

2018 Women's College World Series

Thursday, May 31, 2018
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma



Mike White
Shannon Rhodes
Haley Cruse
Lauren Burke
Alexis Mack
Miranda Elish
Oregon Ducks

Oregon 11, Arizona State 6.

THEE MODERATOR: Coach White, we'll start with you. How important was it for you and how much of an impact is it that every time they put up some runs, you guys answer it immediately back.

MIKE WHITE: Exactly right. As we talked about, it's important to regain momentum, especially after either somebody scores or when we score to try to shut that other team down. I thought that happened after the first innings, we were able to get the momentum back, and then we shut them down for the next couple innings, of course, until they scored again.

If you had told me that's going to be 17 runs scored off those two pitching staffs to start the game, I'd have thought you were crazy. It was definitely a dogfight.

Congratulations to Arizona State. How far they have come in just one year is amazing and Coach Ford, and G. Juarez is certainly a top-class pitcher, and I bet you they are like us. They don't want to face another Pac-12 team but the good news is we're here and the Pac-12 is well represented.

Q. Miranda, what was it like emotionally to get the start today and also to get so much run support?

MIRANDA ELISH: It was awesome to get the start, and my offense had my back the whole entire time. I gave up a two-run home run to start off the game, and they punched, ASU, right back, and put up two runs. So definitely our offense really saved us today.

Q. Miranda, the only runs you've given up in your

last two starts are from the long ball. Other than that you've been pretty spot on. Is it just a missed pitch here and there that's the cause of those?

MIRANDA ELISH: Yeah, they are not terrible pitches but they are not good pitches, and they just capitalize on those little mistakes.

Q. Coach, you guys took advantage of a lot of their costly errors that they had earlier in the game. Can you talk about putting the pressure on the team here in Oklahoma City?

MIKE WHITE: Actually that goes both ways. Every time an error is committed, it's one third of an inning that you give the other team and I think there was, what, three errors, or something like that, maybe a couple of errors, so that gives us more advantage, and like you said, we're able to capitalize on it.

Top of the order right there, they were pretty good. We had five hits in the top two hitters, so that's what we have to do if we expect we want to win and we got great production from Rhodes and Svekis. She came in with a couple of chinks here and there but she's known for that, and of course Haley Cruse and Lauren Burke, right through the order. I was really pleased with the way we hit the ball.

Q. I'm not entirely sure to whom to direct this question but what happened this morning with the bus and the jersey? Wonder if you can answer that?

MIKE WHITE: We actually took Florida State's bus, so we want to know if we can borrow it for the rest of the week.

Q. Behind the plate, Lauren, your post-season so far, it's kind of been unreal. If you can talk about just what your year has been like, the hometown kid, playing in the World Series, can you summarize what all is going on right now?

LAUREN BURKE: This whole year has been a total roller coaster of ups and downs. I'm seeing the ball right now and I get lucky in situations; I get runners on and I just try and move them over, give them a good pitch to hit and that's pretty much what I'm trying to do right now.

Q. Shannon, this was your third time going against Juarez. How much did that help and how much did

you look at the first two games and look back and prepare for today?

SHANNON RHODES: Great question. I think that our first two outings against Juarez, our first game, was obviously better than our second but going back and watching film and saying, you know, we're not going to have her beat us again on the same pitches, she's got a sequence.

I personally think very predictable, so we really just bought into what Coach White told us -- bought into the plan, swinging above the ball where it's going to be, instead of under it and trying to lift. Just hit gap-to-gap line drives. You've just got to stick to the plan.

Q. Haley, with the sideball, what was going through your mind in that at-bat?

HALEY CRUSE: I know what she was going to throw me. She got me out twice on the same pitch pretty much. I knew at some point she was going to come in, so I let all that stuff go and I waited for her to come up and in and got the pitch I was looking for. So I was just trying to produce and make an adjustment and turn on that pitch.

Q. Lauren, did you hear what Jenna Lilley said before your trip on your approach to the plate?

LAUREN BURKE: Yeah, I did.

Q. What do you think about that?

LAUREN BURKE: I think it's funny. I think it's pretty accurate. When I'm in the box I'm really not trying to think too much. I know a lot of people are like, that's crazy but it helps my game, I have a tendency to overthink things, so when I'm in the box, make it as simple as I can. Get a good pitch to hit, hit it hard, get there on the ball and I just limit it to that. I don't try and get it -- I don't try and look for a certain pitch, just a strike that I can handle.

Q. Shannon and Alexis, and maybe some follow-up for coach, what's clicking with your offense right now, how does that -- when your offense is going so well, how does that make you feel when you're hitting 11 runs against Kentucky and today and that kind of thing?

SHANNON RHODES: I think our offense is clicking in a sense that we are just trying to pass the bat from hitter to hitter, one through nine. I don't really think there's a secret to it. Just everybody get on base, get them over, get them off, get them through to the plate.

