

2021 Women's College World Series

Monday, June 7, 2021

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Florida State Seminoles

Kaley Mudge

Elizabeth Mason

Coach Lonni Alameda

Postgame Press Conference



Florida State - 8, Alabama - 5

THE MODERATOR: This is the game 14 press conference featuring the Florida State Seminoles, joined by student-athletes Kaley Mudge and Elizabeth Mason.

Q. Elizabeth, on that home run pitch, what did you see from her, and what did that -- when you were able to hit that home run, what did that do for you guys, just your energy and really believing this could happen?

ELIZABETH MASON: Obviously, Montana has a great rise ball. She also spots a couple low in the zone. I just wanted to get the barrel there. She flies a lot of power. As long as I could get the barrel through the zone, I knew it would be a hard hit. I'm just glad it went over the fence.

I think a home run in the first inning is a great way to start the game. Obviously, we tend to score later in the game a lot after we get through the lineup one time, but I think setting that pace for the game was well needed.

Q. Elizabeth, just a question. I asked you before you left Tallahassee if you had a nickname for this team yet, and you didn't have one. Do you have one now, first question. And second question, just the fight in this team? The young lady next to you, young player, everybody tonight just fought so hard.

ELIZABETH MASON: I still don't have a nickname. I don't think we get to choose the nickname. I think the fans will come up with one. It's amazing to see Mudge's performance tonight. She's been one person on our team who has worked tirelessly day in and day out. She's had it in her from day one. I think as a team we've had it in us from day one. Couldn't be happier that it's coming together now, and I'm so proud of Mudge tonight. We all are.

Q. Elizabeth, congratulations to you and Kaley and the whole team. Can you talk a little bit about your defense. You get a lot of attention for your offense, obviously, but you've had to adjust to a new position at first base, and you had some really nice picks out there today and that great cutoff throw. Can you talk about how hard you've had to work on that?

ELIZABETH MASON: When you have a coach who believes in you enough to switch your position every year, I owe it to her to be the best I can be, wherever she's going to put me.

Defensively, we know we have a strong pitching staff, and defensively, all we can do is do the best for them, give them the support that they deserve and put it together offensively as best as we can and make sure that we hold that game down.

Q. Kaley, let's follow up with you on the defensive end. You made that great diving catch in the seventh inning against Bailey. You obviously have to respect her power and play her a little deep, you had to come in pretty hard. Just take us through that play.

KALEY MUDGE: We were back by the warning track because we know how much power she has. She hit a home run earlier in the game, and she's a great hitter, so we were giving her that respect. When I saw it go up in the air, I wanted to make a play for Danielle and make a play for my team.

Q. For both of you all, you and your opponent in this WCWS Finals both traveled the same path, losing your first game and winning all the way through. What gave you all the belief that you could go ahead -- in 2018, your program did this as well -- but to win all these games in a row to get to the championship finals?

KALEY MUDGE: Yeah, I wasn't here when they won the 2018, but I remember watching on TV, and I just remember how much fight they had, and I think that's what we have this year too. We just have to fight for every pitch to our left and our right. I just think, if we look at the end goal,

ASAP sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

then we get too ahead of ourselves. We can't control the outcome of any game. We've just been trying to fight one pitch at a time.

ELIZABETH MASON: I think there's something special about FSU that allows us to block everything else out -- block out the stats, block out the outcome, block out anyone who's not in our corner. We just look to our left and our right. I look to Danielle, I look to Mudge, I look to our coaches, and when you can fight for them, all you want to do is give one more pitch, one more opportunity, and one more game.

That's what we did in 2018, and we know we can do it again because we've been there before.

Q. For both players, this isn't a team that relies on home runs, but you had three big ones in recent days from Dani and Anna and Elizabeth today. When you're at the World Series in this kind of setting, do those kind of hits build a momentum or energy beyond even the runs they produce?

