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Florida – 9
Nebraska – 8

An interview with:

**FLORIDA COACH TIM WALTON
BRIANA LITTLE
KIRSTI MERRITT
HANNAH ROGERS
KELSEY STEWART
STEPHANIE TOFFT**

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Florida head coach, Tim Walton, and student-athletes Briana Little, Hannah Rogers, Kelsey Stewart, and Stephanie Tofft. We'll start with an opening comment from Coach and then questions.

COACH WALTON: Well, I just want to say congratulations to Nebraska for a great season and one heck of a ballgame. If that wasn't one of the best, most exciting games of the College World Series, I don't know about ever. But it was one of the most exciting games I think I've ever coached. And I'm really proud of our team and the way they handled. Just got punched in the gut in the seventh inning with two outs, but I thought we did a really good job of bouncing back and showing a lot of heart as did they. They showed a lot of heart and will and determination and hit a home run. We hit a home run back. And that is the last thing I remember to be honest with you. There were so many innings, I don't know exactly what happened after that. But just proud of our whole team, the team effort again. Lauren Haeger pitched her butt off for us and got a big hit. And every one of these ladies up here and the rest of our team really showed me a lot of fight and will to win.

Winning a game at the College World Series for any team is huge, but they showed me a

ton today, and I'm really proud of the way we played today.

Q. I don't even know where to begin. Let's go with Kirsti and Kelsey. Just talk about the fatigue factor of playing 60-some pitches in five and a half hours.

KIRSTI MERRITT: For our pitchers, that's great. They did such a good job. We have practices for so many hours and this is what we prepare for.

COACH WALTON: Four hours.

KIRSTI MERRITT: Four hours, yeah. I didn't know the exact number. But our conditioning really prepared us, and we even actually run three miles, so we're really prepared.

KELSEY STEWART: Yeah, it was hard. I'm not going to lie. Our 6:00 a.m., everything we've done up until this point paid off with our mental toughness. Coach kept telling us we're in better shape than them. I felt like I was in 'Coach Carter,' you know? I think the energy with my team and knowing I couldn't give up on my team really helped me the whole time.

Q. About two hours ago, Stephanie, you were running down somebody at the third baseline. Can you talk about that play? Obviously, it didn't work out, but how deflating that had to be at that point?

STEPHANIE TOFFT: Definitely very deflating, it was very frustrating. It just kind of popped out of my glove. I felt like I let the whole team down, but they came right back behind me and picked me back up. They fought through the whole game and really what should have been over in seven innings was over in 15.

I kind of caused the whole extra innings, but my team had my back the whole time and I just really felt the love.

Q. Hannah, you started the game, at I guess at 6:00 o'clock, and then you saved the game at 11:25. What about sitting there in the

dugout watching what was unfolding? What were you seeing?

HANNAH ROGERS: I was seeing a lot of fight from our team. No one ever gave up. We all kept fighting. Lauren was throwing an awesome game. She did awesome for us. She kept everyone up. Everyone was picking each other up. When everyone could have gotten tired, we all just kept fighting.

Q. I was going to ask, Briana, about your home run. When you hit the home run, the dugout must have been jacked. How deflating was it to have to go back out there again?

BRIANA LITTLE: I just went out there trying to do something for my team. And then when -- sorry. I knew we'd come out there and work our hardest to get back in there and getting ready to hit again, so I had faith in my team the whole time.

Q. Kelsey, could you talk about the two plays, the one outfield to home, to second to third and then of course the last play?

KELSEY STEWART: I don't feel like it was chaos, really. Just because as a softball player at practice we always get the ball hit to us and we have to look for the next play. So those were just the next plays. I don't think it was chaos; it was just heads-up for the next play.

Q. Stephanie, would you talk about the last play? It looked like you were trying to block the bag. Did you think you got her before that or she came off and you got her then?

STEPHANIE TOFFT: I don't think she touched the bag. I think she got my whole knee and that's about it.

