

# 2021 Women's College World Series

Thursday, June 10, 2021  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

## Oklahoma Sooners Coach Patty Gasso Postgame Press Conference



Oklahoma 5, Florida State 1

**Q. Patty, what was that last moment of the game like? It seemed like you were holding on to the fence to keep you standing there. What does this mean to cap off this unique season in this manner? And also I understand DJ is getting married tomorrow?**

PATTY GASSO: Yes, he is. He's got a rehearsal dinner paying for it as we speak, so I'm paying for it but I'm not there, and I'll be at the wedding tomorrow, so a lot of things were happening.

I don't think anyone thought that they would take an extra day, so that kind of screwed up family plans. But I will be there for the wedding, so I'm really excited about that. I'm sorry that he missed it, but that is a pretty big deal for us tomorrow.

Giselle, my heart just was overflowing with joy for her because it was a tough season for her. It was her super senior year. She had a lot of things to prove. 2019 didn't finish the way she wanted, and went through some really tenacious surgery and rehab just to get back and play that last season.

I'm just overwhelmed with joy for that young lady because she was very diligent and fought through it and didn't have her best season, and she would tell you that, but I don't know that it matters right now to her because she had that moment in the course of about seven days. It caps off her career in the most ultimate way you could ever think of.

**Q. At the beginning of the year you told me you thought you might have a special team. Now you've got a national championship, you're fifth. Your early thoughts turned out to be totally correct, haven't they?**

PATTY GASSO: I knew we were good. I knew we were good. It was really what got us here was really good leadership, a great staff, great strength coach, great hitting

coach, great pitching coach. Just surrounded with some really hardworking people.

I think these hardworking people had so much belief in this team and they felt it daily. We practiced hard. We practiced hard daily. They'll tell you that. That's how it all pays off. It's just a lot of hard work and a lot of belief in our culture and our championship mindset and all that we put to work there.

**Q. I just want to know, how does it feel winning this national title after everything this team and program had to go through last year with COVID? What does it mean for the university to come out of last year and this year a champion?**

PATTY GASSO: Yeah, I just don't know that people understand how rough it was. I think every coach in the country could relate, where week by week you're wondering who's going to be at practice and who might not, whether they are contact traced and they're out for two weeks, 10 days. It was really tough. It was tough on a few players particularly that were quarantined but never had tested positive, so there was a lot of that going on.

When we started the season, we didn't know who might not be traveling with us. Every day at practice, I was trying to get people to learn new positions to fill in this case we don't have those players with us.

It was hard. But at the same time they were so athletic and understanding about it and saying, hey, whatever we need to do to win, put me wherever you need to put me. Some players were sitting out when they know that they're good enough to be in.

It was just such a selfless team approach the entire season. That's what it's about.

**Q. You kind of talked about the leadership in Giselle, but also Shannon and Nicole, your super seniors, what did they mean to the team this year and especially having to rally this weekend, staving off elimination the entire time you're in Oklahoma City?**



PATTY GASSO: Yeah, you could see both teams today were really starting to run out of gas, especially with how hot it was and the amount of games that we've played and the quick turnarounds that we have to face on a pretty much daily basis.

Giselle was -- just something different about her this week that everyone felt very confident about. She had a different look, approach, calm, confident, wanting the ball.

Shannon, as well. Shannon was ready at all times. Nicole May got some very valuable experience on this big stage.

But Nicole Mendes is a whole 'nother level of leader. She's so well spoken. She's so passionate. But anything she says she backs it up.

I think Jocey is a lot like that, as well. Lynnsie Elam, another, she's our captain. There was some really good leadership going on this week. Those three in particular I was really proud of how they took some things over.

I think they helped people like Lou get fired up and have a big week, huge week for her, and Lou was someone that is sitting out and wondering when I'm getting in. She got that opportunity, she just blasted it, and in that moment, it's like, I don't care whether this is a matchup for you or not, you're staying in the game. Some of the catches she made were incredible.

Jayda Coleman, Tiare Jennings, some of the young ones had to be led by those who have been there, and they did a really nice job of that.

**Q. Just want to ask you, when we talk about passing the torch, you talked a little bit about it, but the leadership those super seniors, seniors are giving players like Jayda, players like Tiare, how big is that for the future of the program?**

PATTY GASSO: Oh, I can't even tell you. It's so hard to get here. It is so difficult to be sitting here -- like I can't even -- words can't even express. It's just really hard. It's a grind. Everyone has got to be kind of in the right mindset.

There are a few of our players that were really struggling uncharacteristically this week. But the freshmen, finding and feeling what it takes to pull this off, is invaluable. Kinzie Hansen, kids like that, that are just -- I guess they're super -- what are they? Super sophomores.

This is a young group, and I didn't realize until we lost our first game, I'm driving home from -- or driving to the hotel from the stadium, and I'm thinking, wow, why did we look

so deer in the headlights. We weren't quite ready for what we were facing with Odicci and James Madison.

