

2018 Women's College World Series

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Oklahoma City, Oklahoma



Tim Walton

Nicole DeWitt

Aleshia Ocasio

Janell Wheaton

Kayli Kvistad

Amanda Lorenz

Florida Gators

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THE MODERATOR: This is Game 9 press conference featuring the Gators of the University of Florida. We're joined by head coach Tim Walton, student-athletes Amanda Lorenz, Kayla Kvistad, Janell Wheaton, Aleshia Ocasio, and Nicole DeWitt.

Coach, we talked the other day about how walks are a big part of your offense and working the count and elevating pitch counts for the other pitcher. Paige Parker was pounding the zone early on, getting ahead a lot of 0-1, 0-2 counts. How does that affect your approach at the plate?

TIM WALTON: Well, you watch the first game, you watch Arizona State when they talked on camera about being able to decide on one half and play to the other, we decided not to go with that plan and stay with the plan that we always use.

But I told our team after the game there's not a whole lot you can do when you've got a pitcher, strike one all day long. Not strike one with one pitch, but strike one inside, outside curve, changeup, bounced the changeup when she wanted to, featuring a little bit of a rise. She was good. I give her all the credit. She really did a wonderful job.

We squared up a couple balls and hit a couple balls hard, but weren't able to get enough elevation to the one that Jaimie Hoover hit, and then Amanda, the first changeup in the first inning.

But really good job. Give them credit for the game plan

pitching-wise. I thought they did a good job, did a good job pitch calling, but overall got to give her tons of credit, game 1 and game 2.

Q. You guys are so good offensively creating plays. How tough was it when Ocasio is pitching so well and they get a run on a pass ball and things like that? How frustrating is that?

TIM WALTON: Yeah, I mean, one run is obviously a tough enough challenge today, chasing two made it a lot tougher, which was a nasty pitch. She threw probably one of the best dropoffs she's done all year on that one. But I thought we did a good job on that.

Obviously, the game plan wasn't to see how far Jocelyn Alo can hit the ball in the first inning, so we were going to obviously check the speed, see what she could do in regards to that velocity and movement. Kelly just threw right down the middle. But other than that, we respect where respect is due to (indiscernible) so many other people, not only for this year but future years.

But, yeah, it was tough. Tough to chase one, and really tough to chase two.

Q. Can you go through the decision to walk Jocelyn intentionally those next two times? Was that something you were considering to do coming into the game even with runners on the base?

TIM WALTON: I think I just answered that. That was the key. We're not going to let her beat us. Obviously Shay Knighten had a wonderful World Series, especially World Series finals last year and MVP, but we were going to have to make her beat us today. We weren't going to let Jocelyn on base with runners on. I don't think I've ever walked a runner to be in scoring position. I know I've walked runners with bases loaded before. I don't think I've ever put a runner in scoring position before.

Q. Tim and Nicole and Janell and Amanda, just what makes -- actually, Tim, you already answered this -- what makes Paige Parker so difficult to hit from your standpoint?

AMANDA LORENZ: She did a great job just attacking the zone and competing. I think that was the best thing about her demeanor. She was really just competing out there. Even if you don't have your best stuff, that's really hard to compete against when a pitcher is just

competing every single pitch. She did a good job, and we were just trying to compete too.

JANELL WHEATON: She just pounded the zone from strike one and the very first pitch. She had the advantage of her changeup working today. I think that was the key, changing speeds and just pounding the zone and changing the different planes of her pitches.

NICOLE DEWITT: Yeah, she's a great pitcher. We give her credit for that. She just kept mixing where she was throwing it, mixing in and out, throwing that changeup, and that changeup is pretty dirty. She did a great job tonight.

Q. For Tim and the other players, was there any residual emotion from last night the way the game ended or how it played out? What was your day like today looking ahead to this one?

TIM WALTON: I thought business as usual. We did the same thing we've always done. Other than cherry juice and beet juice, I think everything else was right on point.

Q. You've seen a reasonable amount of Paige Parker over the years. Last year they don't do what they did without Paige Lowary. So I guess I'm wondering, did she reach a level today that you've not seen previously from her?

TIM WALTON: You know, I would certainly not want to tell you that she wasn't good last year, but she was a lot better today than she was in the championship last year, in my opinion.

Q. Aleshia, you've been such a great player in your career and the team has been so good. Can you kind of capsule what it's been like to play with this group so long and how well you guys have done?

ALESHIA OCASIO: It's definitely been a journey. It's been a great experience learning from Coach Walton and (Coach) Rocha, and multiple other coaches along the way. But to play with this senior class and some of the greatest athletes, Amanda Lorenz and Kelly Barnhill, Player of the Year, it's been amazing to learn from everybody. To just play alongside with some of the people who are going to go down as some of the greatest players.

So it's been a journey, but like I said, I'm going to remember it forever wearing this uniform. Lots of emotions today, obviously, this is my last game in this uniform, but it's definitely an experience.

Q. Kayli, you hit the hard single in the first inning, and there were a few hard-hit balls early on, and it seemed later on there were less and less. Did Paige make adjustments, do you think, her second

or third at-bat, or was she just sharper overall?

KAYLI KVISTAD: I definitely think she threw a changeup a little more as the game went on and just really locating that rise ball in between the changeups. I think that was her biggest adjustment. She was always pounding the zone, trying to get ahead of our batters, and we didn't make enough adjustments.

Q. Amanda, I hate to do this to you, but I want to ask you what it's been like playing with these girls to your left, and what it means to you having played your last game with them?

AMANDA LORENZ: It's special. They're competitors, and I just have a thing about teammates that just compete each and every day. It's been really special. To look at them in the eye, they may not have their best stuff each and every day, but they'll compete their butt off for you and do anything for this team and for the person next to them, and that's just really special.

It shows a lot who the type of players that Coach Walton recruited to this class. They really just did anything that they could for the team. You truly cannot say that about every girl on every team, and we were special enough to have a whole senior class that really did everything for the benefit of the team, trying to get the team better. I think it's just really special, and I've learned a lot from them.

Aleshia Ocasio, what an athlete. I'll never play with an athlete like that ever again. She's just a once-in-a-lifetime kid that I've been around. Kayli, her competitive fire that she brings each and every day, that's why she's so good. She's just so competitive. Nicole, she's just a game changer. I think that over the years she just has the ability to change the game at any given time.

And Janell, I have the most history with Janell, so it's kind of crazy that it finally came to an end, but seven years, eight years playing together, so it's just really superb, and I'm really thankful that I've had the opportunity to learn from her as a teammate. We've gotten a lot better together. This is our dream together, so it's pretty cool that we committed to Florida together. We wanted to win a National Championship together. We won one at travel ball.

But to play in the College World Series with someone who made me better growing up and is one of the reasons why I'm here is just really special.

Q. Coach, can you comment on the rumors that you're interested in the Texas job and that they're interested in you? Can you say with 100% assurity that you'll be back at Florida next year?

TIM WALTON: Well, first of all, I don't know about the

interest on my part. Two, I don't think that this is the place to have that conversation. But thanks. It's flattering. I've got a great job, so thank you.

AMANDA LORENZ: Go Gators.