

2017 Women's College World Series

Saturday, June 3, 2017
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma



Patty Gasso
Paige Parker
Lea Wodach
Sydney Romero
Fale Aviu
Caleigh Clifton
Oklahoma

Oklahoma - 3, Washington - 1

PATTY GASSO: We were ready for a battle, and that's what we got. I thought our team played extremely well. All facets were working. I think a lot of people questioned our defense yesterday, which everybody can question it, but we don't, because we know it's been a staple of this program this entire season, and the defense showed it tonight, so I was really proud of them.

Offense was attacking, and the pitching staff was phenomenal. To me, it was a complete game. It would have been hard to beat us tonight with the way we played. But like I say, Washington pushes us to be that good. You have to be that good, and for the Paiges, to keep them to three hits was a pretty stellar performance because they're a very volatile offense.

Q. You've talked all year about your defense and how this team may be different than some others. You win in so many different ways. We kind of saw that today. You did have the long ball from Syd (Romero), but defense and pitching and everything else that came together for you, would you say that's kind of how you've played all year?

PATTY GASSO: I wouldn't say all year, but -- well, the defense has definitely been something that we've counted on all season. Our offense was a little hot and cold, but they're hot right now. Pitching staff for the most part was hot, but really got hot mid to late season. To see it all come together means we're in the Final Four right now. I'm really proud. I know they're really excited, especially the defense, because they have a lot of pride. They work extremely hard every

day with me a lot, which probably isn't so fun, but it pays off, and they know it, and I was really proud to see them make great plays tonight.

Q. Paige, what was it like seeing that defense behind you tonight?

PAIGE PARKER: It was amazing. Our defense was absolutely clutch tonight with some really huge plays, and I have so much confidence in them behind me, and they were fantastic tonight.

Q. Fale, you had kind of a crazy second inning there. How were you able to score there and dodge the tag?

FALE AVIU: I work on it in practice every day, so me and Lea, she always gets mad at me, and even today they all got mad, but I mean, it worked out today, so just trying to score.

Q. Coach, obviously it's big to win the first one, but how important was it to get the second win today and get that extra day off?

PATTY GASSO: Oh, huge. Every game gets bigger and bigger, but for us to be able to get a breath tomorrow is extremely important for this team, and we worked for it.

I think going into Sunday, everybody else is going to beat each other up, and then we get into Sunday, and we'll be rested and ready for whoever comes our way. But somebody is going to have to beat us twice, and we know that, so we're going to be getting after it.

Q. Paige, did you feel like your spin was working a little bit better today than yesterday?

PAIGE PARKER: I felt really good today. You know, just coming into the game, I just wanted to execute the game plan, and Lea was very encouraging throughout the whole game just for me to really trust my spin and trust my defense behind me, and it was a really great game plan that Coach Lombardi had, so it was just about a lot of trust today.

Q. What went into the decision to start Paige today? I know she hadn't pitched back-to-back games much this year, but only threw 68 pitches in the first game.

PATTY GASSO: Well, up until right now, there's no better pitcher in postseason, as proven last year.

Paige thrives in this situation, in this setting. This was a big game. She's a hot pitcher right now. We knew that we had everybody -- everybody was hot and ready to come in, Mariah (Lopez), Paige Lowary, but Paige Parker was handling her business and did a great job doing it, so it was really a no-brainer at this point.

Q. What did you see on the homer, and if you don't mind, you're such a good defensive player, and yesterday was such a weird night for you there. For you to come back and play the way defensively, did you talk about it overnight or as you always say forget about the last game and come and play?

SYDNEY ROMERO: I mean, it happens. I'm not going to be perfect all the time. I knew I had to step up my game a lot more and I needed to help my team in any way I could, and I felt like I did that today. But that pitch was up and in, and I was looking for it.

Q. Did you know it was going out the second you hit it?

SYDNEY ROMERO: Yeah.

Q. I know it might be hard to recognize, but do you feel any differently emotional and mentally this year than you were at this point last year?

PAIGE PARKER: I think so, a little bit. The experience that I had last year in the World Series was really helpful coming into this year, just being able to kind of settle in a little bit easier this year, and you know, knowing that I have fantastic pitchers in this staff along with me is just an incredible feeling, to know that we all have each other's backs.

Q. Lea, Fale said that you guys get frustrated when you practice tagging in practice. What does she do that makes her so tough to tag in those situations?

LEA WODACH: I feel like with Fale (Aviu), you just never know what you're going to get. She's going to go one way, she's going to go the other. She just always keeps us on our toes, and I think it prepares us for big-game situations. We always joke about it, laugh about it, get mad at each other about it. We go at it in practice but it makes it better, and for her to be able to do that in a big-time game like this is huge, so that gave us a lot of momentum, and it pays off on the big stage.

Q. Lea, can you walk us through that diving catch behind home plate from your point of view?

LEA WODACH: Yeah, so I just saw the ball off the bat, and I know when Paige (Parker) is throwing a game like that you've got to do whatever it takes. Anything that you go to help her out. Anything that I can take advantage of, I just saw that it was going to be close at the wall, and so I went for it, and things kind of worked out in my favor. But yeah, whenever Paige is throwing

a game like that, you kind of have to make those extra plays, make those diving catches because you know she's doing whatever it takes and you want to do it for her, too.

Q. Caleigh, talk about the offensive approach tonight. The Washington pitcher, so good, she's pitched for so long in quality games, that approach tonight to get three runs on the board.

CALEIGH CLIFTON: Yeah, it's huge. She's a really good pitcher. She's outstanding. I think it was good for us to get three runs off of her and to score early, like Fale doing that was huge. We'll take whatever we can get. I was proud of our team for finding ways to score runs whatever it took.

Q. Patty, I know this has some meaning for you guys. Have you ever done the high five with the threes before when you were running?

PATTY GASSO: Yeah, we did it today.

Q. I was just wondering if that had happened any game prior to, but just to have that moment where you're on the same wavelength right there.

PATTY GASSO: It actually happened before, so...

Q. Patty, we've seen pitchers who have won titles and pitched a lot of innings in the process and not be able to hit those same high notes the next season. How or why has Paige (Parker) been able to avoid that?

PATTY GASSO: That's a tough question because if I say something, it would maybe make these others that you mention feel like -- they're incredible competitors. I think Paige has so much confidence in her team, and there's a camaraderie here that we hope you can feel and see on the field that she'll give everything she has for her team. And it's very selfless. It's not looking for glory. It's not looking for attention. It's a very selfless style that is day in and day out, as is the rest of the team.

It's almost not hard for her. She doesn't want to disappoint, but at the same time, that doesn't lay on her shoulders. I think she just goes out and is a good leader in a competitive spirit that feeds into the rest of the team.

What I love about Paige Parker is she's never for the glory. She will always give her teammates the glory and not accept it herself, and I think that's why she's -- partly it's just the person that she is, and it's good. Good person, tremendous athlete.

Q. Patty, obviously you don't ever want to get complacent with a lead, and Paige (Parker) was pitching really well tonight, but it felt like for

probably the first five innings Washington just had a number of plays where they were really close to getting something going. Did you guys feel any pressure from them?

PATTY GASSO: All night, absolutely. All night. You hold your breath against those guys because you watch them on video, and they're just so dynamic. They've got speed. They've got power. They're slappers, handle the bat well, but they also can stand in and hit it through a gap. I don't think any of us exhaled or felt comfortable at all, not until the game was over. It felt -- the word these guys were using was, we've got to keep grinding, keep grinding, because we knew that they're capable of coming back in one swing.