ELIZABETH MASON: I mean, a home run is definitely an energy builder, momentum builder, but obviously it's not the end all, be all for a winning team. I think we've been able to put together runs and wins offensively, situational hitting, just trying to scratch and claw. When we can get those home runs across, I think it's a really good cushion for our pitchers, and it really loosens us up to try to get one run at a time.

KALEY MUDGE: Yeah, I agree with Lizzie. All season we've fought to find runs all we can. Home runs are great. Situational hitting is great. We just try to play one pitch at a time, put the ball in play, and run the bases as best as we can. Just trying to find a way to score runs. Home runs are great and give a lot of momentum to us, but so does situational hitting and base hits.

Q. Elizabeth, I don't know if this has already been asked, but could you talk about the game plan coming in for Montana Fouts, and what were you all seeing from her that just made you all so confident at the plate today?

ELIZABETH MASON: Obviously, coming off of a perfect game, Montana is an amazing athlete, even better of a pitcher. Saw a lot of strikeouts on that rise ball up in the zone. She brings a lot of velo to the plate as well. Just trying to get the barrel to the ball, see it down. She does spot a couple down in the zone. So just doing our best to lay off the rise ball, and when she does miss, to make sure we're ready for that pitch.

Q. I know obviously we don't have either of the pitchers here, but I'm going to ask you all about them. You knew how loaded the Alabama lineup was. Kathryn was the one who did a lot to get you all here, but what can you say about all three of them? It took all three of them tonight to be able to hold off the charge?

KALEY MUDGE: Our pitching staff has been amazing all season. We've really relied on them heavily. Kat started us off great, and Caylan came in and Danielle came in, and they pitched their butts off. It was fun seeing them all come together for a big win for us.

ELIZABETH MASON: When you're one of the last four teams left in the nation, there's going to be hits. Obviously, Alabama, they're a top four team, one of the best teams in the nation. We would expect nothing less from them, but our pitchers, they have worked so hard. They're amazing. They dominate, and when they do slip a little, there's always someone there to have their back. The second Kat got a little shaky, it was Caylan. The second Caylan, it was Danielle. We know they're going to fight for us the same way we're going to fight for them.

We have so much confidence in them, and it allows us to be even better teammates, even better defense, and get some stuff going offensively as well.

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Coach Alameda. Questions for Coach.

Q. We talked to you before about the fight in this game, but you have Lizzie, the senior, who obviously had a big hit in the first, and then it goes down to Mudge, who's a young player on this team. What is it about their ability to fight and the culture you've created here at Florida State?

LONNI ALAMEDA: It's been the whole journey of the season. I know our upperclassmen and our returning World Series players really wanted to share the culture, the experience, the fight pitch by pitch, and yet they had pressures of their own trying to figure themselves out and how to compete also.

I think the culture piece has really gotten us through here because there's many times they could have given up on the process part, and that's been so important to us.

We have such a good foundation of family and the competitive nature, and we keep bringing those values up, and we keep talking about them, and it kept the fabric of our team together to give us the opportunity to be able to shine towards the end of the season.

I couldn't be more proud of Elizabeth. I know she wanted to lead and lead this team. It's hard as a leader. It's really hard.

We talk about it all the time, Dani Morgan, and then you've got Kaley Mudge that's going to give us everything she has. She's going to follow and give her heart out. It's all of a sudden coming together, and they're to the left and right fighting for each other pitch by pitch.

Q. Coach, the fan base just obviously goes without mention. Every road game, it feels like you guys are at home playing at Graf. There's a cool moment in the broadcast where they showed the Canadian national team watching you guys, supporting you. Obviously, I know you have that relationship with them, but to see your brand, Florida State softball, being supported on different international borders, different countries, how cool is that?

LONNI ALAMEDA: Really cool. I did not know that happened. Obviously, Kaleigh Rafter is a Florida State alum, and you've got a lot of collegiate players in that group. They love the game of softball.

I am fortunate to be able to be their pitching coach this year in Tokyo, and I am tied to them quite tightly. I'm really proud of the opportunity.

