

2021 Women's College World Series

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Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Florida State Seminoles

Dani Morgan

Kaley Mudge

Coach Lonni Alameda

Postgame Press Conference



Oklahoma - 5, Florida State - 1

THE MODERATOR: This is the National Championship Game press conference, featuring the Florida State Seminoles. Joined by student-athletes Kaley Mudge and Dani Morgan. Questions for our student-athletes.

Q. Dani, kind of take us through this ride starting with regionals and supers and World Series. Probably some people that doubted you would get this far, but I know you guys believed you would win a National Championship. Tell us about this journey for you.

DANI MORGAN: I think this journey, we just -- (crying).

Q. I know it's difficult.

DANI MORGAN: I'm just so proud of the team to be here and everything we've gone through this year to persevere and to be in this moment is what we dreamt of. I'm just proud of this team. We were able to get here and give everything we had.

Q. Thank you, Dani.

Q. Kaley and Dani, congratulations on a fantastic season. You got farther than anyone thought, except you guys. Kaley, can you talk a bit about breaking the record for the most hits in a College World Series, and also how do you think that this experience will help you going forward in your career giving you really good experience?

KALEY MUDGE: Yay, I'm just blessed to be here, honestly. Coming into the World Series, I did not think that I was going to break any records. I was just excited to put my feet on the clay here.

I'm just grateful that God has given me the opportunity to be here. My teammates and my coaches, the support staff, the fans, they've all just helped me get here, and they've made me the player and person that I am.

So I'm just grateful to be here and have the chance to make some records. Obviously, in the game I wasn't really worried about that. I was just trying to help my team win a National Championship. Yeah, I'm blessed to be here. I think moving forward it's a great learning moment. Definitely know that there's a lot more to come from this program. The seniors have been amazing. Dani's been such a role model to me. So I'm just grateful for them and for the culture they've left behind, and I'm excited to get after it next year.

Q. Dani, you're one of a number of super seniors who put life on hold for a year to come back after the pandemic. It obviously didn't end the way you want it, but how much did this run and being part of this kind of validate that choice?

DANI MORGAN: I wouldn't change a thing. Being here, just getting to play extra games with this team. It's a special team, and we love each other. We fought with each other. I'd never second guess the decision I made, and I would make it a hundred times over.

Q. Congratulations to the both of you for making it to this stage. You all talked about the sisterhood and having such a strong bond. Can you tell us what this bond would mean to you moving forward.

KALEY MUDGE: Yeah, I feel like I've met 25 sisters since being here. It's just such a family atmosphere here. The coaches make it a family atmosphere, and we really buy into that culture, and I know that I've made five friends with the seniors who are leaving, and I know that I'm going to be able to go to them for anything. I'm just excited to spend more time with the people that are staying and just to create that family culture for the people coming in.

It's so nice to have a team that gets to this level that is just for each other, and everyone on the bench is rooting for

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everyone, and everyone on the field is just all in for the team. It's such a great atmosphere here, I wouldn't change it for the world.

DANI MORGAN: Yeah, it's lifelong. You can see that with all the alumni that came to support this weekend from ex-players to ex-managers. I mean, it's a culture, and it's a family atmosphere from the top to the bottom. Not only do I have 25 sisters, but I have a second mom in Coach, just family in all the staff. It's just a culture at Florida State, and it's something that attracted me to the school, and it's something that is going to keep alumni supporting this program.

Q. I was wondering about G. Juarez. You got hits off of her, but it wasn't easy for you. How were you able to put the ball in play, and what were the challenges she presented you these last two games?

KALEY MUDGE: Yeah, G is a great pitcher. I know she has a lot of experience being here and being on the big stage. I think for us it was about making adjustments coming into today. She has great spins, great velo. We were just trying to put balls in play and trying to find the barrel. Obviously, we came up short on the scoreboard, but I'm just so proud of our team for fighting.

Q. My question is for both athletes. We just heard over the broadcast all the breaking numbers that this whole tournament had. It was just mind boggling, but just for us sitting out and you playing through the whole thing, just talk about the whole entire experience, from the rain-out to the push-backs, the late hours, all of that together, just how was it for you?

DANI MORGAN: This is what you dream about -- the rain-outs, the 2:00 a.m. games, it doesn't matter when you're playing because you just want to be here and play. It's exhausting. It's a long week, but like I said, it's what you dream about. It's an experience that you'll never forget.

