

2015 Women's College World Series

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Florida 4 - LSU 0



Florida

An Interview with:
COACH TIM WALTON
AUBREE MUNRO
KATHLYN MEDINA
LAUREN HAEGER
NICOLE DEWITT

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by University of Florida head coach Tim Walton, student-athlete Aubree Munro, student-athlete Kathlyn Medina, student-athlete Lauren Haeger and student-athlete Nicole DeWitt.

COACH WALTON: What a great environment today. We had a tough series with LSU back in March to open up the SEC play, and I thought we just didn't pitch as well as we needed to, hit the ball pretty decent. Fortunately for us, Lauren Haeger didn't really pitch that weekend. She didn't start, so they didn't have a great look at her. She only came in relief twice. What a magical night she had offensively and just pitching, set the tone. Really thought she had good stuff. Obviously pitches working really well, locating really well. And obviously using the defense when she had to. Big play by Taylore Fuller in the first, Katie Medina in the first inning, to get the tag and turn. So overall offensively, Aubree (Munro) is sitting up here for a reason. She's our catcher, but tonight she was a great No. 9 hole hitter, turning the lineup over and giving us many opportunities to score. And that's why we were able to score four runs against one of the best ERAs in the country and one of the best pitchers. So just give Aubree credit and our offense. I thought they did a good job grinding things out and did things that they had to to get it going. I think the article I read the other day or yesterday or last night was that we just have a little bit of a mediocre offense. And I thought tonight we were pretty well rounded and really poised to do small ball, big ball, and do some things with two strikes and two outs, and I just want to commend our athletes for stepping up today.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Tim and Katie and for Lauren, the first inning, they get the bases loaded with no outs. Lauren, you can start, what are you thinking about just during that time?

LAUREN HAEGER: I felt okay. I was hitting my spots

fine. Couple of balls got through the infield soft. And that happens. People are going to get hits like that. But Katie (Kathlyn Medina) made an amazing play, double play to end the inning. Taylore Fuller did a great job going home and saving a run, too. I credit my defense for that inning. But I felt fine. My stuff was good.

KATHLYN MEDINA: I felt great. Like she said she was hitting her spots, and I knew as soon as I looked at her, just get me a ground ball, I'll get us out of it. And we were back to get a double play, and it just worked out in our favor. It was great that she was able to get the ground ball.

COACH WALTON: What Katie (Kathlyn Medina) alluded to, with (Sahvanna) Jaquish we were in tight to get the force at the plate. And after we got Jaquish and the bang-bang play at first with (Kellsie) Kloss and (Kelsey) Stewart is looking in the dugout I just gave them the green light to back up and turn and roll the double play. I think it got away from the runner a little bit too. Katie was behind her instead of in front of her. That's kind of a tweener ball. And she was just right in the perfect spot. She did. She told Lauren (Haeger) let's roll this up, let's get, let's go.

Q. Lauren, can you talk about you were the first player to go 60-60. Now the first player to go 70-70. And what that means to you and also to get your 30th win tonight?

LAUREN HAEGER: I mean, it feels great. I'm just doing what I need to do up there in the circle and at the plate. I'm not really paying attention to numbers so much right now because I'm just trying to take it game by game. But that is a really cool accomplishment and I hope I can keep it going.

Q. Coach, first inning you guys got to a pretty good situation there. It was 0-0 situation even though there were bases loaded for both teams. I lost my thought.

COACH WALTON: At first I thought you were just giving us a recap. (Laughter).

Q. Coach, Lauren talked about giving up those three singles and still staying so confident, not getting shaken. Is that what you've come to expect from her at this point in her career on this stage?

And how amazing is it that she can have that focus in that kind of moment?

COACH WALTON: Just fortunately for us she's a senior. She's really had a great career, a very well documented as far as how well she's been kind of raised to be this. She had a great high school career, great international career. Now she's finishing it off with a great collegiate career. She's poised. I really feel like she's more prepared now. Again, it's easy to get frustrated in the first inning. She gives up a ball in the infield and a nice bunt base hit and then two strikes on (Bianka) Bell and she blooms it in between left and short. I thought she was making good pitches, too. And I saw the poise in her. I come to expect that, yes. She's thrown so many shutouts this year and really done a good job not only using herself and her stuff but using her teammates as well.

Q. Nicole, what were your thoughts when you saw the ball get over the fence with the home run?

NICOLE DEWIIT: I was so excited, I just jumped and I was just clapping. It was so cool. And then looking at my team, they're just waiting for me at home plate. It was just the greatest feeling I ever had.