I started counting like how many players have been here before, and there was a lot less than what I thought because they've handled themselves so well in postseason and through the season, but it's quite a different situation when you get to the big stage and what they've been dreaming of.

But for them to find out what it feels like and what it takes to win it, the future is really, really bright for the Sooners.

**Q. You have the five titles, but basically four generations of core players have won titles for you. What was the tipping point for you when you knew that the program could reload year after year after year and always compete?**

PATTY GASSO: I just think our staff does a really -- we work really hard recruiting. Really hard. So you've got to get good athletes, but you've got to get athletes that fit your program, and I feel like we found those athletes.

It's really become a great sisterhood. We had some of our national champions up in the stands. I took a picture with Syd Romero and Kelsey Arnold and they made sure I knew that they were present for three of the five national championships.

So it's just a really tremendous culture that we're living in, and the expectations don't get too big for them, but this culture is breeding itself, and it's also bringing in a lot of athletes who want to be part of it.

**Q. The 2013 team a lot of people hold up as sort of your gold standard in terms of power and balance, one player to the next. I don't think you'd argue that point. I know all your champions are special to you. Now that this team is done, do you see comparisons, viable comparisons between this one and the one from eight years ago?**

PATTY GASSO: Absolutely, yeah. You've got Lauren Chamberlain, Jocelyn Alo, you've got Shelby Pendley and Tiare Jennings. You can compare them all the way down the lineup. We had more lefties in the 2013, but they were hybrid type players. They could bunt. They could slap. They could hit gaps. They could hit it out at times. We had a few of our athletes like a Jayda Coleman being able to do that.

So they were very comparable top to bottom. Don't make me choose because I can't. They're both very worthy.

**Q. You talked a little bit yesterday about Jocelyn and the fact she was able to bring it every time and to open up the scoring in the first inning with that home run and being your designated player, hitting is her deal. With that kind of impetus, how important was that for her to hit that home run today but also just the challenge of that's how she's going to be measured game to game, to come through like she did for you guys this week?**

PATTY GASSO: Yeah, we knew that we wanted to set the tone pretty early. Jocelyn Alo is made differently. Made differently. When she puts her mind to something, she gets it done, whatever it is.

She is such a perfectionist with hitting. We handed her the circle late in the game, and she just got right in the middle of this team and told them what they needed to do and how they needed to change.

There's nothing I'm going to do to stop that because they want to listen. They want to hear what she has to say.

But she is a perfectionist and one of the smartest hitters I've ever seen, knows how to use her body the right way, knows what to look for. She was so, so focused and calm throughout this series the entire World Series that it disrupts pitchers. It disrupts their rhythm. It's hard to call, what to call against her, what pitch to throw, because she is so versatile about every pitch.

She was just a really outstanding leader by voice and by example this week.

**Q. I was going to ask you to talk about the WCWS as a whole. You smashed attendance records and viewership records. Just your take on the whole event of this week's WCWS.**

PATTY GASSO: Yeah, I could tell you that we were all absolutely overwhelmed with the fan support from the Sooners, from the state, from -- then there were people coming up to us at the hotel that are from different states just coming out to watch us. But the Sooner fans showed up in droves. It was so unreal. We have never felt anything like that.

Our athletes were talking about, feels like we're on the sidelines of an OU football game, how loud it is. We just couldn't hear each other. The fans were passionate and they were, I thought, very respectful to our opponents, as well.

They really -- when I first started here, nobody really knew what softball was about. Now we've got some very

educated fans that know exactly how this game is played, and they know when to interject with us and when to feed us with their noise and their passion.

It's moments that these players will never forget. It'll live in their lives forever, and they'll be able to tell their grandchildren what this felt like.

But it's not just the OU fans. Every team we play has a really strong supporting group right behind their dugout that is as passionate as everybody else in the stadium that might be wearing OU.

There were names that showed up like Odicci Alexander that everyone will remember from this World Series. Rachel Garcia threw her last game as a college athlete here at the College World Series. There were so many wonderful story lines, to be a part of it was really special to this team and to our program and to our university.

It's been quite an honor to be a part of it, and just so appreciative of all the work that goes in by all the crew, whether it's ground crews, the NCAA crew that's helping us through a lot of the changes in schedule and so forth.

What I really hope in a very sincere way, I think a lot of us coaches spoke up, this tournament is big. It's getting really, really big. It's getting a lot of viewership. It's getting talked about a lot.

As coaches we just want to do what's best for this sport in a respectful way, and we just hope people are listening, whether it's changing our schedules, giving us an extra day, not having us play in late-evening games. There's just a lot of things that definitely -- instant replay, absolutely needs to be a part of this.

It feels to me like this College World Series really exposed a lot of things, in a good way, that need to change to make our game better for our student-athletes.

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