Q. What about the quick turnaround having to play in the next 12 hours?

COACH WALTON: I'm not going to worry about that. I'm just going to let them have this moment. We're conditioned. Whether we're going to be any good tomorrow or not really doesn't matter. I think what these guys showed me tonight, I'll take them to battle any day of the week. I told this team from one of the first weekends of the season, I'd win or lose with this kind of team any day of the week. The way they play and how much they care. Stephanie Tofft comes in the dugout just completely demoralized with tears in her eyes and feels that. For her to go out there

and sacrifice her body with a cleat in her leg to get back on the W side of things, I just give her a lot of credit for that will and determination.

Q. Coach, just try to put the game itself into words if that's even possible. Have you ever part of a game quite like that?

COACH WALTON: Well, right before the game as you're preparing your team for the game, I looked at all the statistics, and I looked at the fielding percentages and you look at the batting averages, and you have two really evenly matched teams. I think both teams are coached the same way. Coach Revelle, who I have a lot of respect for and I've known her forever, she's kind of enough to be on my resume a long time ago. I always admired the way she coached her team until the end. She did it all the way to the end again. Her team reflects just how hard she competes and how hard they compete. I think, again, my team's the same way. They understand how to compete and go hard. Both teams laid it all on the line.

Q. You guys got punched in the seventh inning with two outs. What was the mentality in the dugout after that?

KELSEY STEWART: Punched in the gut. Yeah, it sucked. We're up by three runs and then 7-3. There is no blame on anybody. It's just like the game. So after that it was like here we go. Fighting again. So it's really just fighting the whole time. No one ever gave up. I never saw -- I mean, when someone was getting tired, there was someone picking them up. It was really the fight in my team. I never had a doubt in my mind that we wouldn't come out on top.

Q. Katie Medina's catch, did that bring up the energy level perhaps when maybe things were starting to slip away on that play itself? Because it seemed like the team really moved.

COACH WALTON: I think the team for a couple of reasons was -- obviously, the timing of it. But that's not a play Katie Medina can make a month ago, and we worked really hard on increasing her range and making that play in practice. Coach (Kenny) Gajewski, twice a week, works on that kind of play. Just three weeks ago we were talking about how we were going to be able to defend that. She just, gosh, laid parallel to

the ground, caught the ball. Showed the ball to the umpire, too. I saw that. I was fired up for her. But just again, how hard we work on those kind of plays and she came through. It was definitely an adrenaline rush and something that we needed. I'm just proud of her effort.

Q. Kirsti, can you talk about the play in centerfield where they said you didn't catch it? And Hannah, can you talk about the last play and the helpless feeling of seeing the ball bouncing in the outfield with the game on the line?

KIRSTI MERRITT: When I was in the moment I was like, I caught that ball, I caught the ball. But then when they showed the replay, I didn't catch it. So I guess it didn't go my way. But either way, it depends. If the umpire doesn't see it hit the ground, I guess, it's going to be a phenomenal play. It didn't go our way. But there is nothing I could have done about it. I did all I could do.

HANNAH ROGERS: I saw Katie running after the ball hard, and I just knew that our team sets up, like they said earlier, at practice, we always know where the next play is. At practice, we're always working on and we need to finish up every play. I knew that Katie was going to know where to go with it. I mean, I know Stephanie's always giving her body up for us, so I just knew that they were going to make something happen.

Q. Coach, as it gets to the 14, 15th inning, is your job more about motivation at that point or are you still tweaking X's and O's so to speak?

COACH WALTON: We did a few things. Obviously, we bunted with one out in one situation, we bunted and we sacrificed Katie and got a nice bunt for us later. We were going on the down angle there with Lauren Haeger if their infield was playing back. I think the shortstop kind of peeked a little bit to see if Lauren was going and then the ball ricocheted in the outfield. So we were trying to be maybe a little more aggressive. Maybe you can call it conservative.

But I was pushing the envelope a little bit and trying to put a little pressure on them. But I don't know that I changed because of the innings. I think it more had to do with the personnel at the plate and where we were at and what was going on, to be honest with you. That's how I felt anyway.

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