

2015 Women's College World Series

Thursday, May 28

Michigan 5 - Alabama 0



Michigan

An Interview with:
COACH CAROL HUTCHINS
SIERRA ROMERO
KELLY CHRISTNER
LAUREN SWEET
MEGAN BETSA

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by University of Michigan head coach Carol Hutchins, followed by student-athlete Sierra Romero, student-athlete Kelly Christner, student-athlete Lauren Sweet, student-athlete Megan Betsa. Coach, general comments about the game.

COACH HUTCHINS: I think it's a great effort by my team. I was really proud of them tonight. I thought we came out and played our kind of softball and stayed to our moment. And that's a great Alabama team. And to shut them down it's a great credit to Megan Betsa's performance and some of the great defense that we played. And really it was just one inning at a time. And that's the way we play softball. It's, I think, why we have done what we've done all year. We told our kids tonight just come out and do what we do. And our kids were -- they gave us their best effort and that's all we ever ask.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

Q. Coach, in the second and third you guys weren't able to get anything going. What was it like trying to adjust to Alabama's pitching tonight?

COACH HUTCHINS: I thought (Alexis) Osorio pitched very well. And she was definitely getting us at the top of the zone. And we got a little better when we saw more pitches. And I thought we got to her a little bit later in the game there. But it's the first game, and I thought our kids weren't as one-pitch focused at the plate as I've seen them. But she's a good pitcher. And this is the World Series. So it's going to be tough. All the pitching is going to be tough.

Q. Lauren, talk about that at-bat, falling behind 0-2, working it full, talk about the whole at-bat and what you got in the end?

LAUREN SWEET: The at-bat before that I obviously struck out on a rise ball, and I swung at a bunch of rise balls. My adjustment was to go up there and use my

timing swing and just really see a lot of pitches. Even though I got down in the count I was able to come back and really see the ball and really see it down, so my game plan worked out.

Q. Kelly, what was it like for you to hit a home run in that first at-bat when you told us earlier in the week that you played here before and it was a dream come true to come here for the first time?

KELLY CHRISTNER: Obviously the nerves were a little high. Everyone was trying to calm me down before the game. I think I just went out there, first at-bat and realized that it was just like any game we played the entire year. So I just focusing on seeing the ball down, like Lauren (Sweet) was saying, and it was nice to get that early lead there.

Q. Carol, you made a real hustle play to hold her at third to load the bases. Can you talk about what went into that decision and just talk us through the play and Sierra also?

COACH HUTCHINS: We hit the ball well and (Haylie) McCleney was going to her right and (Sierra Romero) Romo runs well and was running hard, and I was pretty fired up to get another run across. I made a really athletic move and almost tackled her because it would have been a really poor out at the plate, and obviously I have a lot of respect for McCleney, and fortunately Romo looked up at the right moment, because she was on her way.

SIERRA ROMERO: We know (Carol Hutchins) Hutch likes to hold us late sometimes, so we kind of try to take a sneak peek up before we decide if we're going to go home. I just happened to look up as she was falling over on top of me at the same time. I just hurried up and planted my foot and tried to get back.

Q. Megan, you played really well like you had been here before. Does it feel like that while you're pitching?

MEGAN BETSA: My biggest thing was getting past the first inning, I knew I would have jitters and nerves. I knew if I could get past the first inning then I would be fine. After that I was just focused on throwing 85 percent and making my ball move.

Q. Lauren, you had a walk-off grand slam to win a state title in high school. What's your bigger thrill,

this or that?

LAUREN SWEET: Playing on the biggest stage here is so awesome. To do that here is obviously really cool. I'm just trying to help my team out as much as I can. So it's pretty awesome. I don't know it's hard to rank them. But obviously, I mean, the World Series is my dream and I've got here and I think it's awesome that could happen here.

Q. Carol, could you talk about Lauren this season and how far she's come both as a hitter and behind the plate?

COACH HUTCHINS: Well, you know, (Lauren) Sweet has just been a fantastic player for this team and a team player her entire career. And she's having her best season as a senior. And you love to see that. And it's what we need. We need your seniors to be the leaders out there. And she's just been fantastic all year long. And we just want her to keep playing as long as possible.

Q. Megan, if you could talk about how you guys connect the game that Lauren calls and how you guys connect out there and how important you are to one another?

MEGAN BETSA: We're obviously very important. But I think something that's really important is how well (Lauren) Sweet knows me. So when my ball is not moving as much, she comes out and she's, like, hey just spin it. That's all you need to do. Your spin is good enough. Or if I'm moving, my pace is too quick, she comes out and tells me just to breathe. So I think the way that she's developed, like, to know me really well is a big aspect in this season where we are right now.

Q. What did she tell you tonight?

MEGAN BETSA: She came out and she told me just make the ball move, throw 80 percent, trust my spin.

Q. Carol, did you think that Lauren's ball was fair, that double that came back?

COACH HUTCHINS: Well, I'm on the other side of the field. So I am not objective either. I'm going to be the first to tell you. But you should probably ask Bonnie Tholl that question.

