

Indiana vs. Louisville Postgame Press Conference

Elimination Game | NCAA Louisville Regional | Jim Patterson Stadium

Indiana Head Coach Jeff Mercer (Opening Statement): “It’s been a great year. When you look at what this group was able to accomplish, you look at guys like Matt Lloyd and Drew Ashley, we were preseason 4th or 5th in the conference. We lost a couple key players in the draft last year, lost a couple good returning players to injury. We lost our Sunday starter to an injury, had two new starters in a weekend and started five freshmen and sophomores every day. These guys just went out and they worked their butts off and they invested and they bought into a new coaching staff and a different system. They worked really hard, they believed when there wasn’t a lot of reason to -- necessarily from a preseason expectation standpoint -- new guys not knowing them. And they went out and achieved so many wonderful things, they did so many great things. We’re just very thankful. I know our coaching staff is, I know personally my family and I are. We’ll never be able to repay the debt that we owe to players like Matty. I’ll spend the rest of my life and never be able to repay that debt and certainly our program never will forget the guys that are moving on. We’re just very appreciative and thankful and proud overall.”

Indiana Players

(On Matt Lloyd’s last game and career) Matt Lloyd: “It’s gone well, I think. As a whole. Obviously, working with the new guys. It was tough at the beginning, but we made adjustments and... just very proud of myself and the whole team.”

(On coming back, scoring runs, staying in the game) Matt Lloyd: “I mean, it just comes down to character. Never say die. And just fighting tooth and nail ‘till the last pitch every single pitch of the game.”

(At the final out there, the two teams had to be separated. Was something said between you?) Matt Lloyd: “I just think it was a heated moment. Questionable call, and the tension was high and just emotions boiled over a little bit.”

(About team’s ability to overachieve this season) Matt Lloyd: “Just the character of our staff. Coach Mercer, especially. It’s just easy to trust what they’re saying and everybody on the team was willing to work with them, buy in, and you saw how far that carried us. And we were just that close today, too. So just the character of the coaching staff is unbelievable and just so easy to trust what they’re talking about.”

(On moving forward to next season) Drew Ashley : “Well, I think you saw it the whole season. We just got better and better as the season went. We didn’t start off super great, and then as the as the season went on we just got stronger and went back to work every single day. So, I’m pretty confident in saying that’ll continue next year. We’ll just continue to build off what we started this year.”

(On getting down to Louisville 6-0 in the regular season game and then going to extra innings.) Matt Lloyd: “I just think that that’s something that’s always a possibility for us. You saw it against Illinois State, too. We were down but we’re never out of a ballgame. That’s the whole mindset.”

(On Drew Ashley playing second base almost the entire season) Drew Ashley: “Not really, I’ve just got to compete everywhere I can. I pride myself in being able to play all over the field. And so wherever we have the most responsibility to get the right guys in there we have to make the best of it that we can to give us the best chance to win the ballgame.”

Coach Jeff Mercer

(On the ejection) Coach Jeff Mercer: I don’t know what was said at the meeting with the pitcher and the umpires and it is not my place to speak on what on was said that caused the immediate ejection. The umpire will have to answer to that. But the reality is, and you can look at the video, I am a subdued guy I am pretty level-headed. Both of our base coaches are very level headed, subdued guys, the pitch just bounced. You can look at the video. I am not just saying something that is untrue or controversial. It bounced. When you have a game like this that has so much on the line, so much at stake to make a call like that to end guys’ college careers, end their baseball careers period. And other guys end their college careers and go on to the next level and so it is going to be heated and guys are going to be upset. They have a job to do, I have a job to do. They get paid to do their jobs. I get paid to do my job and you have to be able to execute and get held to a high standard. It is going to be an emotional situation when those type of things happen.