KALEY MUDGE: Yeah, I agree with Dani. It's been a dream to be here. I hope that I get to come back. But this past week has just been amazing. I don't think it's really set in for me yet because I've just been loving it with my sisters. It's just been a dream to be here.

THE MODERATOR: Dani, Kaley, thank you so much for everything, for the past week and a half. We appreciate you so much. Best of luck. Hopefully, we'll see you down the road.

Now joined by head coach Lonni Alameda.

Q. Coach, I know this isn't the way you wanted it to end, but looking back at the ACC final loss and being here, what is it about this team that they were just able to rally together like this and come together kind of when it meant the most.

LONNI ALAMEDA: I think you want to be playing the best softball at the postseason time of year. As a coach and as upperclassmen, you keep pouring ingredients in and hoping that when you hit the end of May and June that you can create something special.

I think we kept pouring into each other, softball skills, mental game, relationship building, team bonding. We just kept pouring it in and pouring it in, and the mixture showed up at the right time.

Q. You were around the Pac-12 at the height of kind of Arizona and UCLA. There are more challengers now. You're a part of that winning a title. But are there similarities in the standard that OU has set the last nine, ten years, and what you saw in those Arizona-UCLA teams?

LONNI ALAMEDA: Yeah, definitely. I think sometimes you're playing a tradition, you know. Here, you're obviously playing a fan base. It's a little bit different here. It's a home game for them for sure. I think our kids did an incredible job. We didn't let that bother us too much. It was more of a celebration of softball than anything. They definitely got momentum on their side on that case. I think that's easy to recruit to and easy to build on. They do an incredible job of coaching. It was probably the most fun for us as a pitching staff to figure out how to beat each and every hitter in their lineup, and you know they do a good job on that part.

Yes, I think what Arizona and UCLA had back in the day now has gone coast to coast. Now the game of softball has grown. The SEC opened up. The ACC is competing now. The Big 12, the Big Ten, it's just given a lot more opportunity. If you see both of us coming out of the loser's bracket to play today and exhausting weekends -- week, weekends, I don't even know how many days it's gone of playing softball, it's really cool to see where the future is going to go for it.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about the reason you had to put Em in the game. That was kind of a surprise to see her come in. Also about the tangibles about this season. If you just look at the raw numbers, you probably shouldn't have gotten as far as you got, but something clicked that helped you get this far.

LONNI ALAMEDA: Yeah, for sure. I think we've got a



good game plan, all season long. Emma's a good pitcher. She's going to be incredible down the road. I haven't been able to use her a ton this season because of the reasons you just said. We struggled scoring some runs, so we didn't get to really platoon too much of our bullpen.

I kept working with her and telling her there's going to be big times, a great lineup you're going to get to. Nerves got the best of her, and that was my call, and that was the plan getting in on there today. We're going to have to give different looks to them today to get through it.

The main thing is we have to score runs. It wasn't going to be a 1-0 ball game, a 2-1 ball game. They hit the ball, and we knew that. So we had to sell out to try to beat some of their hitters.

The inning got to us. Maybe it wasn't so fair on her part for me to put her in there, but I know she wanted it. I know for the future of this program it's going to be good for her to take the memories to this, and it's by no means her fault for what happened. Kat came in there, and she's ready to go.

When you have a game plan, you stick with. It works, everyone looks great; if it doesn't work, then everyone questions it. That's how it goes as a coach sometimes.

I'm really excited for her future. I think the pitching staff, we did our best. We gave it our all. That was a big motto today coming in here. Empty the tanks, give us all you have, offense, defense, energy, pitching. This is our plan, and we're going to go with it, and I'm super proud that they did that.

Q. Coach, we've talked over the last few days about the importance of enjoying the moment. This game recorded roughly 3 million viewers just at home. What would you say to those fans that cheered you all on back at home?

LONNI ALAMEDA: I'm grateful for the fan support, not only for Florida State, for the game of softball. I don't know how many of my college teammates were here this weekend that kept telling me how proud they were of us growing the game and just being a part of baseball, softball, so many athletic players from my days at OU are here, and they just love the growth of softball. I think that's a big thing that we've always been a part of is growing this game, not only here, but internationally too. It's a great game.