Q. Coach you saw Kayli yesterday have a big home run and Nicole today. How big is it to have a freshmen contribute?

COACH WALTON: Yeah, and Kayli (Kvistad) had another nice at-bat, two more good at-bats in this game. But it's a proud moment. I think again just watching the young kids get up there and gain confidence and keep gaining it and gaining it, and I think Kayli talked about it yesterday, just learning from our players that have been there, done that. And we're a program to keep building and keep getting better and we need those young kids to set the tone and to be the leaders maybe potentially next year. So it's important. That's a really good at-bat. Obviously with the base-running mistake followed by the home run, it was really a much needed, good two-strike swing.

Q. Coach, is it harder for somebody in college softball to be both a top-tier pitcher and top-tier hitter in 2015 than it would have been 15, 20 years ago?

COACH WALTON: I have a hard time answering that, I think just because of the fact that when I saw on TV popped at the bottom that Lauren (Haeger) was the first 60-60, I would have assumed that somebody else had done that before. I didn't realize that that had never been done before. So I'm going to say now I don't know that -- it's a hard accomplishment. I told her in the recruiting process it's hard to be a pitcher and hitter at this level. You'll have to dedicate yourself. Seen good ones: Nancy Evans at Arizona and Jennie Finch at Arizona comes to my mind. And Ally Carda at

UCLA comes to mind. Some good two-way players. It's really difficult. I don't know if you can compare but I know it's probably going to be very difficult now and it was very difficult in the old days, too.

Q. Lauren threw 79 pitches today, 81 against Tennessee and you get to rest. How important is that and what kind of position does that put you in going forward?

COACH WALTON: I think the greatest day off at the College World Series is a Saturday off. It's a great feeling to have to be beaten twice. It's a great feeling to get your players some rest, some shopping. All the little things we like to do on those days. Really excited about having that. I think again 81 pitches yesterday was awesome and 79 again today. It's a good feeling. It's a good feeling for her to be able to use her defense and get some quick and easy outs.

Q. Nicole, eight of the ten hits tonight came from the top half of the lineup. Do you guys really kind of feed off of each other a lot of good hitters up there? Do you kind of get that contagious feeling whenever you guys start hitting like you were tonight?

NICOLE DEWIIT: I think whenever one of us gets a hit it leads to others and it just wants us to just keep going and keep getting on base and moving runners and scoring runs.

Q. We've obviously had a lot of rain over here in the last week, month, really and left field has been one of the tough areas for them to get a tarp out there and cover. I was curious what the field has been like out there to play in left field?

NICOLE DEWIIT: I mean, it's pretty mushy in shallow left field. But you just have to play in it. You can't complain about it. You just have to deal with it.

Q. Lauren, when you got your 70th home run, actually ESPN put a graphic with you and Babe Ruth as the only people to have 70 wins and 70 home runs, what's your reaction to that?

LAUREN HAEGER: Again, that's so cool. I mean, it's hard because he's got a lot more than me and he's Babe Ruth. But again if we're the only two people to do it, that's like amazing, and I'm just proud of myself, I guess. (Laughter.) I mean it's really cool and something that I'll remember forever.

Q. Lauren and then Nicole, was there any additional motivation today with LSU beating you guys in Gainesville two out of three? I know LSU beat you two out of three in Gainesville, was there any additional motivation today knowing that happened earlier in the season?

LAUREN HAEGER: I mean, yeah. They're a good

team. We're fired up to play them every time. Again, they're a good team. Of course we want to beat everyone we play. But again, us losing to them obviously gave us a little more fire but gave us a little bit more experience against them. So, yeah, they're a good team. We really wanted to beat them.

NICOLE DEWIIT: Just like Lauren (Haeger) said, we were ready for them. We just wanted to come out, play them, beat them, because we did lose to them twice in the first week of the season and we just had that revenge on them.

Q. Aubree, as a so-called captain of the defense to see everything play out from the way defense makes plays, what's it like from your vantage point just to see? I think I asked the same question the last week in the regional, these great defensive plays always happen. What is it like from your vantage point to see that?

AUBREE MUNRO: It's really cool with K (Kathlyn Medina) making that super heads up play because I'm watching everything happen, I'm seeing her move in for the tag, and I'm just hoping, get really excited. Kind of the same thing last year when we turned all those double plays. It's cool to actually be involved in the actual play, so I get to kind of see everything pan out and not running to go back to first, but I'm trailing the runner. And it's really fun and it gets me super pumped up, super excited for Katie (Kathlyn Medina), super excited for Lauren (Haeger). It's been awesome working with her especially this year just watching her kind of become the pitcher that she's kind of always wanted to be, watching her get these awards. It's been really cool to work with her. We've always been the pair that gets really pumped up. Sharing that with her has been cool and being able to watch, watching a pitch come in and knowing it's a pretty pitch, and just being able to get excited with her is a really good feeling.

