

2021 Women's College World Series

Monday, June 7, 2021

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Alabama Crimson Tide Coach Patrick Murphy Bailey Hemphill Montana Fouts

Postgame Press Conference



Florida State - 8, Alabama - 5

THE MODERATOR: This is the game 14 press conference featuring the Crimson Tide led by Bailey Hemphill and Montana Fouts.

Q. Montana, obviously, the first two games, you played so well. What changed for you today in this one?

MONTANA FOUTS: I don't know. I guess I tried to go in with the same mindset, just to go pitch by pitch. I guess it just didn't go my way.

Q. Bailey, now that your career is over, can you talk about what it's meant to wear an Alabama uniform and what are the greatest things this program has taught you?

BAILEY HEMPHILL: First, I want to say congratulations to Mike Candrea and Lu Harris-Champer on incredible coaching careers.

I guess all I can say is I'm heartbroken. Wearing this "A" has meant everything to me. This university has given me more than I could ever ask for, and I can't help but get emotional. I don't care about the wins and losses. I came out of here as a better person. I am just forever grateful.

Q. Montana, talk about how important the senior class has been to this season.

MONTANA FOUTS: I mean, they were everything to us. They still are. We're family forever, and that's why we come here. They're our best friends. They're our family.

So it hurts. It hurts. But they led us, and we've learned

from this year and this season, and we've learned from them in general as people. So we're really lucky to have them as part of our family.

Q. What kind of fight did you see out of your team after the 8-0 deficit, even you with the home run? What did you do to try to get your team back in it?

BAILEY HEMPHILL: I feel like we're never out of it. We could have folded right there. We could have given up more runs. It could have been a lot worse than 8-0. We're resilient and gritty. I think we showed that. It was a challenge coming back. I wish we could have come back and won it.

I think we showed the type of fight this team and this program has had in the past. It just sucks that we couldn't get it done.

Q. Bailey, it looked like you all were a little bit anxious at the plate tonight. Seven first pitch swings, six second pitch swings. Were you all just not patient tonight?

BAILEY HEMPHILL: I just think after last night we were too patient. The game plan was to be more aggressive. I wasn't in the batter's box with everybody else. But I think they swung at good pitches. We just missed it. We couldn't come through. We couldn't get it done. Again, I'm just so proud of the fight that we showed.

Q. When you look back on this year, what do you think is going to stand out to you most?

MONTANA FOUTS: Well, first, I'm really grateful for the opportunity to be here at the World Series, just because it's a dream come true. So I just think that just the adversity we faced, we're going to learn from that because we made it so far with that. I think that we could have went further, but just learned to be resilient. I think being resilient and gritty is maybe more than having all the talent in the world. I think those characteristics are more important.

BAILEY HEMPHILL: I think the biggest take-away this year is just the adversity we faced. I think, again, it's not



going to help us -- it will help us in softball, but it's going to help us in life. All that we faced -- everybody faced the pandemic. Playing a collegiate sport during that, that was tough. We had to sacrifice a lot.

Again, people that had injuries this year, that's adversity, and they're going to bounce back. I think it's just life lessons and it's just going to make us better people.

Q. What is your message to just the rest of the Lafayette community and other STM graduates about just being successful softball players and going to a different state like Alabama just like you did? What's your message to people coming up in softball in STM in general?

BAILEY HEMPHILL: I guess my message is you can do it. Lafayette is a small town, but you can play anywhere. I know it was tough for the STM fans to say Roll Tide, but I'm grateful for it, and I love you guys.

Q. This is a question for both of the athletes. There's one person too that always believed in you guys, and he always kept preaching about your fight and your grit and never ever stopped, even today when you were down. Your coach Pat loved you guys and gave you nothing but praise. I just want to know what great things can you say about him?

MONTANA FOUTS: I mean, you couldn't ask for a better coach.

THE MODERATOR: That's a tough one. I understand. Bailey, you want to take a crack, and we'll come back to Montana.

BAILEY HEMPHILL: I'm going to get emotional too. He's never doubted us one time. It's hard to talk about it because he means so much to me and this program. I mean, if you look in the stands how many alums came back, like we have so much respect and love for him. He made it truly a family.

I mean, for him to believe in you, it makes you feel like you can do anything in the world. I'm so grateful he took a chance on me and let me play at this university.

THE MODERATOR: Ladies, thank you so very much. Congratulations on an incredible season. We appreciate your time all week.

THE MODERATOR: Now joined by head coach Patrick Murphy.

Q. Coach, congratulations on obviously a wonderful

season. Not the way you want it to end, but Bailey Hemphill was asked what you meant to her, and she couldn't really put it into words. What has she really meant to you after she played her last game in an Alabama uniform?

