

2018 Women's College World Series

Sunday, June 3, 2018
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma



Heather Tarr
Taran Alvelo
Trysten Melhart
Julia DePonte
Washington Huskies

Washington - 3, Oklahoma - 0

THE MODERATOR: This the Game 11 press conference featuring the Huskies of the University of Washington. Coach Tarr, you guys are now 42-3 when you scored first, and have outscored your opponents 65-9 in the first inning. Is that a point of emphasis for your offense, and how important was it, especially to put Oklahoma behind the eight ball right away?

HEATHER TARR: Kind of wondering when we lost three games and we scored first. That kind of sucks, but it's okay. We've learned a lot this year. I think our team really has grown over the last four years from these seniors freshman year, learning, figuring out just how to create momentum, how to sustain momentum within a game.

And those numbers that you just said speak to their knowledge of the game and their experience and the lessons they've learned. They've learned some hard lessons, and just try to stay like pitch to pitch and be in the moment to try to create momentum for the University of Washington to win games.

Q. Taran, can you just talk about your day? Seven hits, no walks, what was working for you?

TARAN ALVELO: I don't think it was so much that things were working for me. I think it was things were working for us as a team, and I knew what my part was, and I knew I had to go out there and execute.

I owe it all to these people that are sitting next to me and the rest of the team because no matter how good I pitch, sometimes it's just not enough. The love and everything I get from every single one of these people is what keeps me going.

At this point in the season, it's all or nothing.

Q. On Thursday you had seen Oklahoma from afar, then you get a shot. Now today you had your chance to like go back, muscle memory, mentally, what did you all talk about before the game and during the game?

HEATHER TARR: That's a good question. I don't know if there's one answer to your question, but I think at this point in time of the season you're using your language that you become accustomed to using. Whether it's like internal speak about how we're going to approach a certain pitcher, just inside language, they're communicating amongst each other and they're really trying to embrace an attitude of 21 on 1. It's not necessarily the opponent. It's just that moment. 21 people on that pitch, and that's really all we're trying to do.

Now, different opponents pass through us, and you see many people a lot at this time of year. You run into common opponents, and that's helpful. But it's more about us than it is about any one person or opponent that we're facing.

Q. Trysten, you had that incredible catch in the top of the fifth. Can you just kind of talk about what you saw there and how important the defense was today?

TRYSTEN MELHART: Yeah, as soon as I saw the catch, I knew there were runners on, so I knew they were going to have to throw somebody out or catch the ball. Your instincts just kick in in that moment and you just go for it.

Luckily I caught the ball. I knew, if I didn't, that my centerfielder Kelly would be behind me to back me up.

Q. Trysten, I know you sort of just walked through with those catches, how they actually worked, but what did that mean to you coming up big on both those plays?

TRYSTEN MELHART: Yeah, it's awesome. I can't really explain it. I'm just happy I could perform for my team and hold them to not getting a run so we could keep the mo and keep scoring runs and help us win that game.

Q. Julia, talk about three hits, what did that last home run feel like for you?

JULIA DEPONTE: I just think that this whole week has

been a process for me, and this whole year has been a process, just about like hitting and stuff. You know, you're nervous. There are a lot of people out there. It's like a home crowd for them. The first two days I was a little jittery, nervous, and then I just went internally like, hey, you can do this. You've been here. I've played my whole life.

But collectively as a team, we just made loud outs and we had them all the whole time. I was just trying to get our defense and our pitching just another run, so she didn't have to worry about that.

Q. For the three players, was there ever a moment during the season where you guys kind of knew like we're going to make it to the championship series?

TARAN ALVELO: I think as the season grew, the feeling, it's more of a -- it becomes a want and a need. It's survival of the fittest when you come here, and I feel like Coach Tarr touched on that, these seniors, their freshman year until now, they have led us and how much it takes to get here. They've showed us the ropes and they've taught us everything we needed to know.

So it kind of all comes together and clicks at a certain point. You don't really know what that exact time is until you get here and you realize you've done it.

TRYSTEN MELHART: Yeah, I would go off what she's saying. Going throughout the season it just gives you confidence after your wins, your at-bats, making loud outs like Julia was talking about. Like she said, there's not really a certain point or certain moment where you feel like you deserve to be here, you deserve to win. We just keep playing tough, keep playing Husky softball, and it's gotten us where we are. We feel like we can continue getting (indiscernible).

JULIA DEPONTE: We're just playing Husky softball. We've been playing Husky softball all year long. We've had a couple losses that were a little rough along the way, and I think that helped us a lot. But we're here because we're playing Husky softball. That's what led us here. Now we're working together, and it's like we're all together, together, together. I mean, that's it. That's why we're here. It's not really a feeling, it's just we're playing Husky softball. It's always a team effort every time.

Q. Coming out of the Oregon series and UCLA series, you talk about playing Husky softball, what did you take out of those series? How did you move forward from those games to where you are right now?

TRYSTEN MELHART: We kind of do a debrief after

every weekend, so we talk about what we did well, what we can do better. And there are always things that we're going to be able to do better on. We just bring that into the next weekend and into the World Series, and we capitalize on those moments. Just continue to work the process.

