needs to be our first baseman -- and for a lot of reasons.

Think about the way he impacted the game defensively today. What about the play he made down the line in the third? What about the pick that he made on the ground ball to Daly? What about the pick he made yesterday on the play up the middle with Grant? He's impacted the game in so many ways.

And his defense was amazing. And he takes the good kind of pride in his defense.

So the two things that have happened to our team, when Waldy offensively got to the spot where he was in the lineup full time, that changed. And then when Ryan started hitting the ball over the fence, it changed our lineup. Those two things have changed our lineup as much as anything.

Q. Nick, you were talking about adjustments. It occurred to me the kids who came in, could have been anybody, but Kentucky kid, you've got a recruit from out of town, and then you've got a kid from the portal. You kind of mixed and matched and that concoction has worked again. Is that the adjustment, one of the adjustments you looked for for each of last two years? Seemed like that's fallen into place.

NICK MINGIONE: You bring up a good point. You're



exactly right. The foundation of our recruiting has to be from high school student-athletes. That has to be the foundation. And as we evaluate our team each year, there's a lot of factors. There's the draft that we try to deal with. There's the transfer portal.

I'm really proud of our program because the fewest players go into the portal as any team in our league. I think that says a lot about them. And obviously what our needs are. When you're dealing with graduation, draft, and the portal allows you -- one of the things we wanted to do was be old. And we believe if we continue to develop our high school student-athletes and then we were able to mix and match and get some guys out of the portal, that would be a good recipe and formula.

When we were here in the first time, in '06, as you remember, we won the SEC the first year we were here. That was awesome. We had our first regional. We weren't able to win, but we hosted one.

And I always remember John (indiscernible) talking about how we had to have edge and toughness. And we wanted to be old. At that time we did a lot of junior college players. If you think about all the great junior college players that came through our program, even back then with Coffee (phonetic) and Streebe (phonetic). These guys were all part of us trying to be old as well.

So the fact we've been able to do that and develop our guys and the guys have been patient, and to mix in the portal, that's been one of the adjustments we learned and we decided over COVID.

Q. Do you still hashtag Omaha every time?

NICK MINGIONE: No, I changed it to "Go, Cats." I changed it to, Go, Cats. But that first year, you're exactly right, that's how we ended -- you did a great job with that documentary -- but no more hashtag Omaha -- Go, Cats. Go, Cats. And when I do the social media, I always do "We Are UK," because I want to remind them that it's bigger than ourselves. Our baseball program is about the university.

Q. You don't even need to do that anymore because they're thinking of that.

NICK MINGIONE: That's right. Good point.

Q. You had the mic again after the players talked and got dunked and I don't know if it shorted out or. Who pays for the mic that's broken? What did you have (indiscernible) BBN?

NICK MINGIONE: I just wanted -- who pays for the mic? I'll pay for it because it did stop working. I told Greg, I'm, like, the mic is not working.

I just wanted to thank them one more time, and I wanted our players to give them a round of applause. As they lifted us up, I wanted our players to just give it back to them instead of them just receiving it. I wanted them to give it back to them for us to show their appreciation. I wanted them to tip their caps to them and just thank them.

Q. One of the players that you had speak to the crowd tonight, meant a lot to your program, was your catcher. What's he meant to this team and what has he meant the last few games going forward?

NICK MINGIONE: We wouldn't be where we're at without Devin Burkes. I can look you in the eye as a man and tell you we wouldn't be where we are without Devin Burkes. He's an extension of the coaching staff. He's tough, he's competitive.

I had that guy today with runners on base. I make a note in the tally. 10 different times the ball hit the dirt and Devin kept the game in front of him -- 10, 10, 10 times. He either blocked it or picked it -- 10.

What about the play that got behind him and he flips it and Mason is there, and the guy had to stop.

Q. What kind of composure does that help your pitcher have that he knows he has that, maybe a follow-up pitch following up a play like that that knows he's got my back on a play like that?

NICK MINGIONE: You bring up a good point because in the game of baseball trust is so good and it's so important. And you've heard me. You know I like quotes. You know I like quotes.

Someone once said it's more of a compliment to be trusted than loved. It's more of a compliment to be trusted than loved. And you heard that guy at the end of that table, Mason Moore said, I trusted my defense.

So when we have two strikes and we know that the way we're going to strike this guy out is throw the ball in the dirt, guess who he has to trust. Devin.

Guess who they trust. His energy tonight, I believe in my heart he willed our pitching staff to do things that, quite frankly, maybe they didn't know if they had it in them. And they don't want to let that guy down.

So in '22, we made three adjustments. We started



catching Devin more. We put Nick Ammirati in the dugout to spend more time with the positional players, and I started coaching third. And from that day forward, it's been pretty good.

And Devin, amazing guy, amazing leader. He lights up the coaching staff, the offices every day. He comes by every day. He does not miss.

As a matter of fact, this is amazing. This guy is contagious. Yesterday I'm talking to a recruit. And he says to me, he's a pitcher, and he said, Coach, your catcher is amazing. All the things that he does back there, he goes, that guy's obviously getting drafted. What's the plan next year? Because if I come, I want to make sure we have another catcher like that. He goes I've always wanted to throw to a guy like that.

So then I went on to explain to them about how he's an extension of us. We want him to come by the office every day. He meets with Coach Roszel. They talk about everything that's happening in bullpens, what cues they have, where do we need to give targets, all of that.

That's what he does. He literally is ate up with baseball. And, whoo, the guy's amazing, the guy's amazing. We don't win tonight and we're not in this position without that guy. I'm 100 percent confident I can look you in the eye as a man.

Q. It seems like you could say that about eight or nine guys on your roster right now.

NICK MINGIONE: The amount of -- guys, we've got good players on our bench that aren't playing that have just committed to just do whatever they can to help Kentucky. You guys see Mitch Daly on defense? Every pitch, that guy, he just empties the tank. We saw Grant, we saw Pete, Nicholson, Waldy, James, Nolan. It is a team full of guys that love each other and they understand how to win.

Every team has to go through three phases. Number one, you gotta learn how to compete; number two, you gotta learn how to win; and number three, you gotta learn how to deal with winning. But the foundation is competitive. This is a competitive team, a competitive team.

And, yes, they have fun. But number one, their foundation is competitive. And it's been a joy to be around, guys. They've been unbelievable. They've been unbelievable. And I'm looking forward to spending more days with them.

Q. Statistician Corey Price on Twitter shared that it had been 138 games since Indiana State had been shut out. What does it mean to you that your pitching staff

was kind of able to break such a long streak like that?

NICK MINGIONE: I say all the time that we're just a bunch of dogs. That's what they are. They are a bunch of dogs. And they wanted to win. Pitching, defense, the only way you're going to do that is you have to make plays because they put balls in play and they're going to hit balls hard. They're going to make plays.

I mean, look at what they did in the first game. They're an amazing team. That's why I started out, my press conference, this press conference about them because they're an amazing team. What we just did to a team like that, that is not easy.

But I will tell you this, I believe that our team is filled with a bunch of dogs. Thank you so much for being here. Go, Cats.

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