

# 2021 Women's College World Series

Thursday, June 3, 2021

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

**James Madison Dukes**

**Loren LaPorte**

**Odicci Alexander**

**Kate Gordon**

Postgame Press Conference



James Madison 4, Oklahoma 3

THE MODERATOR: This is the Game 1 press conference featuring James Madison. We're joined by student-athletes O Alexander and Kate Gordon.

Questions for our student-athletes.

**Q. Odicci, what was the key to your success today in being able to slow down this Oklahoma team?**

ODICCI ALEXANDER: I'd say just focusing on every pitch, knowing where I wanted to put that pitch, just keeping them kind of off balance.

**Q. What was it like in the eighth after Kate's home run to go back out there and go through that inning?**

ODICCI ALEXANDER: I mean, I was excited. I knew I couldn't let down because they were still at the best part of their lineup. I mean, just spinning the ball and focusing on each and every pitch. Got the three outs.

**Q. Kate, just that feeling to hit that home run to put the team ahead. Obviously you being from Shenandoah Valley, to lead the Dukes to a win tonight. What was that feeling like?**

KATE GORDON: Yeah, that feeling was awesome with Odicci battling, Sarah Jubas came up clutch, got us the lead in the beginning and set the momentum with that at-bat. Having the opportunity to come back up in the eighth inning, to have that at-bat, and be able to put an extra run on the board, that was super special.

**Q. Odicci, to go out there in that setting today against a team that's pretty much playing a home game, best**

**offense in the country, what was working well for you today and it seemed like you felt pretty comfortable out there in the circle?**

ODICCI ALEXANDER: I mean, it is a different atmosphere. I was just trying team brace the moment, enjoy every moment because there is our first time here. I wouldn't rather be here with anybody else except my teammates. I couldn't be more proud of the fight, grit, the heart and passion they had out there, so...

**Q. You have talked this year about it just being another game, every game you played was just another game. Obviously, this is the biggest stage you can play on. At what point did today settle in and be just another game?**

ODICCI ALEXANDER: Honestly, I was just there to compete against whoever. I was just ready to compete. I think each and every one of these girls were ready to compete, no matter who we were playing.

KATE GORDON: I think with the mindset of just another game, we haven't looked past anybody. We prepared. We had fun. In our pregame we were enjoying it. We're soaking in the fans, soaking in this atmosphere and this experience. I think we came into the game knowing this is another game. This team put their pants on the same way we did. We just have to go out there and show them who JMU softball is.

**Q. Kate, walk us through that at-bat for the home run. What did you see on that pitch?**

KATE GORDON: So my teammates were telling me the whole time we have your back, Kate, we have our back. Coach LaPorte said, Kate, play your game, calm down, stop thinking. This is a mental game, once you get it into your mind, it's very hard to get out. Just keep on swinging. That at-bat I knew I had to get on the base for the team. Jubas a great postseason. Everyone else behind us has as well. They were going to do their job, get me around. That was my mindset. Going up there being super disciplined, just waiting for my pitch that at-bat.



**Q. When you hit that ball in the eighth inning, did you know it was out? What were your emotions and feelings when you saw it in the air? Odicci, on the bench, what did you think when that ball went up in the air?**

KATE GORDON: I don't ever think anything of them are out. I just run hard. I was like, Go, ball, go, ball, go, ball. They're great outfielders, I know they like to rob home runs. So I was just like, Keep going.

Even coming around the bases, seeing Coach LaPorte and the excitement, the dugout, my teammates right there, that was just awesome.

ODICCI ALEXANDER: Honestly that at-bat, I knew it was coming. I took a deep breath myself and said I wouldn't want anybody up in that box but Kate. I was praying. When she hit it out, I knew it was out. I said, Thank you, Jesus. I almost cried a little bit.

I couldn't be more proud of Kate.

**Q. Odicci, you mentioned earlier you wanted to keep Oklahoma off base in terms of the pitches you were throwing to them. What was the key to that considering how explosive this offense has been all season?**

ODICCI ALEXANDER: I think just mixing up my pitches, not really throwing the ball to the same spot each time. Just making sure it moves. Because they're great hitters. I was just trying to focus on each pitch, not make them hit it over the fence. One got ahold of one, but, I mean, it's all right.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Kate and Odicci. Congratulations.

KATE GORDON: Thank you.

ODICCI ALEXANDER: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: We'll bring in head coach Loren LaPorte.

Coach, we will begin with questions.

**Q. You have a pitcher that's throwing 70. You know she's as good as it comes, even though the nation doesn't know about her. Talk about your offense knowing you have a great pitcher in the circle. What does that do for your offense facing a pretty good pitcher in Shannon Saile herself?**

LOREN LaPORTE: Our offense going into this game was the mindset of we have to score runs. We knew Oklahoma's kind of offense. It was very important for our hitters to know they had to put runs on the board, even if CiCi was mowing them down, we were still going to have to do it. It proved. We went up three, they came back three.

