

OSU Baseball Seeking Confidence To Generate Success



An eight-run fourth inning leading to a 13-8 victory over Maryland closed Ohio State's series with the Terrapins April 16, but the prior two games furthered the challenges the Buckeyes have seen since entering Big Ten play. A lack of timely hitting yielded 7-5 and 3-2 losses April 14 and 15, respectively.

Now at 3-9 in conference play, OSU sits with the worst record among Big Ten teams, a far cry from its 12-7 mark before the league schedule began.

"I see how (the players) react. I see them doing the strangest things that we haven't done before," Ohio State head coach Bill Mosiello said. "We were so battle-tested from those first 18 games in the spring, on the road against really good teams. To think, 'O.K. boys, this is why we did it, for the Big Ten.' Then the way they reacted once we got into Big Ten play (...) I can't speak for the players, but their actions show me everything. It's not that easy to just change how you think."

A serious run of wins would be required for the Buckeyes to grab one of the eight spots available in the Big Ten Tournament, as they currently sit 2½ games back of eighth place. Off a 21-30 season a year ago and the recent lapses of this campaign, however, Mosiello told BSB that his team needs to build confidence in itself before it can find the wins it desires.

"Who cares about my confidence, what do they believe? I've believed in all of them long enough," Mosiello said. "There comes a time when they better start believing in themselves."

Ohio State outhit Maryland 10-5 in the first contest between the two sides but still lost by the above-mentioned 7-5 tally, stranding 14 runners on base. The Buckeyes trailed 7-3 entering the bottom of the ninth and managed to scrounge up two runs, but runners were left on second and first on a game-ending groundout.

The following loss included a one-out, bases-loaded situation in the sixth inning that OSU couldn't capitalize on, short of a walk that handed the team its first run of the contest. A lineout and groundout ended the inning and the Buckeyes scored just one more run from there.

Prior to that in the fourth inning OSU had the bases loaded with no outs, only to fail to score any runs after an infield fly and back-to-back strikeouts.

"That's the stuff that's alarming to me," Mosiello said about the team's lack of situational hitting.

As the first-year head coach has discussed previously, the team's recent history of losing seasons has hurt its ability to maintain a winning mentality. The Buckeyes went 21-30 a year ago and scraped past .500 with a 22-20 record in 2021 before seeing their rough opening to Big Ten baseball this campaign.

"Unfortunately, when you've lost a lot, you learn how to handle losing a lot," Mosiello said. "So they act the same regardless. They've had a lot of practice at this, and I haven't. That's why I'm the guy who's not the fun guy to be around doing these interviews and things because a guy went one inning or two innings without a run, even though he might have had four baserunners."

"Confidence doesn't always develop by success," Mosiello said. "If a kid doesn't have success, where does he get the confidence? Confidence is a choice of the way they act, and the way they handle themselves and what they believe. So if we're going to wait for success for everybody before we can be confident, we may be waiting the whole season."

"You better have confidence first in your work, that you see your improvement. And then you better think confidently before you win. Bill Walsh, the famous (San Francisco) 49ers coach, had a saying that champions behave like champions before they become champions. You can't become a champion then behave like a champion. You have to behave like a champion to become a champion."

Mosiello added that all the above statements are easier said than done. The front half of this season has been tough on him, and he admitted that his "arrogance" had him believing he could be an immediate success in Columbus.

In the locker room, team leaders like graduate catcher Cole Andrews have been trying to help teammates absorb the coaching staff's message of self-belief.

"We've talked a lot about preparation and just making sure we're preparing the right way," Andrews said. "When things don't go the way you want them to, you have to have something to fall back on to be able to have your confidence. A lot of that is in your routines and how you prepare for games every day."

For now, Mosiello isn't focused on the standings or how many games his squad needs to win to make the conference tournament. The way he goes through practice and the season with his players and the team's commitment to development will remain unwavering, he stated.

"We could be 35-0 and the approach will never change," Mosiello said. "I haven't even looked at the standings, I don't know how many it takes. I haven't paid attention in the past. Worry about one game at a time and play good baseball and you'll end up being where you want to be."