

2018 Women's College World Series

Sunday, June 3, 2018
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma



Lonnie Alameda

Jessie Warren

Carsyn Gordon

Sydney Sherrill

Kylee Hanson

Elizabeth Mason

Florida State Seminoles

Florida State - 12, UCLA - 6

Q. Coach, one of the core values of your program is committed. Can you explain what that means to your program, how you have incorporated commitment, and how that has helped you go 6-0 in elimination games in this postseason?

LONNI ALAMEDA: I mean, first I want to congratulate UCLA on a tremendous season. I just -- I coached in the Pac and I know the tradition of the Pac and it has tremendous athletes and a great program, and again, it's an honor to play them, and it was a hard-fought game, and Rachel Garcia is everything that she's been for the Player of the Year, and it was fun to compete against her.

Yeah, as for our core values, we try to live them the best we can all year long, and we really pound in commitment, and all of them truly in the fall. The fall is where everything happens for us, and we really grind it out in the fall. We really try to make sure that the underclassmen through the lessons of coaching staff, practices and our upperclassmen, what commitment means and what living and being where your feet are, living the values mean. It's one thing to post something on the wall, it's another thing to live it daily, and I think we embrace our identity, and it's different every year, but our core values stay the same, and that's our standard and that's our line, and when we dip below it we have a self-check little meeting; and when we rise above it, which we are exceeding some amazing expectations right now, and no one believed this but this crew, and we're having so much fun with it, and I think that's the biggest thing right now is we are truly having fun. We were an emotional team in the

first game. It's just so exciting that they love it that much and they're so excited about it. Very proud of this team and the history we're making.

Q. Coach, just looking at your schedule, non-conference, Michigan, South Alabama, Alabama, Hofstra and Oregon. You lost the first game to them, bounced back and beat them, same with LSU in the super regional and then today. I'm wondering, what is it about the players or the game plans that allow you that kind of success which is kind of extraordinary?

LONNI ALAMEDA: Yeah. Another core value of ours is smart, and it encompasses a lot of things but one of them is trying to be the smarter player on the field, so we know in order to get to this stage, you're going to have a regional and a super regional, you're going to be playing someone twice, and the biggest thing about the game at this level is making adjustments.

Rachel Garcia is going to beat us on something one time, she's not going to beat us again a second time. That's a smart core value that we live. So when we do set our schedule that way, we set our schedule to be able to play teams two times, if not two out of three times, to make sure that we can challenge these girls in making adjustments throughout the weekend and then throughout the game because that's a huge part of the success here is one kid is going to get a swing if we can stick to game plans, and that really showed up and showed well for us today.

Q. Jessie, talk about bouncing back; you lost to Oregon, came back and beat Oregon --

JESSIE WARREN: Yeah, I think -- this team just -- we fight, and I tell the girls all the time, it's hard to beat us more than once, especially like in a series or something. This team, like I said, fights, and we don't stop fighting. We don't know how to stop fighting.

There's not much I can say about this group of girls because I love them so much, and those are the three words that like I feel describes us because we are family, and like Coach said, we're smart in the classroom and when we're scouting teams and we're aggressive on the field. This team is amazing, and we can do some amazing things, and we've showed that in the postseason. We're going to continue to fight the next three days.

Q. Going back to the first game, Elizabeth, coming through with the big hit, just kind of take me through that at-bat.

ELIZABETH MASON: Well, obviously Rachel Garcia, she's an amazing pitcher, and she's going through the innings, we knew it was going to be a hard game, and we knew it was going to come down to one pitch, and ultimately it could have been anyone. Dani had that home run that was robbed, and just not giving up, committed, committed, committed to the plan. Just running that through my head over and over again. Just one pitch, and that was the one.

Q. Coach, you had to win two, but you come in with two really strong starting pitchers. How critical was that and how confident were you coming into the day?

