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PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: WICHITA STATE BASEBALL
WHITE HOUSE ROSE GARDEN
FRIDAY, JUNE 16, 1989

Senators Dole and Kassenbaum, ^{Phelan of UK, assist when} President ^{rel} ~~_____~~, Coach
Stephenson, Shocker players and staff, ^{rel} friends. ^{rel}

Welcome to the White House. And heart-felt congratulations on winning the NCAA baseball championship. Moreover, let me assure you: As a Texan, I don't take it personally that you sent the Longhorns back to the corral.

It is a special treat to be here. For as you may have heard, I've loved baseball since I was a kid. In fact, watching Greg Brummett's fastball last weekend reminded me of another pitcher who threw the high, hard one when I was growing up -- the fabled Dizzy Dean.

As a player, Ol' Diz fractured opponents' bats. Later, as a broadcaster, he fractured the English language. Once, Dean said of a home-run hitter: "He's standing confidentially at the plate." And he delighted listeners with his trademark quote: "That runner slud into third."

Well, my friends, by winning Wichita State's first-ever national baseball title, you have "slud," head-first, into the sports heart of America.

They're calling it Shocker Success. Or the Midwest Miracle. Remember how Judy Garland once said, "There's no place like Kansas?" Well, with apologies to Senators Dole and Kassenbaum, you've proven there's also no place like Omaha and the College World Series.

Believe me, I know how you feel. For in 1947 I played in the first College World Series, then in Kalamazoo. Next year, again my Yale team reached the title game. Only one problem: We lost both times. Yes, I know first-hand how baseball can keep you humble.

And that's you did: Keep opponents humble. Over a __ regular season. And five victories in the College World Series. Batting, fielding, and pitching your way to baseball's Mount Olympus.

Greg Brummett, of course, spurred the climb: Only the 7th pitcher in win three games in a College World Series [PAUSE] . . . Greg, that pickoff move of yours would nab Willie Sutton. And help came, too, from the Shockers' answer to the question, "How do you spell relief?" Jim Newlin: Only the fourth college pitcher to save three post-season games.

Then, there's catcher Eric Wedge. And shortstop Pat Meares, clubbing a home run in the title game [PAUSE] . . . Pat, this morning I called the weather bureau [PAUSE] . . . that ball is still orbiting Omaha. And outfielders Jim Audley and Todd Dreifort. Each of the four an All-Tournament selection.

Don't worry: I'm not forgetting Mike Wentworth. One week ago, you started reading the comic that covers a piece of bubble gum. And you came upon this fortune: "Something magical will happen." Hours later, you belted a three-run homer to help beat top-seeded Florida State.

And the next day, Gene Stephenson's team completed the magic act -- becoming the first NCAA baseball champion in 23 years not located in California, Texas, Arizona, or Florida. Last week Gene said: "We wanted to prove to people all over the country that somebody outside those states can play baseball." Don't worry, Coach: You did.

You know, in that final game, Bryant Winslow had to leave because of a stress fracture in his right leg. One of ___ injuries to hit your club. He had tears in his eyes. Didn't want to leave. But Bryant led his teammates from the bench.

"You guys have got to win this thing," you told them. "Don't you dare lose this game."

Well, as they say on the Kansas prairies, "them's fighting words. And today, the baseball world is crying Unconditional surrender."

A writer once observed: "The Kansas spirit is the American spirit double-stilled." My friends, you've bottled that spirit. And it -- and you -- have made the Shockers Number One.

Thank you for coming here and, again, congratulations. God bless you, and God Bless America.

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-- winning Game Two with a memorable base hit. And Chris Sabo // Chris, this morning I talked to NASA [PAUSE]. Your Game Three home runs are still in orbit. // And Paul O'Neill and Herb Winningham and, yes, Tom Browning // the man who combined a World Series and the birth of a son -- batting 1,000 along the way. //

All of these men -- so many others -- were dedicated to a cause -- bringing the world championship back to perhaps America's best baseball city. You achieved that goal. / And Lou [Piniella] -- let me say: There were times in the last month I could used you to help pilot my budget through Congress the way you piloted the Reds. // Together, you showed why two of the most beautiful words in any language are, simply, "Play ball."

Reds' broadcaster Joe Nuxhall often says, "This is the Ol' Lefthander rounding third, and heading for home." This year, home for one of sport's greatest franchises was the 1990 world championship. So let me leave you by paraphrasing another Reds' announcer, Marty Brennaman: "This year belonged to the Reds."

Once again, when it comes to baseball, Cincinnati is truly Number One. Thank you for coming here. Congratulations. And God bless the United States of America.

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