

# 2015 Women's College World Series

Thursday, May 28

Florida 7 - Tennessee 2



## Florida

An Interview with:  
COACH TIM WALTON  
LAUREN HAEGER  
KAYLI KVISTAD

**THE MODERATOR:** We're joined by University of Florida, head coach Tim Walton, student-athlete Lauren Haeger and student-athlete Kayli Kvistad. At this time we'll take opening comments from Coach and then throw it out for questions.

**COACH WALTON:** Thanks. Just great game. Really proud of the way our team came out and played well. Just thought we, Lauren (Haegar) hitting that home run in the first inning really set the tone, really went out there and pitched well to get that top half of the first. But overall I thought we played clean. We played very poised, very controlled. Controlled our emotions even after a two-run homer I thought we did a good job of just bouncing back and getting the moment back again. Just proud. Good to be able to come out and get that first W under your belt. And especially after the way we played against, the way we swung the bat the last time against Tennessee in the SEC Tournament we didn't really play very well. And today, just a much better tone set for our team. I thought they really did a good job of playing and controlling their emotions and playing about as normal as I think I've seen us play all year long. And tip my cap to the grounds crew. I thought they did a good job getting that field playable with the amount of rain we had overnight. Thanks to those guys for working hard.

**Q. Kayli, can you talk about stepping up and hitting a homer on this stage as a freshman and just what was the excitement level for you to do that?**

**KAYLI KVISTAD:** It was really exciting. I was looking for a pitch to hit and working on being on time and to help my team out and get to a 3-0 lead. It felt really good.

**Q. Coach, with the extra preparation, did that really help this time around against Tennessee?**

**COACH WALTON:** Yeah, I think the thing that we talked about, I felt like last time we played we had just as you go through the emotions of the SEC and the play and

the travel, and being on the road a couple weeks in a row and you go in, we won the first game against South Carolina and I just felt like we kind of just showed up the next day expecting to win. And I don't expect anything different but I don't think I put the time in preparation wise to really know our opponent inside and out. And this time I felt like our team did a much better job of knowing who we were playing, knowing the pitches they're doing. We made some significant adjustments at the plate and I thought that really helped us out.

**Q. Your pitcher actually outhit Tennessee two to one by herself. Does that kind of bring perspective of what she's capable of doing for this team?**

**COACH WALTON:** I didn't even look at that part of the box score. I didn't even recognize that. I totally forgot, I think she had two hit by pitches and the hit, and that's impressive. I think as you talk about getting over the hump to get back to the College World Series as a 1 seed I think that was a pressure relief for our team just to be able to step up and do what I guess you're supposed to do. But to be the national player of the year and to jump back on this stage when everybody is ready to say, well, she's the national player of the year, blah, blah, blah, and she stepped up and hit a home run her first at-bat, pitches a great game, gives up one hit. I think she answered that call as well, just how well she's played this year and how well she's prepared to get on this stage and to have her moment. She really hasn't -- she'd be the first one to tell you -- she really hasn't played probably her best game at the College World Series. And for her to step up and do that today she answered the call we've talked about, she and I, and her preparation and we're proud of the way she came out and got after it.

**Q. Coach, saw on Twitter earlier that Billy Donovan came and talked to your team before the game today, obviously with him being the new coach of the Thunder. What was that experience like and what did he tell your girls and what was your reaction to that?**

**COACH WALTON:** Yeah, you know, I think that's the beauty of being at the University of Florida and the culture that Jeremy Foley has created for us as coaches. Just everybody is a part of what we do in Gator Nation and I'm really happy about what Jeremy affords us the opportunity to be around each other. We

have coaches parties. We have coaches get-togethers and round tables, just things to allow us to get to know each other. And Billy is a friend of mine. He's somebody I really look up to. Really sad to see him go. But I think the Oklahoma City Thunder and the state of Oklahoma is in for a big treat. It's got one of the best human beings there is in the game of basketball. I'm glad we got a W for Coach Donovan, because I think he was, like, 0-2 in pregame pep talk. So we finally got over the hump, too, now as well for him. He spoke in my first postseason as a coach ever at Florida, and I mean he's intense. It's beautiful. One of our players -- I won't tell you the quote because I think Lauren will tell you that quote a little bit better about when he's looking into her eyes. But it was awesome -- very, very grateful for him to take his time and do that for us.

LAUREN HAEGER: It was a great surprise to have such an awesome coach come in and talk to us. You could tell he's coaching guys for a really long time because he came in and his volume kept going up and up and up, and he would look at you, like, when he made eye contact with you, he was speaking to your soul. Like I felt it. It was like, okay. It was really awesome. He had great things to say to us. Obviously he's a championship coach and now he's a professional coach. So we took his words and it really pumped us up a lot and we're grateful for that opportunity.

KAYLI KVISTAD: It was inspirational, if he can't pump you up I don't know who can. It was an honor for him to come in and speak to us in this type of environment. Coming in as a freshman, it made me feel at home.

**Q. You guys forced their pitchers throw 155 pitches in six innings. When you keep going deep in the count, deep in the count time after time how much do you see that wear going through pitchers and doing that?**

LAUREN HAEGER: As a pitcher, you want to throw the least amount of pitches you can because you've got to come back the next day and throw again. I think it's great to work the count. I like to get ahead, and I know that that's mostly what pitchers like to do. So it is a wear on you if you do keep getting deep in the count like that.