CiCi did such a great job. Our defense stepped up big for us. Kate made a diving play there. Just super proud of the whole team. Full team effort right there.

**Q. With the way Odicci was pitching, considering the explosiveness of this offense that she was facing, how was she able to do it in terms of keeping them off balance with what she was throwing?**

LOREN LaPORTE: The key for CiCi was hitting her spots and hitting the corners of the plate, not leaving a full ball in the white of the plate. That was very important. It was very important that her ball moved, she spun it.

That change-up that she developed this spring, really bought into, had a lot of confidence in, she used it a ton today. It was able to set up a lot of pitches later in the count.

**Q. Staying with Odicci, what did you think about the way she bounced back after that homer in the third? Maybe OU was ready to break out again. How quickly she was able to do that and get relocked in.**

LOREN LaPORTE: When you play a regional and a super regional as hard as we did, Odicci and the whole team had pressure a lot in regionals and super regionals. In the championship game in regionals, Liberty went ahead and they hit home runs. Then Missouri obviously was a battle.

I think it's one of those things, it's all about being able to handle the hard. We talk about handling the hard a lot, being able to handle the pressure, not let one swing determine the ballgame.

Odicci knows this team can have her back, put runs back on the board. I think everybody is on the same path at this point.

**Q. This win overall, what this means for this program? We talked about this program breaking through. This is the ultimate breakthrough.**

LOREN LaPORTE: I think these players, they're playing for each other, but they're playing for a lot more. We're playing for all the smaller schools out there that work just as hard. We're playing for all of the young children, all of JMU Nation. Everybody that has just kind of supported us

from the get-go. Even in the last three weeks.

It's pretty special when a team goes out on that field and is playing for every single person that has supported us.

**Q. Kate's home run, describe that whole moment right there, what that was like in the dugout. She'd been struggling a little bit throughout the post-season. Her being the local girl from the Shenandoah Valley.**

LOREN LaPORTE: I knew Kate was going to break out. I didn't think it was going to be a home run, I tell you that. I thought she was going to get a base hit in the 5-6 hole. We had a talk before that inning, took her to the side, Just love this. Don't put so much pressure on yourself. Sometimes with hitters that have been big-time hitters for us all year, they tend to put a little more pressure than needs to be. I think the nice thing is in the back of her mind she knew Jubs was going to be able to get it done if she got on base.

Luckily she barreled it up. It was a high fly ball. I didn't know it was going to go out. She barreled it up in the right spot and got the distance.

**Q. You're the first unseeded team to win the College World Series opener since 2008. It was easy to label this game David versus Goliath. You didn't buy into that. What does this mean for the team going into tomorrow?**

LOREN LaPORTE: We just told had them in the locker room, we just did one of the most historic things that has ever happened in JMU history, and history in the game itself. But we go back to the hotel room, we watch this game, and we prepare. It's on to the next.

I know a lot of people out there thought we were going to get here and be done, but this team wanted to do some damage. I feel like we played composed, we played JMU softball from the first inning.

**Q. You mentioned pulling Kate aside before the eighth inning. Had you seen something in her at-bats earlier in the game where you felt she was putting too much pressure on herself?**

LOREN LaPORTE: It's been going on since super regionals. She's one of those players that wants to give everything for her team. Sometimes it affects her. I just said, It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter at all what you do here. Just have a good at-bat. Sara has your back. I think that just kind of helped her calm down.

Her mentality was seeing a good pitch. We were in a good

situation there. I think she went 3-0. She was in a good hitter's count. She got to see a lot of pitches. I think that's important for all of our hitters to take counts deep, so we can time balls up, hit balls on the barrel. I think she did a great job of taking that count deep and getting her pitch.

**Q. Speak to your defense, which has been spectacular. Here you were the better defensive team today and didn't give them any extra opportunities.**

LOREN LaPORTE: Yeah, I mean, we all know that CiCi is very, very talented but she's going to need the defense. I think that's important, that they know that. When the ball is hit to them, they need to expect want ball every single time. I felt bad for Sara at shortstop to lead off Jennings with we called it an error, but they called it a hit. It took a funky hop on her. She knew, she was like, Man.

Get the first out is huge, and the team knows that. Getting that first out is everything. It sets the tone a little bit. It doesn't allow anybody else to get to get momentum. The plays they're making right now is amazing.

**Q. This was a historic day for the World Series - expanded stadium, biggest crowd. Seemed like an atmosphere like this could either intimidate a team or invigorate a team. How did your players respond to the atmosphere?**

LOREN LaPORTE: They're not intimidated by the atmosphere. Before the game we told them that today's game is just like any other game. You've grown up playing it. You've worked your butts off for the game. Don't make it bigger than it is. Use all this for our side, use it as momentum, use it as energy.

They love it. They love the atmosphere. Being in Knoxville, being in Missouri, that prepared them for this. We brought a lot of fans, a lot of JMU Nation is here. It's big for us.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations, Coach. Thank you very much for your time.

LOREN LaPORTE: Thank you so much.

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