Q. To follow up on that, you gave up 27 runs the last time you played LSU in the series in Gainesville, did you think there would be a lot of people crossing the plate in this game?

AUBREE MUNRO: I think with our mentality going into this game, no, we knew it was going to be a dogfight. They're a good team. They play with a lot of energy. We play with a lot of energy. I knew it was going to be kind of tight and we were just going to probably feed off each other a little bit and try to break each other's momentum. I figured it would actually be a more low-scoring game than a high-scoring game.

Q. Coach, it was mentioned you guys allowed 27 runs to LSU back in the series. When you prepared for this game what was the main difference you saw from today's game and those games in that

series?

COACH WALTON: I think in those series LSU had some big first innings. So the double play in the first inning was probably the key to limiting the runs scored. We were down in every one of those games by a lot. I think we were down 9-0 on Saturday. So ultimately I think we just, the first inning double play was huge. Like I said, to open up, Lauren Haeger didn't start any of those games leading into the LSU series. I think that was a big key. And I think obviously the way she's throwing the ball right now is one of the bigger differences, too.

Q. As a follow-up, you guys have double plays in each of your last three games. As a coach how much pride do you have when you guys have a knack for turning those double plays?

COACH WALTON: It's difficult to turn double plays in softball. It's a tough thing to do. And especially when you're playing some of the best. And on this stage to be able to turn double plays and how important those double plays have all been, the one Taylor Schwartz turned yesterday and the one Katie (Kathlyn Medina) turned today. The one we turned in the Super Regional was phenomenal against Kentucky. Just those things. And anytime you get two for one, I'm going to take my chances. I think that's a big, huge bonus when we can get that thing done like that.

Q. Katie, can you talk about the things that were running through your mind as the ball's hit to you? Because I mean you could go home. You could go to second and the runner flashes in front of you, could you talk about all the things that were going through your mind there?

KATHLYN MEDINA: Before the ball was hit to me I kind of knew where I was going to go. I was either going to go to second or I was thinking if she comes across me since I'm back I'll just tag her. I got the ball she happened to be right in front of me I put a tag on her I threw it. I knew Lauren (Haeger) would make a good pitch to me, she gave me a ground ball. It's just those little things of making sure I know what I'm going to do when I get the ball.

Q. Coach, was there a key to getting (Carley) Hoover's pitch count up, and did you feel like you wore her down a little bit or were you just hitting home runs like you normally do?

COACH WALTON: Well, I chuckle. Sorry. I think it's what we do. I mean, we get criticized a little bit for some things with our offense, whether it's walks or hit by pitches. But it's what we do. At the end of the day the goal is to swing at strikes. And I think that's what we try to do. We try to swing strikes. If the team throws balls or throws balls in the batter's box or don't throw pitches over the plate, I train my hitters to swing

at strikes. If you're going to criticize someone for not being as fun to watch in some categories, we want them to throw strikes. So I think the goal is again for us to swing at strikes. When people throw strikes and we're on time, good things happen. We weren't really going into the game trying to make her throw strikes or grind her out. But that's just what we do as a whole program anyway.

Q. Coach, you just mentioned something about double plays. If you can expound on that, because actually that double play I'm glad to see a good one but you mentioned it's more about spacing, because you mentioned it's harder to do in softball?

COACH WALTON: With the 60-foot bases and the speed of the runners and we're having a little bit more left handed play in softball versus baseball typically. You have to make good decisions and you have to make them quickly. I think it's harder to get a double play. I look at some baseball double plays, I saw somebody had 83 double plays. If a softball team turned 83 double plays it would have the best fielding percentage in the country. I think overall it's more difficult to get a double play because of the speed, because of the shortness and proximity of the bases home to first.

Q. Why didn't Lauren (Haeger) start, anything different from the games against LSU in Gainesville?

COACH WALTON: At the time, coming off of what we were going with, we had Aleshia Ocasio had thrown some good. She had beaten Michigan, I think she beat Michigan twice, beat Oregon. It's just the matchup we were trying something again. Same thing I did last year. I think Delanie (Gourley) started our first weekend last year against, I don't even remember who it was at this point, I think maybe it was Ole Miss or Alabama was the second series. Just trying to figure out what we have, and at the time Lauren was throwing the ball good. But she wasn't throwing the ball like she is now. And after that weekend or even kind of leading up to that weekend, she really said, Coach, I really worked hard and I want Friday nights. And I said, well, prove it to me. Go out and make sure your bullpens are good and go out there and win ballgames. And she has. Again, I call it like it is. We were going a different direction. She wanted it to go the other direction and she earned it. And I think that's what makes me the most proud of somebody who can have a meeting with a coach, call a meeting with a coach and say this is what I want and I'm willing to work for it. And for that like I said she's been rewarded for it.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.