Q. The other question for all of you, can you talk about the letters that you received from the 2005 players, what that meant for you and was it a motivation for you tonight?

MEGAN BETSA: It's definitely something special because I received my letter from Jennie Ritter who was obviously a pitcher, an All-American here. She had some great words of wisdom -- let go of the good and be great was something I really liked and that was something that I focused on tonight was just letting go

of what I've already done just focus on now.

LAUREN SWEET: Same thing. Becky Marx wrote mine and she was the catcher of the 2005 team, so it was kind of awesome to hear some words from her. And she was awesome. She wrote me a whole page. It was so cool to see them take the time to actually do that for us and show us their support. So it was really awesome.

KELLY CHRISTNER: Mine was from (Rebekah) Milian, and she was actually No. 21 and left fielder also. So we have a connection there. But she basically just said go out there and play our game. And I know we're excited to be here, but go out there to win it. And I think that really stuck with me.

SIERRA ROMERO: Mine was from Angie (Danis), she also wore No. 32 while she was here. It was really cool to have team 28 come back and tell us what it was like and what they experienced, and they gave us great advice and it was just really cool that we had their support.

Q. Megan you pitched against Alabama earlier this year. I know it was a few months ago but how much were you able to take from that game and apply tonight, because obviously you were able to shut them out?

MEGAN BETSA: I think I've grown a lot since the beginning of the season. And I've developed a few other pitches that helped me out tonight. But I didn't really receive anything, like news for the hitters or anything like that. So I think we were just really focused on the batter who was up at the time and just attacking them getting ahead in the count.

Q. Sierra and Coach correct me if I'm wrong but Coach talked about her challenge to you is that you will be, your legacy will be defined by what your teams do. Can you talk about what that discussion with her and what you do other than just try to do your best when your number is called to affect others to be better?

SIERRA ROMERO: She brought up Derek Jeter a lot in our meetings in her office, and she talked about how he elevates everyone around him to be better and do better. And that's what I focused on this year. It took me a while to really understand what that meant. But I found a way to just put all my focus in my teammates. Once I was able to do that everyone started doing really well. And just letting them know that they can do it. And if they believe in themselves and trust in what they do, that we're going to be successful altogether. And just really focusing on them rather than myself has been the key all year.

Q. Coach, I wanted to talk to you about the sort of like the anatomy of the home run and how it's become such a big part of your team. You've been coaching for so long. And some people think it's just all about power. But there's so much more that goes into it. Seeing the pitch and the communication between the batters, the coaching. Have you thought about it on a more philosophical basis about how this team -- I mean, Sierra Romero has got 21 home runs and only seven strikeouts outs, and Sierra Lawrence is about one to one, and the fifth-best home run hitter had the grand slam. And I find it interesting those around you on a weekly daily basis how it's evolved and the team accomplishment. Sorry, it's a long question?

COACH HUTCHINS: I'm not sure what the question is, but I believe one thing that we went back to this year was we went back to vision training, something we've done over the years. And really just tennis balls and numbers and really focus on seeing the ball. And our kids do see the ball well. And they strike the ball well. And that was our other emphasis was strike the ball well. Hit the back of the ball, try to hit it square. We hit the ball square a lot. And I believe they've really embraced that and they have really, their confidence is so important in that. Because a confident hitter is so much better than a non-confident hitter. Their trust and their belief in each other, it's a lot of things you hear all the time, but our kids are really embracing that.

Q. I apologize for the convoluted question. But do you have anything to add?

SIERRA ROMERO: All year we focused on seeing the ball and trusting our swings and our preparation. We've also realized that the second we start doubting ourselves is when we start to struggle. But hitting is contagious on this team. Once one of us goes we all go. If we trust what we do, then there's no stopping us.

KELLY CHRISTNER: Basically what Sierra said.

LAUREN SWEET: Yeah, I feel like it's kind of just the same. I feel, like, we don't try to hit home runs. And I think that's like the key. We're just trying to hit the ball hard. We're never going up there to try to hit home runs. Like (Carol Hutchins) Hutch always says, they're going to come. If you go up there to hit the ball, then home runs will come. That's been our focus all year.

Q. Lauren, following up on that, how hard is it to do that? It's easier said than done. You hit that home run on that cold rainy night that cleared the bleachers that's the hit that makes it hard for a hitter -- how do you stay disciplined and not let that happen?

LAUREN SWEET: It's hard. Hitting is a very hard thing to do. I think just staying focused every at-bat and

going up there to hit the ball hard instead of, oh, my gosh, I have to hit it out right now to help my team win. Just going out there to be a base. We always talk about being a base and just getting on any way you can, whether it's a walk, a base hit, bunt, anything. So I think just going out there and staying focused on just being a base, that's the main thing.

Q. You're just looking for a sac fly?

LAUREN SWEET: Anything that's going to help us score.

Q. Megan, now that you're seeing hitters in the World Series, is that different from what your expectations for yourself are or where you went on the regular season or earlier on in the postseason at all?

MEGAN BETSA: No, my expectations for myself are to give up the fewest amount of runs to give my team a chance to win. And that hasn't changed from the first game to now.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.