**Q. Lauren, Bailey (Castro) was saying yesterday you said how much you wanted to hit a home run here. So after she hit that one last year, that was a monster. What did it feel like finally what were your thoughts on that?**

LAUREN HAEGER: It felt great. I wasn't going out there -- I can't ever go out there and try to hit a home run. My home runs will come with good at-bats and good swings at good pitches. I was just going up there

looking for a good pitch to hit with two outs. I did a great job with battling a few off there and got a good pitch to hit and it was really exciting.

**Q. You hadn't given up a run in 32 and two-thirds innings. What was your thought process after that?**

LAUREN HAEGER: I just had to buckle down. I only gave up one hit. If you leave a ball up here in the College World Series you can be taken out of the yard against good teams like this. I was just trying to buckle down and get the next girl out.

**Q. Coach, you spoke of the adjustments that you made at the plate between the SEC meeting and then this meeting. What were those adjustments? Was it just being more patient at the plate?**

COACH WALTON: You've got two junior pitchers that will come back next year. So I'm probably not going to say too much about what our plan was. But I think overall we just swung at terrible pitches last time. With the two styles, the contrasting styles between Rainey (Gaffin) and (Erin) Gabriel, it's hard to prepare for the way they throw. So we just went in with a different approach than we did last time. And again I didn't want to overanalyze last game, but our players, every one of them complained about seeing the ball. And we did not see the ball very well at all the last time, and whether that was a tribute to their movement or at least Erin Gabriel's movement early or if we just couldn't see that day, if there was something going with the shadow at the time we played. We just didn't overanalyze that. I told the players the same thing. I walked by four different players and they said the same exact thing and at different moments. I definitely knew they weren't conspiring against me. They just couldn't see the ball.

**Q. Kayli, could you talk about your jitters coming out and playing on this stage for the first time, and Tim could you talk about her stepping up the way she did as a freshman?**

KAYLI KVISTAD: Well, our seniors have really done a good job and the upperclassmen keeping us calm whenever we come on the field. I've played here before, but it's definitely a different atmosphere. Just coming in, I think pressure is an option. I wasn't that nervous, but at the same time it's nice to have teammates coming in backing me up telling me it's okay.

COACH WALTON: We talked about this before, the adjustments that Kayli (Kvistad) has made here over the last week plus, totally different swings, different bat speeds. And I think she's becoming more of a sophomore now than a freshman. Starting to loosen up a little bit. Seems her swing is actually in a much

better place than it was just three weeks ago when she was struggling to get hits and just wasn't generating good enough bat speed. I thought she did a good job swinging the bat this whole week in BP and for that I think she was rewarded. Chased a pitch early in the count with bases loaded in her first bat, but her second one she got an elevated pitch and got on the plane pretty well.

**Q. Were you surprised that Erin Gabriel was kept on a short leash and they went back to (Rainey) Gaffin?**

COACH WALTON: No, because that's their MO. They've been doing that a lot. Rainey Gaffin got them to this point. She really pitched well in the last game in the Super Regionals and held Florida State, pitched a complete game. I think their intent was they were prepared. They had, (Gretchen) Aucoin was in there, they were prepared to use at least three pitchers, at least that's what it looked like on paper. I don't think we were prepared. We were prepared for Gabriel and Gaffin and we prepared for the other two pitchers as well.

**Q. Can you just talk about the mindset of this team coming into the College World Series, obviously being number one with a very loaded field SEC heavy, what are some of the things you wanted to see from your team and out of yourself?**

LAUREN HAEGER: I think we did a really good job of just staying calm. A lot of us, this is our third time back and for me I went out there it felt a lot different than it had before. I felt so comfortable. Nobody felt nervous and you could definitely tell how we played. And I think us being a No. 1 seed, we just have to keep playing, doing what we're doing to win ballgames, just play clean, play good defense. That's what our MO is we play good defense. And I think we did a really good job of that today staying calm and just staying cool like we have been all season.

**Q. Tim, there's fewer and fewer strikeout pitchers in college softball, more balls being put in play. Does it change how you value defense, how you scout defense?**

COACH WALTON: Yeah, I think as we talked, sitting here in 2009, sitting on this stage at the end, losing to Washington, we just talked about our overall athleticism has to change. And I think the key to that was defensively the range of our infield, the range of our outfield, I think the game itself has changed. There's so many good athletes playing the game that the play that Nicole DeWitt made in left field. Easily overlooked. A left-hander hitting a slicing ball that way, just being athletic, and being able to make plays when you're supposed to. And I think it's really the key to keeping teams, can't give up extra outs at this level.

It's going to make it tough on you.

**Q. Kayli, tell us what it's like to be a teammate of Lauren Haeger; she almost has 70 home runs, -- 70 wins in her career to have a teammate that carries you guys as a two-way player and maybe how you've grown in that appreciation throughout the season?**

KAYLI KVISTAD: Lauren Haeger is awesome. She's definitely one of my role models and I look up to her hitting-wise, but to be able to pitch and hit at the same time, she's national player of the year it's kind of exciting to play with such a great teammate.

**Q. Ladies, you didn't need any extra incentive at this point but did the Tennessee five game winning streak against you all get to you at all?**

LAUREN HAEGER: I had no idea. Until you said it now, I had no idea. We had a big winning streak as well. So we kept doing what we were doing.

COACH WALTON: He meant five games against us.

LAUREN HAEGER: Oh, I thought you meant a five game winning streak.

COACH WALTON: I knew about it, in case you were wondering. (Laughter).