

2018 Women's College World Series

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Oklahoma City, Oklahoma



Mike White

Megan Kleist

Miranda Elish

Gwen Svekis

Shannon Rhodes

Jenna Lilley

Oregon Ducks

Florida State - 4, Oregon - 1

THE MODERATOR: This is the Game 10 press conference featuring the Ducks of the University of Oregon. We're joined by head coach Mike White, and student-athletes Jenna Lilley, Shannon Rhodes, Gwen Svekis, Miranda Elish, and Megan Kleist.

Coach White, understanding that you're certainly very proud of this team, and I know when you came here you probably felt if you played Oregon softball you'd have a chance to compete for a National Championship. Can you talk about just how difficult it is to win games here and how well you have to play in all three phases of the game?

MIKE WHITE: It's a good question. That's absolutely true. I mentioned to the team we were hoping that the Pac-12 wins this week, and if it happens, I think being the Pac-12 champions and having beaten those teams over the course of the season shows how good our team really can be when we play Oregon softball like you mentioned.

But unfortunately this week we weren't at our best. I'm getting tired of making that speech. We're working hard to try to find that secret of what it takes to bust through that door, because we certainly had the ability to do better than what we're doing right now.

And that's what hurts, I think. That's what hurts these young ladies. Is that if we had played up to our caliber and we got beat, so be it. But to kind of feel like you didn't quite get it done to our abilities, that's the toughest thing to go.

But I want to congratulate Florida State on making it through to the next round, being a quarterfinalist. You know, they're a class group. They play well. They're fighting hard.

You know, like I told my team, we gave ourselves an opportunity to tie that game up, and that's all I can ask of them. We fought hard at the end and just came up a little bit too short.

I'm extremely proud of this team. I'm proud of these four seniors and that they've been with our program for four years. They left our program better than when they came in. I think that's important not only on the field but off the field. They've been great representatives for The University of Oregon and for the Pac-12. I want to thank them all with all my heart. Thank you.

Q. Gwen and Jenna, how tough is it to end your career this way? And do you think after time you'll reflect back and kind of realize what you guys did accomplish over the four years?

GWEN SVEKIS: I think we know what we've accomplished, and it hurts right now, but I'm very proud of my career and my four years. I'm very proud to be a Duck. Yeah, it hurts right now, but I feel like if we had come out and played the way that I know we can, we wouldn't be going home tonight. So that hurts.

But I already know that we had a great four years, and to hear Coach White say that we left the program better than we found it is the greatest achievement of my four years. So, yeah, I'm very proud.

JENNA LILLEY: It hurts. It hurts a lot. Just taking off of Gwen, I'm glad we could leave our program better than we found it. I hope we changed the culture of the team and we made the culture better. That's just as important as on the field. But I'm proud of me, myself and my teammates. Coming to Oregon was the best decision I ever made in my life, and I will always be a Duck no matter what happened today.

Q. Gwen, you were saying yesterday when you guys were all in the batter's box you felt like you knew what was coming and you weren't able to execute on some of the pitches. Was that a similar

sentiment tonight?

GWEN SVEKIS: Yeah, same thing. We were as prepared as we could have been. We watched a ton of film. We hit rise balls all day to day, and we just, I mean, couldn't get it done to the best of our ability.

I think some people had some really great at-bats. I personally had some terrible at-bats, and that sucks, but it is what it is.

Q. Shannon, Miranda, what do you hope to take from this to learn from it so when you get back here you can build on it?

SHANNON RHODES: Great question. I think it's just a feeling. The feeling sucks, for sure, but the only thing we can do is take that and give that -- try to pass the knowledge as best as we can to the younger girls and the incoming freshmen, and stress how important it is to have intent and purpose in every single rep that you take, because it really does count at the end.

MIRANDA ELISH: I think something we can take is a feeling of what our seniors did for us. (Indiscernible) they believed (indiscernible). Sorry. I love softball, and to play with your -- sorry, my best friends. What it's like to love softball and play with your heart and leave your heart on the field every day, I think that's something we can take from that and move on because what they showed and how they played, I don't think anybody has ever showed or played in front of me before. And they're inspiring, and I take it as a huge loss.

Q. Mike, you kind of mentioned this in your opening statement, but you have been here before. You also said you kind of felt like this was the most prepared group you had to go all the way this year. Was it a different feeling this year, right now, sitting where you are?

