

2018 Women's College World Series

Saturday, June 2, 2018
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma



Patty Gasso
Paige Parker
Lea Wodach
Nicole Pendley
Shay Knighten
Jocelyn Alo
Oklahoma Sooners

Oklahoma - 2, Florida - 0

THE MODERATOR: Game 9 press conference featuring the Sooners of Oklahoma, joined by head coach Patty Gasso, Jocelyn Alo, Shay Knighten, Nicole Pendley, Lea Wodach, and Paige Parker.

Coach, these two programs, Oklahoma and Florida, have been the two best programs in the country over the last five years. You guys have some epic games with them. Are you able to actually enjoy competing against them?

PATTY GASSO: I do, because they make us better. So I congratulate Florida because they always push us and make us be a better team in order to find a way to win. So they're tough, and it was -- I mean, they had the tying run at the plate quite a few times. But I enjoy playing anyone that challenges us and makes us better. I love competition just like they do.

Q. Just talk about Paige's performance tonight. She comes back in the second game and is masterful again. Talk about everything, kind of the game plan and how she executed, please.

PATTY GASSO: Well, she's a senior. She's been here, she's done it many times. And when Paige Parker says "I would like to have the ball," you listen to Paige Parker and you give her the ball.

She did a good job of not throwing a tremendous amount of pitches in the first game, so it's still fresh. For her to have an outing like that after playing Arizona State against a team like Florida that's such a well-rounded team in every area, it was one for the ages, in

my mind. It was not only just masterful, but it was a will to find a way to win, which led into our team, and they were going to find a way to win with her putting those efforts on the mound.

Q. Paige, you built a reputation as a workhorse early in your career, but have you ever thrown back-to-back complete games in a doubleheader? What was it like especially in the later innings of tonight's game?

PAIGE PARKER: Yeah, I have thrown back to -- I mean, it's been a long time, but I have done it. Just kind of took myself back there and it was just about going out there and competing and doing anything I could to help my team win.

My team is so important to me, and I love them so much, and I wanted to do anything for them.

Q. Paige, did you adamantly tell Coach that you wanted the ball? And the second part, how important was it, all day you were getting ahead of hitters, how important was that?

PAIGE PARKER: I don't know if it was adamantly. I just said, told her before the game.

PATTY GASSO: Kind of whispered it.

PAIGE PARKER: Yeah, I did kind of whisper it to her. The second part of the question, I just wanted to try to get ahead of batters as much as I could, try to be as efficient as I could tonight, just try to not throw a ton of pitches, and just work counts and try to work counts in my favor.

Q. Lea, you've caught Paige forever, and you've probably caught tens of shutouts from her. But did she have something beyond today? I mean, whether it was the way she was competing internally or the number of pitches she could throw wherever she wanted to, was she in a place that was sort of even new for her in some way?

LEA WODACH: I feel like physically ball-wise she threw -- she obviously elevated her game and was getting ahead in counts which is huge. But she just goes to a new place in this kind of environment competitively. She's hands down the biggest competitor I know, and I'm very thankful she's on our team.

Yeah, she's just the best competitor I know. I love going to work with her, and it's incredible to see her continue to elevate and find that competitive mindset that a lot of people don't know how to get to.

Q. Paige, what's harder, the mental or the physical toll that you went through today? Second thing, what did you do in the four hours that you had off to try to get ready?

PAIGE PARKER: I definitely think it's tougher mentally. I think in general being a pitcher you have to be probably the most mentally tough person out on the field. So just trying to go to another place mentally and just go out there and compete and fight. I mean, just give it my all.

In the four hours, I ate, took a shower, and watched film.

Q. Shay, Patty talked about the tone Paige set and how it emanates throughout the dugout. As a fellow player, you've spent several seasons with her. What did that feel like and how did it become contagious?

SHAY KNIGHTEN: It's just the look she has in her eyes. It's something I've never seen before. Like Lea said, she's really competitive and takes herself to the next level. To be playing behind her, it's almost like if you don't, like you're going to miss out.

So she's a leader and you're going to want to follow because she's going to lead you to places that you want to be. Playing behind Paige is something that I've cherished these last three years. So she is just a competitor. I love playing behind her, and I will try to do anything and everything I can to help her out when she's doing her job on the mound.

Q. Patty, what did you make of them walking Jocelyn, even with runners on base? And Jocelyn, what was it like to see basically one pitch the entire game?

PATTY GASSO: I think it's a smart move because I felt like this game was going to be a very tight game. So with what she did in the first inning, it made sense. Although you're still having to go through Shay, and Shay comes through more than not. So it's still a risk, but that's the kind of respect that Joc is getting now.

JOCELYN ALO: It wasn't as bad seeing one pitch, because well, I mean -- yeah, it wasn't as bad seeing one pitch, but I know when I walk it's a potential run for my team. So whenever whatever I do to get runners on, and like Shay's behind me so. Yeah.

