

May 31, 2014



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An interview with:

Oklahoma

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Oklahoma Head Coach Patty Gasso, Lauren Chamberlain, Kelsey Stevens and Shelby Pendley. We will begin with an opening statement from Coach Gasso.

COACH GASSO: First, congratulations to the Oregon Ducks for playing a hard-fought game. They're a tough team. They keep pressure on you with the pitching staff. They're just a very complete team. I have to say that we understand that we've been blessed by God with some great gifts and this team every day goes out to leave those gifts on the field and you can feel that every day of practice. This is always the hardest part of the season, being in this press conference, unless you're holding a trophy. Then things feel a little bit better.

But I cannot tell you how incredibly proud I am of this team. Each one of these athletes up here have their own story, from Shelby Pendley throwing, pitching in a game at the College World Series when she hasn't thrown for two years. She came to us and said "I can help you if you need me," and the next thing you know, she is saving games, getting wins and she is a starter at the College World Series.

Kelsey transferring over to OU and working to find out how to fit in our program. I truly have seen the growth of this pitcher to become and will be one of the forces in this game for the next couple of years -- just her tenacity and her grit and her competitive spirit. I got to really see it grow and it was wonderful to watch. Lauren Chamberlain went through the aches and pains of

everything from her back, and we're trying to stay in the season so she can come back and help us. And she comes in and then she has a knee problem, and the pain this young woman has gone through to help her team win and get to the College World Series was incredible.

Every player on this team has a story of selflessness and hard work and teamwork. I'm incredibly proud of my coaching staff. They were phenomenal. They were trying to piece things together and pull things out of players. And, man, I've had so many different lineups and worked these athletes in different places. Athletes like Georgia Casey, who is playing short, second, third base and pitching. The growth of kids like Whitney Ellis who had -- we had a beautiful double play with strike three and throw 'em out at second earlier this evening. Just different names. Everybody has a story. Kady Self -- if we didn't have her we wouldn't be here right now, and she goes down with an ACL.

It's an incredible story about the journey. I talked to the team and it's not about the ring right now, it's about the journey that we took. We trusted the path. We give the glory above and we respect each other and this group as a team and all their hard work. It was an incredible ride as a coach. I'm so thankful for their efforts and so incredibly proud.

Q. Kelsey, could you give us a sense of what you went through today physically to throw so many pitches and to really hang in, basically, not just tonight against Oregon but gutting out what you did against ULL earlier?

KELSEY STEVENS: I think it's just a lot of mental toughness. I mean, I honestly was feeling pretty tight the first game, but I said no matter what I'm going to leave it on the field for my team and I actually felt really good going into the second game. I got some good rest. But I think it will be good. I feel like I'm getting strong and getting to throw more pitches and I'll be ready for next year.

Q. Coach, you talked about the journey

that you guys have been on. Last night you talked about the way the season started and to be here. Emotional roller coaster this weekend, but at what point do you guys sit back and appreciate all you've accomplished this season and could you talk about the fan support and how much that meant to you guys and how much it boosted your confidence and everything?

COACH GASSO: I think it will take us a little bit of time, because there is just -- this team believed they could win it all. As soon as we started to figure some things out and got on a roll we felt like we were invincible.

So it's going to take a little time to come down from that, especially when you're a team that was holding the trophy last year. Once that happens, that's the only thing you want to do. That's what you live for on the field. That's the only thing that this program and this team will accept is carrying that trophy.

But we also understand that journey. So it was something that I know we'll look back on with fondness and fight, and in preparation for these guys for their lives in the future, all those things that sports brings to young athletes and learning how to live.

But it also prepares us for the future. Our seniors did a nice job of stepping up when we needed them. I could tell you, I don't think we had a very good weekend, honestly. I think our pitchers kept us in the games. We had opportunities at times. We just didn't clutch-up when we needed to and that's something that's been with us for the last couple of months. We just didn't swing the bats very well tonight. We wasted some opportunities early. We can look back at that, but it won't last very long. I think we're excited about where we went and where it's going to take us next year. We're really excited about that. But the love these guys have, it's special. It's special.

LAUREN CHAMBERLAIN: The fans were awesome. I think individually and as a team we can say the same thing. I know individually when I was going through some of the things with my injuries. I'm big on social networks and my fans were there for me. It was really cool because it helped me keep my head in the game and keep my head in the season when it could have been easy to check out on my team. But the love and support of when I came back and also just to see how much they gave us an advantage at home, especially here in the World Series. It's awesome

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to come in and calm your nerves when you know you're playing in front of your home crowd and they make it feel like a home game.