MIKE WHITE: Well, in some respects, yes, and in some respects no. Obviously we didn't do well on the field. Our defense let us down again, and we didn't have the timely hits at the same time. You've just got to win that second game. That's the bottom line. We just didn't get it done. So then there's that negative feeling you take into the next game. In some respects it's almost easier to lose the first game, get to play a game in the morning and come out that night. That's what we did last year. So I've always explained to the team that the hardest game is the one after you lose. Hopefully you don't want to be there, but that's what happens.

So I'll be getting closer. That's what we've got to delve into, what can we do to bust through? Because we're watching teams perform better than what they did in the season. UCLA's performing better, and teams in our conference that we compete with, they're

performing better than us right now, and we have to find out. I'm pointing the finger right at me right now. It's on me. I've got to find a way to get this team to perform better in the big moments.

But before we go. I want to thank all you guys in the media. All the support we've had from Eugene, all our fans coming down, they've made a huge difference to our program. They're really helping us play, and the support from our athletic department, Lisa Peterson coming down. I want to thank everybody for the support we're getting and thank you to you guys.

Q. Just talk about the confidence overall. You've got four teams in (indiscernible). I know it's been a grinding season, but talk about the magnitude of what it means to come to this point in time to have four teams in conference make it this far?

MIKE WHITE: Well, I really think it's tremendous to see our conference starting to bounce back and get a good representation. I know I tell you what, it was a grind each week. I really didn't think -- we only had three losses in that conference the whole year, I believe, if I'm not mistaken. I thought it would take five or six losses, you know? So I think that our team performed very well throughout the season, did a great job. Pitching staff did really well, defense was solid. And I thought it really helped prepare us for this situation, this moment.

But as we talk about, it's hard to replicate being in front of 10,000 people in this kind of atmosphere, this kind of heat and this humidity, and the field. Everything's a little bit different than what it is in the Northwest. I'm not making excuses, but that's what we're talking about. We need to pass that on to our younger players what it's like. Maybe we need to come here to Oklahoma City and play a game. They have the opportunity to play on this field several times or a few times, right? So maybe that's something we need to look at.

Q. You've talked all year about how this is probably one of the closest groups that you've coached ever. What do you think you'll remember most about this specific team and how have they maybe helped shape the culture of Oregon softball going forward?

MIKE WHITE: I think just the way they relate to me and the way -- I think we're very open and they gave me a lot of suggestions on what we could do, and I listened to them. Hopefully they listened to me. We had a tremendous time going to New Zealand, and that was a great experience. Going to Puerto Vallarta, that was great.

We've had a lot of fun together. And that's what I talk

about, a funeral is a celebration of life, they need to think about a celebration of a season here, being Pac-12 champions and being No. 1 team in the country coming into this tournament.

They've got to hold their heads high. They've got to be proud of what they accomplished. It wasn't our week. Everything happens for a reason. Maybe it will happen soon, I don't know. But if it doesn't, we've enjoyed this season tremendously.

Q. You used all three pitchers. You went out to the circle for some pep talks, pinch hit a couple freshmen. Seemed like you were trying everything, what was that like to try to find a spark?

MIKE WHITE: As my team knows, I hate making trips to the mound. I really do. But we try to do our thing. Also was to get some of our younger players, so kids like Shaye Bowden and April Utecht and getting (indiscernible) out there, and giving them the experience of playing out here. We can't practice that. So giving them those opportunities to get out and experience it, I think. You didn't even know. You didn't even know. Sometimes somebody comes up and you hit a big home run, you know, and you're always hoping there's going to be that spark. I tell you what, I had believe until that last swing, and unfortunately it didn't work.

Q. To get the coach and player perspective, you mentioned, Mike, that coming off a loss you brought that negative energy in or you could have that negative energy. Did it feel flat tonight? Did it feel different when you started the game?

MIKE WHITE: No, it didn't when we started. But I think that as we went on and we were gaining success, I think it started to (indiscernible) depressed a little bit and got a little tight. That happens, unfortunately. So really in those games you want to get ahead so you can loosen up a little bit and give our pitchers a little freedom. But hopefully that's a learning experience. When you get to this stage, man, they're all tight games and you've got to expect that.

Q. Gwen?

GWEN SVEKIS: No, it didn't feel tight at all, we had a good mental approach going into the game, and we were on her early. It helped the first couple innings, and it was like, oh, we're going to break through any second now, and then they started to score, and you started to press, and things sort of get out of control if you don't answer back and get the offense going. So I think that's all that happened tonight. I think if we had scored early, it would have been a different ballgame.