Q. Paige, how does the workload today possibly physically affect you going into tomorrow?

PAIGE PARKER: Truthfully, it doesn't really affect me a ton. I'll do anything for this team, so if my number is called tomorrow, I'll be ready.

Q. Most coaches always talk about pitching freshmen with freshmen. What did you see first in Jocelyn to get her to Oklahoma, and now here you are in another College World Series situation and freshman who is about to lead you there and pitching where you want to go?

PATTY GASSO: Well, this freshman committed to another university before I could get my hands on her. When I found out that she was making a change, I -- I hope I can say this -- I got -- no, no, because everyone's going to want to go see it, and you should. J.T. showed me video of her in the Hawaii, in the state wrestling championship. And I'm watching this, and she dislocates her opponent's -- what?

JOCELYN ALO: Shoulder.

PATTY GASSO: And won the championship. And I'm like, okay, I don't care if she hits or not, I thought that was the coolest thing I've ever seen. I want that stud on my team.

But the wonderful thing is she's got a great mindset, a really mature approach for a freshman, and is extremely competitive. If you look at that video, you'll see she's extremely competitive. Anyone that has that mentality fits on this team.

Q. Jocelyn, Coach mentioned something I didn't know. How did you start in wrestling and move over to softball?

JOCELYN ALO: So I started tee ball when I was like four, and then I also did wrestling at the same time. Wrestling was my first sport. My dad wrestled, too, in high school, and as I got older I just did it competitively and for fun on the weekends.

Then as I got to high school, I wanted to compete, and I promised my dad a State Championship, and I got him that my sophomore year.

Q. Nicole, you guys have been a great offensive team all year. You're facing great pitching here. How close are you guys to breaking out? Do you feel like you're close to getting going again?

NICOLE PENDLEY: I think just trust the process, we have plans for every game, so if we just stick to the process, things are going to work out.

Q. Jocelyn, this team is really familiar with Kelly Barnhill, but you were not on this team last year. So what was your approach to hitting off of her?

JOCELYN ALO: Well, like I had watched her in the 17-

inning game, and I just pictured myself in that exact moment, and that moment happened to happen. So hat's off to her, she's an awesome, awesome pitcher, yeah. I'm sorry.

Q. Jocelyn, I wanted to ask about your celebration after Shay Knighten got that strikeout. It seemed like a lot of that was from the last at-bat and got in the way by walking you. How much did you want her to come through in that situation?

JOCELYN ALO: I didn't want her to come through because I knew she was going to come through. It's Shay. It's Shay Knighten. She's a stud. She does anything.

Q. Paige, can you remember ever being better than this? Has that ever happened? And, Jocelyn, can you remember any home runs that you got ahold of even better than what you got ahold of tonight? Start with Jocelyn.

JOCELYN ALO: Probably the Texas game in the Big 12 Championship. I think so.

PAIGE PARKER: I don't really know. I'm not really sure.

Q. Jocelyn, you talked about watching that 17th inning game last season, but what's it mean for you to be on this stage now?

JOCELYN ALO: It means so much. Like just to be a kid from Hawaii and not really -- not many athletes come out of Hawaii, so just to represent Hawaii and being here on the biggest stage of college softball is awesome. It just goes to show that like kids from Hawaii can make it or kids from little towns anywhere, they can do this. This is one of the best experiences I've ever had, and one of the best teams I've ever been on. I wouldn't trade it for anything.

Q. Paige, the last pitch you had that was a swing and a miss registered 65 on the scoreboard. I don't know if you typically throw a 65. I want to say I saw 61 a whole lot. Were you throwing your hardest of the day in the 7th inning in the second game?

PAIGE PARKER: Probably. That's typically -- I typically top out around there, so, yeah, that's probably -- I was probably throwing my hardest then.

Q. Lea, Nicole, just representing the team a little bit, how much are you looking forward to tomorrow? You guys are on this journey, we've seen the "We Believe" things, and now you get that opportunity to play again.

NICOLE PENDLEY: I think we just have another opportunity. We survived another day, so we're making the best of another game, and we're just cherishing the moments together. So I think we're going to fight as

long as we can and stay together as long as we can.

LEA WODACH: Yeah, I think any day we get another chance to come out on the field, we're going to be grateful for it and we're going to take advantage. I know we sat up here when we lost last -- I don't know, a few of us were up here on Thursday when we lost, and we told you guys we truly believe we can do this, and I don't think any of us spoke like they didn't really believe it.

I think that's something that is different maybe. A lot of teams maybe count themselves out, but we never did. We sat here over and over telling ourselves that we truly believe we can do this. And we're going to give it our all tomorrow whether we come out or we don't. We're thankful and we're grateful to survive and advance.