PATRICK MURPHY: Well, she's taught everybody on the team to be more joyful and relish in all the little things because that's what she's done for five years for us. She's very, very tenderhearted, and she's funny and keeps things loose. Obviously, she's one of the best hitters we've ever had in our program, best players in our program, one of the best leaders.

She graduated with two degrees with 4.0. I mean, there's nothing that she could improve on in her career here. She's got fans from people who are 80 to 8 years old. She speaks well in front of people. I mean, she's the ideal person to represent the University of Alabama.

Q. You've mentioned in the past this is one of the most grittiest teams you've coached. Now that the season has come to a conclusion, can you talk about how much of a privilege it was to coach this team?

PATRICK MURPHY: I echo what Bailey said. It was a quick 8-0, and shoot, we could have got run rolled, and they fought back. I thought -- I think Savannah hit one right on the nose, and if that goes either way over the kid's head or in front, side to side or whatever, that was going to be another run, but that was a good play by the right fielder. They showed a lot of grit and some fight.

Kilfoyl came in and put up all the zeros we needed, and we were like one hit away. Really proud of everybody.

Q. I was talking to Elizabeth Mason, and she said the game plan for coming in was to kind of lay off Montana's rise ball and make her work. Just talk about what Florida State did tonight and how they just got to Montana.

PATRICK MURPHY: Well, I should have started with this, but congrats to them on a helluva tournament. They won four in a row again. They're very talented, and they fight like heck too. Hat's off to Miss Kaley Mudge as the leadoff. You don't see 5 for 5 -- I haven't ever at Alabama. For a kid to go 5 for 5 against two really good pitchers, that's an awesome feat by her.

But I think sometimes, unfortunately, we might have had a bad day, and they took advantage of it the first inning, the 3-hole hitter got the home run and put them on the board quickly. They knocked her out. So they had a good plan.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

Q. In terms of when you're kind of going through the first couple innings and things are happening fast, what went into the decision-making in terms of Montana and Lexi?

PATRICK MURPHY: It was getting out of hand, and we needed to stop the bleeding. That was basically it, giving them a different look, see if Lexi could slow them down and give us a chance to get back in the game, and she did that.

Tremendous experience for both of them. One's a freshman, and one's a sophomore. I call them the Twin Towers one day in practice, and they're going to be awesome for the next two and three years.

It was great to see them have tremendous outings here. We hope to be back to finish out their careers here.

Q. You already touched on Bailey Hemphill, but you've talked about them a lot, these seven super seniors that got this extra year to come back. Can you talk about closing out their careers here at the World Series. Some like Claire were injured and didn't get to play much, but some like Bailey got to go out with a home run. Tell us what they meant to the program.

PATRICK MURPHY: They're great, great young ladies. For those who haven't heard this, six of them got their master's degree. That's unheard of for a softball player. Six master's degrees, and the seventh got a double major, and she's going to get her master's next year at Southern Miss. So education-wise, they're covered, and it's a really cool thing to see that many young ladies do so well academically.

Not a problem off the field. I mean, just great young ladies -- classroom, practice, weight room, you name it. Never had issues with anybody. And this is another reason why people should support softball. There's great people, great young ladies in this sport that people can attach themselves to. Montana and Bailey are two of the best in the world. Just awesome people and tremendous athletes.

Q. When you look back at the season, 28-win streak, just so many different things. What stands out to you most, do you think?

PATRICK MURPHY: I think how we got there with all the adversity -- you know, we went through it a lot. It started way last March. So we're about, what, 16 months into it, 15, lots of stuff in the fall injury-wise, and then of course in the spring, two ACLs, kneecap, a back, a stress fracture, you name it, we had it. Then dealing with COVID, which everybody else had to do.

They did sacrifice a lot because we asked a lot of them. I remember I sent out the parent letter at the beginning of the semester, and it was double the normal parent letter, and the dos and don'ts. This is why we're doing this.

God bless the parents too. All the families of our young ladies are terrific because they had to sacrifice a lot because it was a totally different scenario when we went on the road or we were at home playing. So there was a ton of people that bought into our program, and that's one of the main reasons why we're here today.

THE MODERATOR: Coach Murphy, thank you very much for your time throughout the week.

PATRICK MURPHY: Can I say one thing too? I wanted to congratulate Mike Candrea. Mike and Lu are two of the great coaches in our profession, and I'm really going to miss competing against them.

One quick story on Mike. It was my first year, and we went to UCLA. We were probably the last team picked out of 48. We got our asses kicked twice, and I saw them out that summer recruiting, and he probably spent an hour with me in the tournament, talking about how when it gets down to the big time, you need a couple little rabbits in your lineup to put the ball in play and make people throw it away.

I tried to listen to him and learn from him, and just I appreciate all the time and effort that he gave me, and Lou as well. She was one of the feistiest competitors I ever played against, and I know we're going to miss her in the SEC.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, class as always. Thank you so much for your time.

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