(About moving forward) Jeff Mercer: “We are very fortunate to be in a place like Indiana where you have such a large fan base. I didn’t personally do that. But it is nice to have that level of support across the state and the country. For us, we have to go back to work. We have to get better in all phases of the game. The game will be decided on the details of the game. Our inability early in the game to hit with runners in scoring position, our defensive miscues that were not necessarily errors but we threw to the advancing base today allowing the backside guys to move up. With the runner on second and the runner stealing third and we took too long to get rid of the ball from second to first base and they advanced to home plate. You have the details of the program and you have to be able to not only build the fundamentals of it but the details and the intricacies inside the game. We have to become more physical. We have to be bigger, stronger and faster. We have more electric stuff on the mound and more dominant stuff on the mound. We have to be able to go toe-to-toe with athlete for athlete. So if you look at it, the bigger, stronger, faster team wins. That is the way of sports, whether it is in basketball, baseball, football. We have to get more athletic and we have to be more fundamental. We have done a good job building that base. It has to be built upon and understood and applied. We have to get better physically in all aspects of the game. That will allow us to focus more on the details of the game.”

(On struggles of starting pitchers) “I think at the beginning of the week, it was more about the emotions of the moment that we did not handle too well. That was something we did a better job today with but again it held us back because we didn’t execute early in the game. If you look, statistically every pitch is of equal value – the first pitch and the last pitch – there is no different value in those pitches. We could have handled the moment better. If you look at those guys, they worked really hard and had good stuff. The scouting report gets out, the video gets out. We have diversify the pitches, but you have execute those things. It is easier to build an offense over the course of a season than it is to build a pitching staff over the course of a season. Because you only have so many bullets. If you run out of bullets and the stuff isn’t quite as good or not executed quite as well and everyone is putting together video and game plans to attack that game plan. Offensively, you can coach and coach and get better through the course of the year offensively. There is a combination of those things, we have to be able to sustain that stuff and execute those pitches. It is normal when our pitching, I don’t want to be disrespectful because it is good, our second pitcher is an All-American with really good stuff. Baseball is evolving, so if it is not 94-96 with a wipeout, it will be hard to sustain over three or four months of time. So you have to rely on the growth of your bullpen, which is what we transitioned more into this year was the growth of Gabe Bierman, Alex Franklin, Brady Scott, as those guys transitioned more so we were able to utilize them more as different looks throughout the course of the game. As you can see, that was more of our game plan. Our starting pitchers did a great job and our pitching coach is an absolute star – one of the best in the industry and he did a really good job of handling that staff, who had so many good starts. That is just asking a lot of guys to do it over and over with so much information out there to be had.”

(On what recourse he has as a coach regarding the umpire) “Oh yes, I will handle that. I will handle that. I will talk to tournament director, the site directors, and the umpires. It will be handled in a professional way. Just like if I had done something unbecoming or unprofessional, there are repercussions and courses to hold me accountable. And the same thing in place and thankfully, because everyone wants the game to work smoothly. Everybody wants to get the calls right, coaches, administrators, the umpire association, everybody wants to do the best job they can do. That is why there are checks and balances for me and our players and the umpires as well.”

(On the balk call) Jeff Mercer: “He didn’t give an explanation. I would assume he didn’t come set at the bottom. He bounced at the bottom of it. It happened so quickly and my head was turned toward the outfield, making sure they were in position, and it happened. I just assumed he bounced at the bottom and didn’t come to a complete stop. It is a call that you would like to see called with more parity across the board, either that is a balk or it’s not going to be a balk. Because when you go to try to run and steal bases, that is what is utilized against us a lot. When I was at Wright State, we were always the top two or three in the country in stolen bases. So you would see this when we tried to steal bases, you would see guys do that a lot – quick off the ground and won’t come set. When we were really cooking offensively, they will do that. They will balk and quick pitch and try to jump a fastball past you. We just need to come to a conclusion on whether we have to come to a stop or we don’t and then we have to call it across the board. I am not saying that he did that on the play, he may very well have. I didn’t see it, but that play in general is one that could use some examination. What is the standard process across the board.”