I hope all the viewers saw how much passion we have for the game. We're gritty. We love playing, and we play for the bigger picture. I hope that they saw that, and it was two completely different storied teams coming in here. I

think it also shows that you can do it different ways when you get to the final championship. OU got it. They're an awesome team, but we are too. And we fought to the very end.

Q. Lonni, obviously, you've got a very unique perspective on OU softball back to the days of playing at Reeves Park. What to you is the most impressive thing about -- or the toughest thing about what Patty Gasso has done, the program she's built, and what OU softball has become?

LONNI ALAMEDA: She's obviously got the recruiting lifeline, so that's a big part of it when you're building. You've got to make sure you get the right recruits that can flourish in your program. She's figured that piece out. She's got very loyal, obviously, family in the coaching staff, and so that helps too with loyalty.

They've got something special, and it's awesome, and you can see it. I think here, the State of Oklahoma, having been a player here and at Reeves Park and getting kicked off by slow pitch teams to now softball is big in the state. I love what Oklahoma State is doing too. Kenny is doing a great job there. So this state is supporting the game. This state loves the game, and I think that's only a great opportunity for young girls to grow up and want to play at this level. Not everyone can play in Norman, and not everyone can play in Stillwater. It's just going to help grow our game and give more eyes on it and give more opportunities.

Q. Lonni, you had a number of those super seniors who kind of put some pretty big plans on hold to get to come back and be a part of this team. I think it's safe to say you all probably wouldn't have been at this stage without their being this year. What can you say about that group?

LONNI ALAMEDA: I'm so happy for them to be able to end their career here. I can't tell you how many senior conversations we had over the journey of this season. How can we share it with the vision of where we want to go not only through story, but through the way that we do things, the ups and downs. This is a really trying year. It was a really trying year as a coaching staff, as players, and it wasn't just this season, it was the end of COVID season 2 now.

We all had to figure out how to stay connected. We had to figure out how to do things differently. At times it really pulled at the fringes of what you were doing, and you're second guessing so many areas, and I am so proud of them, and I think that they kept the vision in mind and really made sure that we stayed together as a unit, and we

had great relationships.

We also understand that not everyone's going to be the best of friends, but we've got to respect each other, and I think they shared that with us good so we could make this run in the end.

I am very grateful for that because this program moving forward is a solid foundation with them, what they gave to us, but I'm also very proud of them and happy for them because they did end it here in Oklahoma City where they wanted to be.

Q. Lonni, congratulations on a terrific run. I don't know if you remember that you coached against the 2013 Oklahoma team early that season, the one with Chamberlain and Ricketts and Pendley and that lineup. Now that you've seen this version of OU softball, does this squad compare favorably to that one, just in terms of fire power and strength?

LONNI ALAMEDA: Yeah. Obviously, Lauren Chamberlain was a good hitter, and you look at her running around her with all those jerseys. Like Dani alluded to, there's a lot of love for alumni and for the program, and Patty creates that with her organization, just like we take pride in that here too.

Yep, she gets some rabbits. She gets some kids that can run. She's always got pitching. It's the sauce that she's got figured out there, and she does a good job of it.

Q. I know it's tough at times to think about the future. You're thinking about the now. Can you reflect on what this experience was like for some of the younger players?

LONNI ALAMEDA: Yeah. We have so much talent being redshirted right now that was able to see this and not only see the experience on the field, but the prep for it. I've got a couple kids that had injuries and a couple kids that were redshirting due to position stuff and COVID numbers, but they were behind the scenes. They weren't able to get out there and play, but they were behind the scenes and feeling it. They could see the emotions of our senior class right now. It really propelled us forward where we want to go.

Now we get to work on their softball skills as they come back from injury, and then we get to build on this emotional piece that we know is so important and the grit piece that's so important when you get here. I always talk about how leadership is really hard to do. Today's world of judgment and the second guessing, it's just really hard to be a leader day in and day out, but they see how important that is right

now, and they see how important the glue and keeping it together.

When we get challenged next year, they're going to look back at the senior class who stuck with it and just kind of keep working through the failures and keep appreciating the highs and lows because in the end it's worth that, and they lived that, and they were here. I know that's going to be a great building block for us.

THE MODERATOR: Coach Alameda, thank you so much for your time over the past week and a half. You and the student-athletes are tremendous representatives of Florida State. Thank you so much. Congratulations.

LONNI ALAMEDA: Thank you.

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