LONNI ALAMEDA: Yeah, definitely having a one-one punch is huge for this time of year, but it's been huge for us all season. This is not something different right now that we haven't lived all year long, and so we were very lucky to have a lefty and a righty, also. That's another thing is you can have two dominant pitchers but maybe they have the same style of pitching, but we have two completely different pitchers, so we can match up well with offenses and match a lefty to lefty matchup or a righty pull hitter, whatever it might be, and work from there, or even Cass having come in and giving us a couple outs of some ground balls. No matter what, we knew at some point we were going to get the ground ball for the double play. So it's just one of those things that it's nice to have in the bullpen, but Kylee and Meghan have just been outstanding. They've been a spark plug in the circle for this team, and just to see the team go out and just swing the bats and know that the pitchers are going to be there for them, it's really cool to see them all working together.

Q. Elizabeth, we've talked to Sydney about this this week and this experience as a freshman, being in this environment. For you, especially with the big moment that you had earlier and then seeing everything this evening, what has environment and atmosphere been like for you?

ELIZABETH MASON: It's been crazy. It's been crazy for sure. Just being surrounded by upperclassmen and my teammates, they always tell us, especially the underclassmen, just soak it in, take a breath. Whenever it feels like it's overwhelming, just step back, realize the situation that you're in, realize the surroundings. Not everybody gets to be here. So rather than let it be intimidating, just let it fuel your fire for the next play, the next pitch, and just like let that be your motivation.

Q. Tomorrow's Championship Series, what do you

want to see from yourselves and from the team overall?

ELIZABETH MASON: We joked earlier I'd be more worried if we won the first game than anything, but honestly, just play the same game we've been playing the whole time. I don't doubt my teammates for a second. I'm so lucky to be a part of this program. I just love these girls so much.

KYLEE HANSON: Just keep living every day we've been living all postseason and all season, one pitch mentality and really having each other's backs no matter what the circumstances.

SYDNEY SHERRILL: I would say what we did today, we fought. We fought so hard, and that second game we came out with so much momentum, and 12 runs, I think. If we do that, I feel like we'll be good.

CARSYN GORDON: I feel like the fire of this team, I just fully expect that to come out and the rest of the series to continue fighting, and just, yeah, fight.

JESSIE WARREN: I think what this team is doing great is we're focusing on what we can do best as a team and individually to help our teammates and the girls that stand to the left and right of us be successful. Just staying within ourselves and doing what Florida State does best, and when we collectively come together and do all three of those things, hit, pitch, and have good defense and timely hitting, we're really good. Just staying within ourselves and playing Florida State softball I think will be really good.

Q. Do you feed off each other, like when Elizabeth hit the home run it seemed like that carried over, and then Jessie, and you, and you.

JESSIE WARREN: I mean momentum is momentum. If one hitter is hitting, she's like, I want to hit. But I think we communicate really well as a unit, as righties, as lefties, so the communication never stops all game. We're really good at making adjustments when adjustments are needed, and we did that all game, like all day today, first game and second game, and we did a really good job of doing that, so yeah, our hitting is fun and the momentum carries.

CARSYN GORDON: I definitely think it's contagious. Just like Jessie said, we talk a lot in the dugout about plans and everything like that, so it's cool to see if Jessie sticks to her plan, like that gets me excited to stick to my plan because we know we talked about really work pays off, so that gets exciting all throughout the lineup.

SYDNEY SHERRILL: Yeah, I would agree. Just coming in they were switching up pitchers in that second game, and every time they would switch up a

pitcher we would just go in there, we would talk about what they do, talk about what we need to do, and we would all stick to it, and it worked out pretty good. That just was pretty motivating.

ELIZABETH MASON: Yeah, same thing. I feel like there's a moment when you realize, like I can do this, I really can. We're going up against great pitching all week, all weekend, on into this next couple days. Just that moment when it clicks and you know that you can do it, I feel like that spreads through the team, like we can all do this.

Q. Coach, you mentioned about having a pitching staff, a lefty and a righty. What's it like to have an everyday catcher that can do the work, call a game, and whoever you put into the circle, they're able to get that done?