Our fans have been awesome and the coaches and the rest of the team, we have asked them to step up numerous times and they haven't let us down. I think it's awesome when we can look up and see them having so much fun. I think it's cool that we could feed off each other throughout the season. I know they're already ready for us to start playing again, so thanks for the fans.

Q. Coach, you talked about not being able to kind of capitalize on the opportunities and tonight you had a lot of opportunities but you have to at least be pleased that you guys were relentless in putting yourself in so many positions to where you could score. Not giving up, basically.

COACH GASSO: Yeah, this team has never -- if we had that mentality, we would not be standing here. There was a time -- I think it was in mid-March, we're defending national champions and we're getting ranked, down, down, down. We were down at No. 23. We hold, I believe, the record for the only team that's been in the national rankings every week since the inception of the rankings. That's big, to me. I don't care a lot about stats and things like that, but to me that is just a tribute to the consistency of this program.

We were panicked that this team was going to be the team that gets knocked out of the top-25, and we would even tell them that to try to fire them up, whatever it took. And to see where we were then and right now, we're in the final six. It's close to being in the final four and that was our goal, to be standing on Sunday and being one swing away from -- short of our goal, is pretty amazing. That's where we are. These guys will not quit. They will never quit. As long as you're wearing a Sooner uniform, you will not be allowed to quit.

Q. Lauren, two years ago you guys came up short. How much do you see this fueling this team with so much talent coming back? You used that two years ago, this year moving forward how much do you see this coming up short fueling you this coming year?

LAUREN CHAMBERLAIN: I think what fuels us the most honestly this year would be the senior class that's leaving. They've paved the way

and them passing the torch to those of us that are now going to be seniors. Just to leave our legacy on the field as well because they left an awesome legacy. Big shout out to our seniors. Ending on a loss always fuels us for the next season and we have some really good kids coming in and a lot of returners, so I'm really excited for it.

Q. Lauren, you obviously tried not to let it show but can you talk about how much pain you've been in in the last few days or even weeks?

LAUREN CHAMBERLAIN: It was challenging at first, I guess to kind of recognize that I was going to be in a lot of pain for the remainder of the season. But I think a lot of it was mind control and just managing the pain. I worked a lot on visualizing that I was going to be in pain and that it was going to go away, so I think that was a big part of it. Being put in pressure situations with my team and the adrenaline gets going, it kind of takes over. So I think most of my pain would kind of come on a certain play if I pushed a little too hard or it would show after the game when my adrenaline would kind of go away. But the high spirits in the dugout and everything takes your mind off the pain. I'm looking forward to a good summer of rehab.

Q. Kelsey, what do you take away from your first appearance in the World Series?

KELSEY STEVENS: It was an amazing experience. What I will take away are the memories I made with my teammates. I'm just so happy to be on this team and I really saw so many people grow and step up and, yeah, I'm so happy to be here. I love my team and I'm just excited for next year.

Q. Shelby and Lauren, you guys swing -- as a lineup you swing the bats here like you did in the regionals, supers, you're probably still playing, especially with the way Kelsey pitched. Is that the breaks of the game or are you seeing better pitching here than you were back in Norman is that just Hawkins and Traina getting the better of you? What was going on?

LAUREN CHAMBERLAIN: I think we have to give it up to the pitchers that we were facing. They threw really well against our team and at the same time we could have been better and we will take that with us into next season to be better in situations. But shoutout to the pitchers that faced us because they were pitching really well.

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SHELBY PENDLEY: I agree with Lauren. I feel like the best pitching is at the College World Series right now and that's the pitching we're facing and when you're facing that kind of pitching you have to make adjustments quick, and we didn't really do that.

Q. Patty, since you guys won this back in 2000 with 2000 seats and fans sitting on the hills, talk about how much not only the stadium but this event has grown and what does it mean to you guys to know that it's going to be here for the long term?

COACH GASSO: It's been something to see, truly. I remember back in 2000. It was our first showing here, and a crowd of 5,000 was overwhelming and we were just rattled. It was like, you can't hear anything!

I look up at the scoreboard tonight and it said 9,000-something for an 8:30 game. It's just -- the way the sport is growing, the athletes, the passion, the intensity. I've got some of the best athletes sitting right here. People want to come out and see that. It's a great sport to watch and the fans have a blast. There are so many little -- young, young kids that are just following these guys. To me the beauty of our sport is that probably back in 2000, you would ask some of our athletes "Who are your heroes?" and it's Derek Jeter, Michael Jordan. It's all male athletes. These kids know Lauren Chamberlain and Jackie Traina and Shelby Pendley. They know the names. They'll name the names because of what television has done for the sport and the exposure and the interest, and it's really been something else. I am just so honored to still be in this game and a part of it to see it and where it's going to go. It keeps going and going and going. It's really incredible.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, everybody.

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