

Louisville vs. UIC
NCAA Baseball Louisville Regional
Jim Patterson Stadium
May 31, 2019

Louisville Coach Dan McDonnell (Opening Statement) “Real happy for our guys. That’s NCAA tournament baseball. Those guys are good and they deserve to be here. Obviously, I hope their catcher, Josh, is okay. He took a tough spill right there by our dugout. I didn’t get to see it, but I heard it. Man, they played hard. You have to tip your hats to them. You have to earn everything in the postseason. It wasn’t easy tonight, but we earned it, and we did enough to win. It’s not about being pretty, and it’s not about playing perfect baseball at this time of year. You just compete, and grind it out, and do enough to win, and survive and advance. We get to come back Louisville Coach Dan McDonnell tomorrow and play tomorrow afternoon.”

Louisville Players

(On getting back on the field after the ACC Tournament) Danny Oriente: “Going through that at bat, I was just trying to hit that ball with two strikes. I kind of let it up slow obviously, I kind of made a mistake. I just tried to put a good swing on it. Wind was blowing up, so it just worked out. It worked out.”

(On coming backing from his injury) Nick Bennett: “I was just trying to get a bounce back today. Pitching behind the guys that were playing defense, it was just something that was really easy to do when have (Justin) Lavey and Tyler Fitzgerald, and everyone behind me making plays and it makes it a lot easier. I think pitching is about confidence, and I regained my confidence tonight.”

(On the impact of pitching coach Roger Williams) Bennett:: “Coach Williams, I’ve never heard him say this before but he told me, ‘good vibes.’ Good vibes is what we went with and I think we had good vibes the rest of the game.”

(On starting to feel like something switched)

Bennett: “You know, after giving up two home runs, obviously that’s never something you want to do, so just being able to bounce back from that and compete, you know, Coach Mac talks about competing and setting an example for other guys and I just think I was bringing the energy today. Even though I gave up two home runs, I still think we bounced back as a team, absolutely.”

Louisville Coach Dan McDonnell

(On why nobody was warming up)

Dan McDonnell: “We just weren’t playing great behind him. He really wasn’t that bad. I was probably most disappointed that... we talk about, especially with good teams, which everybody in the postseason is a good team, you can only give them three outs in an inning. When you don’t make some plays, you give good teams four outs, or maybe five outs, you’re destined to give up runs. We just didn’t play real clean early on. Of course, we made a great play to get off the field, to end the inning. You felt like Nick was pitching pretty good. A couple balls, he got up and they put some good swings on it. You saw, after that, once he settled in and got the offense going and he got into a groove. We had the confidence that he was going to get it going, I wish we had played a little cleaner behind him. This time of the year, you just compete, just move on. There’s nothing you can do about it—just move on to the next play.”

(On seeing him change patterns) Dan McDonnell: “I just think everybody thinks pitchers are establishing the fastball early. I think that they know that, good hitters know that, and they were ready to hit his fastball. They put some good swings on it, but one of Nick’s strengths is... a lot of pitchers, once you get the breaking ball going for a strike, it’s tough to hit. Hitting is the toughest thing in all of sports. When a pitcher shows the ability to throw that breaking ball, first strike, now it’s hard. You almost have to guess. Once he settled in, that was fun to watch.”

(On McAvine coming in to close) Dan McDonnell: “His closer numbers aren’t super gaudy, we felt like we’ve had multiple closers this year. That’s why we ran (Michael) Kirian, back out there, because you saw how good Kirian looked in the eighth. Sometimes you don’t want to over-coach and keep changing guys. Let’s just let Michael Kirian run out there and finish this thing. But then, a leadoff walk is the kiss of death in the ninth. Give their hitter a lot of credit for a

backside double down the right field line. That is just a really good at-bat. At that point, they have a ton of momentum so at that point you say, let's change it up here because they have some mojo going off of Kirian, and now they all believe that they are able to do that. So, it is great to have the luxury of going to a (Michael) McAvene in that situation. We are the home team. My message to McAvene was even if they score the two runs, there is nobody out. There are no free passes. They have to earn it. If they earn it, we tip our hat and we will win this in the bottom of the ninth, but no way are we giving them free passes. Just to reinforce him to trust his stuff and go at them."

(On dealing with McAvene's fast ball) Dan McDonnell: "I think that's a big boost to this team this year: our bullpen with those guys you saw tonight—(Bryan) Hoeing, Kirian, McAvene—and we have other guys, so that is a good feeling. Right now, we have (Adam) Elliott and Luke Smith and Jared Poland still out there. This is tournament baseball. Those guys will be able to bounce back. We are looking forward to a real tough game tomorrow."