ALEXIS MACK: Yeah, one thing that's definitely helped is we've been on this stage before, we've been to the Super Regional and we've been on this big stage, so the nerves aren't really there. We are not trying to do too much.

And like Shannon said, we are just trying to pass on the bat and it makes it really easy with runners on base, at least for me and other people, that the pressure is on the defense and just try to move them over and not try to get too big or be the hero.

MIKE WHITE: I think it's just a pretty consistent approach by our offense. We have had our struggles this year, for sure, and we have been shut out several times, but they have bounced back and learned from those mistakes. Juarez, second time she threw a great game against us and made the adjustments and we didn't.

And so, I think what we keep telling them, they are starting to buy into the plan a little bit, and we also know that this game can humble you in a heartbeat. Just because you score 11 today doesn't mean you're going to score 11 tomorrow and we know that. We have to keep the focus. It's the focus and intensity and make sure the team we're playing, it's the toughest 21 outs that we can give them.

Q. You guys have struggled sort of in the first game the past couple of times. How good does this one feel? And how much did you talk about maybe last year's experience and how difficult it was to sort of make your way through the loser's bracket?

MIKE WHITE: We definitely feel a lot better having a win under our belt, there's no doubt about it, as opposed to being 0-1. But we know that it gets tougher, each step gets tougher and tomorrow we have to make sure we're rested and focused for whoever wins the Washington/Oklahoma game. Like I said, the game doesn't know tomorrow what happened today. We have to come out and play, be the better team on the day.

Q. What's the process and the timeline for you as far as choosing which pitcher to start in this game? Do you have a conversation with Megan?

MIKE WHITE: Yeah, I've already told the pitcher they are starting, but I'm not going to share that -- today's game, oh, that was a tough decision. It was really a match up that I thought her pitching style matched up better and that was the whole reason for it.

I had the luxury of picking two pitchers that have an ERA right around or under 1.00 and that's good especially when we are scoring runs. It was a matter of how long do I let her go, I don't want to wear her out and I don't want to wear out Megan because if we win today we have to throw her tomorrow. You have to be cognizant of that when you make those changes. But tomorrow, you know, we've got to come out and if we

have to throw all three tomorrow, we'll throw all three.

Q. Going back to Lauren, asking you what you've seen from her, it's got to make you excited, right.

MIKE WHITE: It's pretty exciting because when I had a 10-U team I had a 7-year-old sitting on the sidelines, and we didn't have enough players for a 10-U team.

So we said, "Hey, Crazy Legs, Lauren, come play for us" and she did. Her sister played for us, as well, Shawna, and Lauren's just kind of grown up with the game and it's been great to see her take this to another level. She came into my office and said, "I want to be a Duck," so there was no hesitation what she wanted to do. You have to grab that when it happens.

I think that she's just going to continue to get better from here.

Q. How important was it to give Megan a couple innings? It's been a week since she last pitched -- just moving forward.

MIKE WHITE: Well, everything happens for a reason. I don't know what it is, why it is sometimes, until you look back and reflect on it, what happens after that.

Maybe that was a good thing was to get Megan out there and give her a little bit of time out on the mound and get a feel for it because it is -- I know from my playing days, that first time out sometimes is a little touchy-feely, like yeah, you had to be out there to do it.

So maybe that is a good thing, that both their pitchers, sort of one and two, got their feet wet. Maggie hasn't been out there yet but hopefully it leads to good things going forward.

Q. The potential match up with Oklahoma tomorrow, you played them early in the season, you didn't see Lowary, you roughed up Parker a bit, have you scouted Lowary, does anything stick out about her?

MIKE WHITE: 72-mile-an-hour. It's coming at you hard, you know, and that's what it is. She's got a little bit of stuff, a little bit of this and that, but it's just hard. It's hard to practice that. We don't have anybody who can throw 72-mile-an-hour left-handed.

But the good thing is that we have seen some really good left-handers in our conference. You see Juarez a couple times and then we saw, in fact, they are set up the same way. There may be karma here, but I know when we played Oklahoma, we played Juarez that weekend, so Parker comes to town and we see Juarez again and now it sets up this way again today.

We saw Juarez today and hopefully -- I don't know

what's going to happen tomorrow, Washington has got a good team, too, don't get me wrong, but if it happens to be Parker, then hopefully we got a good look at her. But Paige Lowary, she could be tough to handle the first couple times through.

Q. Can you talk about the impact that Jimmy Kolaitis has had on your team and leading your offense and coaching them?

MIKE WHITE: Jimmy is a hard worker. He is there before I am, leaves after I am. He's one of those unsung heroes that you don't see. Whenever somebody wants to go and hit extra, he's there, no questions asked and he's always trying to get better. He's always calling people and has great contacts. He's trying to reach out and find different ways to do things, and so I respect him for that. He's going to be a great head coach one day.