I think that goes to the big picture we've been talking about a lot. Softball is incredible, and people want to support it and want to grow it, and here you have a team taking time out while they're training for Tokyo to watch the College World Series, and I think that's super special.

>> The sport has moved so much in recent years towards the home run, and you have teams that have hit home runs. What role does other methods of run production still have in softball and what this team was able to do?

LONNI ALAMEDA: I think it's so important, when you get to the biggest time of the year, that good pitching is going to be hitting. That's just the thing. Good pitching beats hitting. When you get here, you've got to make sure you can link those things together, however that happens.

For this ball club, we had to link at bats together all season. We're comfortable at failing. We're comfortable having at bats. We're comfortable with moving our runners. If one crooked letter goes up because someone gets a three-run home run, that's bonus for us.

I think when you have to rely on it, which is going to be something we're watching the next couple of days,

because Oklahoma is incredible the way they swing the bats, but if you can get that glue 1 through 9 and people off the bench to do their jobs and keep the lineup moving, it's pretty special.

Q. Some of the scouting you did of Montana and just seeing her before, what pitches do you feel weren't there as much for her today?

LONNI ALAMEDA: It's hard to say. She's an incredible pitcher. I said it yesterday. Kelly Foy, she's a good pitcher. I don't know. There's pressure coming into these games sometimes too. I think we did a good job of battling pitches. I think, when Mudge got there, and she started fouling off stuff, let's put the ball in play and make her work. That was the mindset. I don't know if it's her inability as well as our ability to make sure we can use our plan versus her. She's incredible and had an incredible season, and they're a great ball club.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about the 2018 experience and how that's helped you guys this year if any? You have five players who have done this before.

LONNI ALAMEDA: Yeah, 2018, for me personally, and I think for Travis, when we were part of that, we realized how important it is for them to be comfortable in their own skin as a team.

When we lost to UCLA, they took a team meeting together without the coaches, and they took control, and they ran with it, and they were prepared for it. As a coaching staff, that's what you want at this point in time. They don't need to look to you because you've given everything you have to them, and they're ready to play a high level game. I got that feeling again.

Danielle Watson hasn't thrown a lot. When she came in after that inning and took a deep breath, and she was prepared for the moment because of everything we poured into her and every opportunity she has. It's such a good feeling to know as a coaching staff and even upperclassmen, you can share with younger ones for their moment. It doesn't matter how big the stage is. They can execute their moment. I've seen that from 2018 to now start to become this week here, and it's heartwarming.

Q. Is it going to be a little nostalgic looking across at the other dugout and seeing the crimson and cream fighting for a College World Series title?

LONNI ALAMEDA: Not nostalgic at all. I'm super proud of graduating from the University of Oklahoma. I'm very proud of what we did. We broke the top 25, and I know ever since then they've done an incredible job. I'm a big

fan of the game of softball.

Yeah, you always root for your alma mater, but when you're playing against them, you root for the team that you're coaching.

I'm excited. I'm really excited to play in front of a full stadium. When we came in the first day and saw the upper deck. I know what it's like to be 30 minutes down the road and all the state of Oklahoma coming in here to cheer for them. It's going to be so special. I'm looking forward to it. Our players are looking forward to it. It's going to be an honor to be here and see our two teams left standing.

Q. After the UCLA game, is there a moment or maybe a few moments that you can pinpoint of realizing exactly what this team can do coming out of the loser's bracket again, maybe a response or something like that?

LONNI ALAMEDA: I don't think we were fully competing in the UCLA game. I think we were kind of dipping our toe in the water and seeing if we could compete, and then afterwards, we chatted a little bit and laid out there. Of course, your 2018 veterans are like, hey, we've been here before. It's not a big deal if you just think pitch-pitch and just get after your little moments. Then all of a sudden you look up, and you've got some games under your belt, and it's really special enjoying that process part of it.

I can't think of anything, between the late night game and the early, it's all swirling together. Now it's about getting prepared for OU and figuring out what we can do there.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports