

Louisville vs. Illinois State
NCAA Baseball Regional Final
Jim Patterson Stadium | June 3, 2019

Louisville Head Coach Dan McDonnell

(Opening Statement) "First want to congratulate Steve Holm and Illinois State. What a good team. I know I know it hurts for them right now. It sucks being on the losing end of the game of this magnitude, but obviously they showed a lot of toughness and they deserve to be in the finals and that rally they put together there late. For school like Louisville, I'm really proud of the midwest kids, we got so many midwest kids in our program that we knew we were playing against three other teams from the midwest and to represent midwest baseball. You get to see a lot of a lot of tough kids a lot of good players. So for me that this was a proud weekend. Obviously, these guys sit next to me and our team showed a lot of toughness. I'm most proud of that, they say the stars have to line-up in order to have success, you're probably not going to be real successful be able to handle the curveballs and the challenges and we did I give them a lot of credit like so I'm super proud of them and happy to be in this position."

(On the team's mentality following Saturday's loss) "It's a competitive group. Like Jake said, a lot of older guys. As I made this statement earlier, I challenge these guys all the time about toughness and the curveballs of life. This is a frustrating game. It's a hard game. So, you've got to be able to deal with failure. As I was teasing Trey earlier, was it Linus the character on Charlie Brown? We kind of pick on hitters if you act like Linus, drag your towel behind you and look kind of sad or mopey. It's something we challenge our players with. So, they go through it. First thing was talk about the '07 team, they lost in the 1-0, 1-0 game. Talk about all the teams that do it in the 16 regional sites, how many No. 1 seeds lost in the 1-0, 1-0 game. I read off about five or six schools. Every year, someone's going to come through losing that 1-0 game, and why can't it be us? Lucas Dunn ran in to Isaiah Howes that night at dinner, and Isaiah was part of the '07 team. Lucas sent me a long text, so I sent a text to Coach Vrable, Coach Vrable sends it out to the whole team, so I wanted to share that moment that Lucas had with a player from the '07 team. Just making sure guys believe. You can do a lot of things with belief."

(On Leonard rebounding from his ninth-inning error) "It's not easy. As you know, as a coach and a parent, you don't want him to feel like he's responsible. You could see the body language. It's hard. Hopefully, he'll learn from that. But when we talk about this game, it's what makes it a great game. You usually get a chance to redeem yourself. Usually, not all the time, but it's amazing how many times you get a chance to redeem yourself. He had a good bunt, a quality at-bat. Of course, he runs the bases, puts a lot of pressure. But let's not forget, he was a big part of the rally to score. It didn't look like we were going to score, and Zeke has a great at-bat, and so we run Trey. Trey puts a lot of pressure on you, and the ball goes to the backstop. Now, you've got to pitch to a guy like Zach Britton with Leonard on base, so Trey did a lot to help us get that rally going, and score those two runs in that inning. Then, he was obviously a part of the last run."

(On Henry Davis' pinch-hit and throw-out at first base) "I met with Zeke and Henry before the game today, and we kind of had the two-headed monster with those two as our catchers. I told Zeke he was going to start because Bennett was starting and Zeke usually catches Nick, but just gave Zeke the head's up we could catch Henry too in a situation if we had to pinch hit or pinch run. As good as Zeke is, he's not the fleetest of foot as a catcher. He knows we've got a great base stealer in Trey, so we kind of prepared those guys that that was going to happen. You look back at the game, there's a lot. Jared Poland hasn't pitched—hurt his hand at Notre Dame on Derby weekend—hasn't pitched since then. To

throw a big inning like that in this game, and Bennett to bounce back and give us that quality start—Hoeing, five innings. There's a lot of guys that you forget unless you really think about the entire game. And that's what I always tell kids. I get it, for the media, in your world, you remember the play that sticks out. I've got game notes from every game, and I've got six, eight notes that we show on video and I teach the kids about, because I get it, some people are just going to remember a certain play. I'm going to show you the play in the second, the play in the fifth, the play in the seventh, that those could have just as much of an impact on the game as to the plays that everyone remembers. So, I just enjoy teaching the game throughout the season. So, you don't ever want kids to live and die off one play."