JULIA DEPONTE: You learn more from losses sometimes than you do from wins. And I think that we learned a lot through those six games. It was back-to-back, so it kind of stung. But sometimes losing doesn't feel like losses, and we learned from it. We learned that this game is only one pitch at a time, one pitch away, it's a game of inches. So we learned more than if we would have won those games. So I think it made us stronger.

TARAN ALVELO: I think they said it. We're here because of everything that's happened. Not even in this past season but seasons before us, even before we got to college, the games we've watched, the games we've learned from, growing up playing.

Ultimately, I mean, it's why we're here, so people before us.

Q. Taran and Heather, they came into the World Series averaging about five walks a game. They've made so many pitchers give up against them yet you guys issued no walks over two games against them. Why were you able to hang in there?

HEATHER TARR: I think it just speaks to the confidence that our team has in each other, and the point that we're at in the season. Our pitching staff prides themselves on not only momentum, but achieving outs however we can get them.

We're not so fragile that we have to strike everybody out. Obviously, our defense speaks for itself in terms of creating energy behind each pitcher and having the ability to get outs with -- any way possible. But, again, it gives the pitchers a lot of confidence.

Oklahoma's a great team. It's a team we look up to. It's a team that has done so much amazing stuff as a program that you almost don't want to think about them as an opponent, because they are so good and they are tough. All those players, everybody wanted those players in the recruiting battle, and we got ours, and they got theirs and we're all just facing off against each other.

Just our pitching staff is very connected, very tough. It's not just Taran and Gabbie, it's Kristin Cochran and Sam Manti and Coach Glasoe behind that group. But our defense is tough, and it's hard to score off of us.

TARAN ALVELO: I feel like what happens in the game

is a result. We don't really try to think so much about or get ahead of ourselves and think about the result. We think about what goes into each pitch and how to execute those pitches properly. If a walk happens, a lot happens. It's what happens next that's the most important thing. I didn't even realize I didn't have a walk until 20 minutes ago (laughing). Thanks. But it's all just about how mentally tough you are and how you handle the game.

Q. When did you make the decision to start Taran today?

HEATHER TARR: I talked about it on TV, you probably didn't hear it, so to reiterate what I said. We need her. We are not where we are today without her. Gabbie Plain has had a phenomenal season, and she's amazing too. We're not Washington without Taran Alvelo. She has performed how she's needed to perform every time we've given her the ball. She absolutely deserved to start this game today no matter what was going to happen. We're going to ride her, just like we'll ride Gabbie the whole way we have them.

Q. When you saw the ball sailing towards you today, did you get a sense of deja vu?

TRYSTEN MELHART: No, not until afterwards. It happened so fast, you don't really think. It just happened.

Q. We know we're going to have one Pac-12 team in the final, we may end up with two. This league has so much history, you talk about it all the time. But as a coach, week in and week out, what makes the Pac special circa 2018? What is it right now about the league?

HEATHER TARR: The players that we have in conference make the players that we have in the conference better every day. One through -- how many do we have? Nine in our conference? It's hard. It's really hard. Especially for us, we ran into two really good teams in a row in terms of Oregon and UCLA, and that was hard. You kind of know that's going to happen, but you just got to keep it in perspective.

I think it's not much different than it has been in the past, but you speak to the health of UCLA, and when they're really good, I think everybody else is really good as well. I think they're a traditional team that should be good. When they're really good, I think everybody else is really good. But we're proud to be a part of our conference. There is nothing like it. I know people say there are others like it, but I can prove that, because I've been involved in it for a long time, and it's hard.

Q. I know you guys have the saying you're the women. I don't know if you realize this is the first time that the final four head coaches have all been

females. If you care to comment on that?

HEATHER TARR: Yeah, I will. Julia might want to too. Yeah, we're not too -- we're not too adverse to having women in leadership positions. Obviously our president of the University of Washington, President Cauce, is a female. Our athletic director and her people with her, they're females. Jen Cohen and Erin O'Connell, they're sitting in the back, Chris Dawson is with us from the Pac-12.

I just feel very prideful in just proving to our women that women can lead. You can lead with emotion. You can lead with wisdom, and gender is important, I think, only because women haven't tapped into the men's side of the game. I think the equal for us would be baseball. But until that happens, I feel like we have to continue to prove to the world that we can lead each other and we can be great with each other.

Q. Julia, let's follow up on that a little bit. Why don't you talk about as a student-athlete what it means to you to see females in positions of authority?

JULIA DEPONTE: Prideful. I mean, I just take so much pride in just having a leader as a woman. Our coaching staff, and, you know, her and Coach Whitney -- she's our leader, but then on to Jen Cohen, she's helped me in so many ways, going on to my next step and after, and same with Coach Tarr. I'm going on to do whatever I'm doing after this.

Softball's great and everything, but they've helped prepare me and know that I can be a leader. So I'm motivated to become a leader and just to try to be a role model for other females and other women. Even to boys too to know that we can do it too. We're empowered too. So just very fortunate to have two very strong, and our president, too, like women to show us the way. It just makes me so happy. I could go on and on, but just happy and lucky and lucky for this opportunity to be here at the University of Washington.

Just happy.