

2017 Women's College World Series

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Tim Walton
Chelsea Herndon
Aleshia Ocasio
Amanda Lorenz
Florida

Oklahoma - 5, Florida - 4

TIM WALTON: First, congratulations to Oklahoma on a national championship, just a hard fought two games. Wish we could have pushed it to a third, and give us a chance. But I thought overall our players, really proud of our team. I thought they came out again, really good, really well. I thought we came in this morning, and I thought we really did everything we needed to do to prepare to get ready for tonight's game, and I thought we took care of ourselves and took care of each other. But overall just proud of our effort. Congratulations to Coach (Patty) Gasso on another national championship and to the University of Oklahoma. Just thanks to the NCAA, ESPN, OKC All-Sports, University of Oklahoma hosting this tournament. It's a great event. Just an awesome event when you get that many people in there cheering, and then the crowd, I thought the crowd was great and I give a lot of credit to the OU fans for being very respectful. They were cheering and chanting and doing their cheers and nothing was ever any negative tone toward us. They were just cheering the heck out of their team and I give them a lot of respect for competing the right way with a lot of class, so congratulations.

Q. Tim, your team fights so hard, and they're never out of a game. Even in the last at-bat they've got a chance. As they're throwing all that pitching at you, what are you thinking?

TIM WALTON: Yeah, I had an in-game interview and I mentioned to Holly (Rowe), we've got to find a way to get another run up there before we can get Paige Lowary coming in at the end and we knew what she was going to be able to do. Overall I thought we were prepared. We tried to do everything we could to get that run, runner at second base, I think, with one out in the sixth. We had a chance.

But I'm proud. I can't tell you -- again, I know our players -- we questioned their toughness breaking camp for the fall, and they all took notice and they worked hard and they put in the extra effort. They did all the things that they needed to do. We had a lot of kids that have really put in above and beyond what we ask of them because they all have high expectations for being great.

Our coaching staff works really hard, but again, I think to get to this point, it takes a special group of players that really has a drive for their own -- not perfection, but greatness. So I give not only these three but the rest of our team, the other 15 women, just a tip of my cap for how hard they work and just how much they really appreciate each other.

Q. Kind of a two-parter, I don't think you guys lost a game when you scored three runs or more playing in the best conference, historically, ever. What changed at the World Series, and can you explain why you went with the pitchers? You know their arms and their strengths better than us.

TIM WALTON: Yeah, I told (Jennifer) Rocha I was hoping we could get through one time with the lineup, just to change the look from what they're getting before we brought in Delanie (Gourley) and then before we came back with Kelly (Barnhill). It was more about matchups. You know, they get the home run early, get a couple nice infield hits to go along with that late, but I just felt like it was a good opportunity for us to try to piece together this game and stretch it out as long as we could. Other than really two bad pitches, I thought we pitched pretty well, played good defense, hit the ball well.

But you know, it just wasn't our tournament. You look at the statistics, it's eerie how close the games were statistically. So I think that you've got two even matched teams. One just found a way to hit the ball over the fence more than we did, and give them a lot of credit.

Q. I know that this has been a great site for the game, but when the games are this close, can the crowd make a difference, the momentum, the noise?

TIM WALTON: Yeah, I mean, I would assume that the crowd had a little bit to do with it, especially the last

three at-bats maybe, the crowd was in it. But it's hard for me to make an excuse that Oklahoma had more fans than we had and that's why they won. That would be taking a lot away from what they really did and accomplished.

But I think there's a little bit to that. But I thought our players really stepped up and rose to the challenge. So I'm not going to make that excuse today. I give them credit for finding a way to get more base runners on base and get the hits when they needed it.

Q. What made you question that toughness coming out of camp in the fall and what did you need to see from them?

TIM WALTON: Yeah, I think the main thing is really we lean heavily on our strength and conditioning staff and we've got times, we've got certain things that we want them to be able to measure up and hit on, and it's just being able to withstand the pressure that we put on them in the mornings, sometimes before 6 in the morning just to -- it's not a toughness thing, it's just about mind over what you have to do.

I think a lot of our players dreaded the workouts more than they actually dreaded them when they were working out, and so that's a mental toughness thing. You're going to have to be able to be at your best when your body is dying, and that'll never change, conditioning our athletes. You want them to be mentally tough. To be mentally tough they're going to have to push their bodies a little bit harder. So that was it. Again, that's not personal, that's just about -- that's just what it takes to be a national champion, that's what it takes to be a College World Series participant. That's what it takes to be a Florida Gator. You're going to have to push yourself really hard, and then the push comes from your teammates. You're going to have to push your teammates hard and use constructive criticism at 6 in the morning and learn how to get over those hard runs.

I thought, again, we questioned it breaking camp, they came back in good shape from Christmas break and really pushed and pushed other than a couple early injuries in January. I thought they really answered, they really understood that it was going to take a little bit more, and I think that came down from our upperclassmen. It came down from our leaders. I thought the leadership was very positive, and you see kids out there doing more. I think that was the differences that we've had players that are really good and what they were doing wasn't good enough to get them to this point, and they all bought in, and like I said, I would have questioned it later on. They really fought hard.

Q. For the players, your coach says any season

that ends in Oklahoma City is a tremendous success. You guys made it to the Championship Series. Can you take solace in that right now?

AMANDA LORENZ: Yeah, definitely. It feels better to end our season here instead of Gainesville like last year. Just really proud of the fight that we've shown and the growth that we've shown. Like Coach (Tim Walton) was saying, I didn't really know what our identity was coming in in the fall, and we just grew every single day. And every single day someone stepped up, and this team was so special because everybody contributed at any time, and everybody had the mindset that if they were put into the game they were going to get something done for their teammates. Just excited about the growth that we had, and proud that we ended our season here for sure. Wish we came out on top. But it happens.

ALESHIA OCASIO: I completely agree with Amanda. It's an honor to be here and blessed to have been here to battle with other girls on my team. You know, we came up shorthanded. They played a great game. We had a hard fight both games, and we just didn't come out on top. We're going to come back next year with a hard fight, as well.

CHELSEA HERNDON: I agree with that, too. Any time you end your season in OKC it's a great season. It's an honor to be one of the last two teams playing in the nation. You are the softball game to watch, and it's pretty awesome. Yeah, this team was amazing.

Q. Aleshia, coming into the game, you hadn't started a game since April 30th. How were you lined up for that mentally?

ALESHIA OCASIO: Well, first off, you know, coming in and pitching, you always want to give your team a chance no matter the situation. Delanie (Gourley) and Kelly (Barnhill) have been amazing all season with the stuff they have. It's really incredible. But Coach (Tim Walton) pitched the idea to me that I might possibly be pitching, and I was just trying to mentally prepare myself for today's game and just give my team a chance and trying to keep runs off the board. They got one early, but that didn't faze us at all. We still fought. But they came out on top, like I said before.

Q. Coach, the pitching has been so phenomenal and overwhelming all season; is there just that much film? Does this environment change things? I heard the commentators speculating that the air was heavier in Gainesville. What do we make of all the runs, going from a 0.66 to the explosion we saw from both teams?

TIM WALTON: I don't really know how to answer that. I don't listen to commentators or anybody else because they're not with our team to know what's going on, you

know? We struck out 26 batters last night. Pretty heavy air, I guess.