LONNI ALAMEDA: Yeah. It's amazing. Yeah, Anna Shelnutt has been tremendous for us. In recruiting her, she was one of the best receivers in the country. You know, it's kind of funny she was told by a team that she was too short and she couldn't play high-level softball, and that really kind of hit her, and obviously she's an amazing catcher, but she's swinging it for us, too. I think the thing that Anna does so well is she's just so even-keel, and she does get a little emotional at times because she wants to produce at the plate and we always have to remind her, your job as a catcher is to catch, and then when the swings come and the hits come, that's awesome. But keep catching your tail off, keep making those diving catches, keep giving us two, three inches in the outer half because you just move so well with your glove, and she's got an amazing relationship with both the pitchers, so yeah, she's the anchor. She gets no love, so thank you for bringing that up to give her love. She is awesome. We hug her up as much as we can, and in this heat, with all that gear on, just much respect to her. She's been amazing for us.

Q. I know everybody talks about the emotions, but Carsyn, I had a chance when I walked down into the fan section after you hit your home run, your dad was crying, and I just want to ask you about what your dad means to you.

CARSYN GORDON: Yeah, well, it's definitely been an emotional roller coaster this whole tournament. What my dad means to me. Growing up, he was my -- my back with softball. Everything we would do, tournaments, practices, he would be there motivating me. It would get a little annoying at times, but I knew he always wanted the best for me. He knew this was my dream to be here, to be in this spot, and I guess that paid off to him, all his hard work and everything that he's put into it. He's been with me through it all.

Q. Coach, what stands out to you about Washington and about Coach Tarr?

LONNI ALAMEDA: You know, I think we pride ourselves a little bit on being scrappy and they do, too. They're a scrappy team. They're fiery. You put it on the ground, they field it, and they do a great job defensively. You know, we haven't seen them play a ton, so lots of video coming tonight, but we know Taran -- I mean, they're good. They're good because they're here right now just like we are, and it's kind of fun because we're a speed team, they're a speed team. We've got some power kids, they've got two really good pitchers, so it's going to be an awesome match the next couple games. When I say match, we talk about throwing punches. It's like we are in a boxing match, and that's what it's going to be. It's going to be blow-blow, and we're going to keep going, they're going to keep going, and it's going to be a lot of fun. Heather has done a great job at the University of Washington.

Q. Jessie, this is the first time an ACC program has made it this far in this tournament. It's also the first time an ACC program has won more than two games in this tournament. Just talk about what this means to not just Florida State but as the ACC as a whole.

JESSIE WARREN: Yeah, it's just a great opportunity for the ACC to be here and just show that we're competitors, too. I think just being able to play in the national championship game is just an opportunity not many people get. We're so grateful for that and so grateful to be here and be a part of this tournament, and we're excited to get out there tomorrow night and continue this journey.

Q. Coach, I noticed after the game obviously you and your coaching staff had a big hug. You're very close, you've come a long way. What does this mean for you? We've talked about this, bringing Florida State back to where it belongs, and here you are. What did that moment mean to you with the staff and the hug when that final out was made?

LONNI ALAMEDA: Yeah, definitely it was stinky. (Laughter). But good, earned sweat. That's what it was. Good, earned sweat. Honestly, we sat down at the beginning of the year as a coaching staff, we had no idea about this team. The team had no idea. And the journey, like Jessie talked about, it's about incredible and fun, and we've gone through our ups and downs and every staff does. We are truly a family and we've been coaching together for a long time. We have our knock-down drag-outs just like a family does and we love each other just like a family does. It's cool to see tears in their eyes. We've just worked so hard to, one, want Florida State to be here, want to be in a national championship, that's been our goal, and then,

two, for the ACC. We want to show that this amazing game, you don't have to be in two conferences or maybe one of the teams in another conference to win a national championship. You don't. You can be at another school, another conference and you can make it happen.

If you put the hard work in and you do it right, you can be here, and I think that's something that we're so proud of because we've worked really hard on making sure that people know that it's just the time you put in and the culture you create can create a successful program.