(On Binelas being calm and prepared for his at-bat in the ninth) "Tim did the story on Alex a few weeks ago. We talked about how mature, how professional...his dad played professional basketball. We brought in a lot of talented kids. I think it was the third-ranked recruiting class in the country. But, it's a big adjustment for freshmen, and Alex just seemed very business-like. Never got too high, never got too low, usually that's that wide range where younger kids are just used to the high and they're not used to the lows. They don't fail before they get here. And I know when Tim did the story, I think Alex struck out like four times the night before, but I didn't even notice. I think that's the impressive thing. I always challenge our kids: if your mom showed up in the third inning and looked out on the field, could she tell that your 0-2 already or you're 2-2, and a lot of kids you can tell. The great ones, the professional ones, the mature ones, you can't tell. So, I didn't notice it that night when I spoke to Tim the next day that he struck four times in a game. He didn't make a big deal about it. It's just this game, it's going to happen. So, putting him in the middle of a lineup, since we did that, it's really stretched us out and made us a complete lineup."

Jake Snider, Jr. OF

(what is it about these games that really motivates you?) "I guess I just don't think as much in the postseason. Kind of just have the ability to just take over, so I guess I should just stop thinking in the regular season, too."

(about your guys' ability to come out of the losers bracket and win three elimination games right in a row?) "It just shows how tough this team really is, even in a post game like this last game with Illinois State. I just didn't feel like there was any doubt, even going into the bottom of the ninth inning that we were not gonna win that game. Having our backs against the wall and facing elimination, we really get to see what our team is made of and it really shows just how tough this team is."

(how good does that feel and what does that mean, that toughness that coach kind of instills from like he said yesterday morning, you guys getting here?) "It means a lot. We show up here in the summer during our freshman year and we get a taste of what Louisville Baseball is all about in terms of the weight room and school and everything. And just going back to that we'd been instilled with. It's good that we have an older group that's actually been to Omaha, so we know what that's like. Because last year, I'm not gonna lie, it hurt, so the older class knows how good it feels. It shows why we're so tough right now."

Trey Leonard, So., OF

(what did coach say to you to make you smile?)

“Just to trust everything we put in. He probably said a joke about me being so hard on myself, because I’m not usually one to not be smiling or laughing. I was so in the moment I don’t really remember but, all I know is I was smiling. He said something, but I don’t really remember for sure.”

(crossing the plate had to be almost a euphoric, out-of-body type experience.)

“Yeah. Obviously, I was disappointed, but as Jake was saying, we see how tough we are. We’re obviously one of the toughest teams there is if not the toughest. So, you gotta forget about it. You gotta flush it. We can’t let your bat go to your defense, or your defense go to your at bats. So, you just gotta make positive out of everything.”

Alex Binelas, Fr., INF

(Alex on the game winning hit) “When I was on deck I was really focusing on what they’re doing with Fitzgerald and I saw a lot of off speed trying to get a chopper. My last at bat that I had, I saw three sliders curve balls in the dirt and I swung at all three and I knew that approach to that at bat trying to get me out and I was up there I was just looking for that side up and put a good swing and stay up the middle of times rolling over balls to the right side. I told myself to stay to the middle and good things will come. It hit right past the shortstops glove and I don’t know I may have been the pitcher. I thought I heard something. But a cycle past shortstop and the rest is history

(on the celebration after the game)” My shoe I guess within the outfield somewhere and my arm guards are somewhere and it was awesome. I got soaked and sprayed with water. It’s something I’ll never forget.”

(on having the game winning hit) “It’s awesome, but us guys have came so close, as almost a family. All the 6 am workouts that we had together and all the long practices I’ve had to go in heat and cold. It’s all for moments like this, then to do it with those guys behind me, it is unreal.”

(going back to your hit, were there any nerves or jitters at all when you stepped up to the plate?)

“No, I just trusted my ability, and I knew that my guys were behind me, and they trusted me. And I just had the right approach up there. Didn’t have to do too much, didn’t have to hit it out of the park, didn’t have to hit it through the gap inning, just had to hit it upfield and just get one run across. Just trusted my abilities.”

(what was the first thing you remember after you hit it?) “First thing I remember is, turning around and getting a face full of water and all my guys running after me. I lost my shoe, lost everything. It was unreal, it was awesome.”