

# 2022 Women's College World Series

Thursday, June 2, 2022

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

**Texas Longhorns**

**Coach Mike White**

**Bella Dayton**

**Mary Iakopo**

Postgame Press Conference



Texas - 7, UCLA - 2

THE MODERATOR: This is the Game 1 press conference featuring the Texas Longhorns. We're joined by head coach Mike White and student-athletes Mary Iakopo and Bella Dayton. Questions for our student-athletes to start, please.

**Q. Mary, I want to ask you, obviously, about the at-bat with the home run. Can you tell me what you were looking for or what you saw, how you felt rounding bases?**

MARY IAKOPO: My first at-bat I eliminated the change-up by hitting the five-six hole. I was sitting hard inside, and that's what I was expecting, and I was swinging away no matter where it was pitched, so it just felt good to help out my team and help out my pitching staff in any way.

**Q. I want to ask Mary and Bella both, you played UCLA earlier in the season. When you were coming into this game and getting ready, what was your preparation process like? Y'all are a very different team than you were then. What was your presentation process like?**

BELLA DAYTON: I think that we just eliminated what happened in the beginning of the season, and we just kept playing the game that we've been playing so far, and I think we just had confidence in what we brought.

MARY IAKOPO: I would say we allowed the beginning of our season to prepare us, so I said it before. We've got punched in the face a couple of times, and finally we're punching back as a unit.

**Q. Also, Mary, there's that interference called in the third inning. Crowd is booing. You guys really kind of**

just shook that off, though, and immediately put some runs up on the board. I guess what was the message to the team during that? Because it seems like you guys really weren't fazed by that at all.

MARY IAKOPO: I would say not a lot of things, they feel like they don't go our way. So as a team we're used to that. So on to the next. We're just ready for whatever is next.

**Q. Bella, I believe you had a stolen base today. You guys stole bases. You bluffed stealing bases, and you did this in the 7th with a 7-0 lead. Just sort of the philosophy of being that aggressive even when the game might be decided, but do you enjoy that, and is it partially to even get in the heads of future opponents?**

BELLA DAYTON: I do enjoy it. I think it just keeps the momentum going throughout the game, and it gives our batters even more confidence to hit that runner in.

**Q. Mike, similar question I just asked Bella. Is it a thing you've been doing all season, just over-aggression for lack of a better term? Continuing it into the seventh inning, is it a message, or is it just we're going to play the same way for seventh innings? Or just tell me about that.**

MIKE WHITE: I think it depends on who you are playing, to tell you the truth. And I have so much respect for UCLA and their ability to come back late in games. I've seen it. I've played against them. I've coached -- I haven't played against them. I've coached against them. I know what they can do. We have to start being aggressive. If my kids, my players see me lay off, they're going to lay off. And we want to keep the momentum going, just as Bella said.

**Q. Coach, I want to ask you first about Mia Scott. I remember you told me she was the fastest kid you had ever coached, but she's so much more than speed. Can you just tell me the impact she's made on your team this year?**

MIKE WHITE: Well, the story behind the story there is in

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super regionals she really struggled. She had a tough one. It was in her head. She's a freshman.

She came out obviously today, and I think she saw four pitchers and got four hits, two triples and two singles. We have to make sure to feed her the right stuff. Janae Jefferson is going to get on at about a .500 clip. If we can them move over and nobody out, that's a bonus for our club.

To have her able to get on base, and we have those speedsters there in a row, it's a lot of fun to coach. It's a lot of havoc for teams. It's part of a whole package.

**Q. Coach, I want to ask you also about your familiarity with UCLA. Obviously, you play them three times a year. You played them some at Texas. Did that familiarity that you have personally play into your preparation for today?**

MIKE WHITE: A little bit. Because they have a whole new team since 2018. I don't know if anybody has really left other than maybe -- I'm not even sure who was left from that program, so it was really completely different.

Our ability to scout them helped. Had some time. Hailey Dolcini, I don't think she was at her sharpest today, but she really battled like she does, and she's the one we had the most confidence in.

Again, we played great defense. We got the bunts, a number of bunts. We were able to stop them from getting things going. That was really the key for us today was, again, good pitching and good defense.

**Q. Coach, I guess you just talked about it here a little bit, but Hailey, what were the things that were working so well for her specifically early on?**

MIKE WHITE: We knew Umpire Cooney [phonetic] is a tight zone, so you can't get flustered. And anybody else might have got flustered. I think Framer [phonetic] thought it was tough, and we had that experience, knowing that. It's like we can't worry about it. We have to make small adjustments. And she was able to make small adjustments, and that's it.

A lot of pitchers, sometimes they try to make adjustments, and they make them in feet when you really need to make them in inches. And that's what she was able to do, and that's why she's tough.

**Q. Coach, I was wondering if you were able to take a moment to kind of take it all in with the great Texas fans and support. Cat Osterman in attendance. I**

**would imagine this is what you envision when you got to Texas.**

MIKE WHITE: Definitely. It's all about alumni and having such a history at this tournament. It's taken us a while to get here, and it's fun to be back. But we really want to try and keep that alumni base going. Obviously, Cat Osterman is leading the charge there. She did a really nice hype video for us coming into this.

It helps knowing that we have players of her caliber, her experience that have got our backs and are out here to watch us. It's awesome.

**Q. On that interference play, my reading of it was could have gone either way. Didn't think it was a slam dunk either way, but I think I saw on the replay the umpire giving you the final judgment and why can, and all you did was nod and walk away. And I thought if I was in your position, I would be losing my mind. Were you holding something back, or did you already sort of see it as this will be a rallying point for us? Or I guess explain that moment.**

MIKE WHITE: I'll have to say I've learned from my history. (Laughing.) It's not going to do me any good. You can't argue the call. All I wanted was clarification of what it was, and he did it right. He came out, and he visited the head coaches and told us. The previous time no one told me anything, and I had to go out, and I got myself in trouble. It was really the umpire taking control and doing it the right way that was able to keep everybody's cool.

We understand we don't have the best view. The people that are out there reviewing. Maybe my big question was whether that ball was catchable or not, and, again, it's a push for me and my fellow staff and the umpires. We need safety bases because it gives a clear lane. How can you possibly run down the lane and stick your foot out without hurting yourself? You know what I'm saying?

Really every coach out there should challenge any play that's down first base because technically you could be called for out of the lane.

**Q. Are you guys playing with a chip on your shoulder right now? Because it's kind of what it seems like.**

MIKE WHITE: I don't care what they're playing with, to tell you the truth. Whatever works.

We want to be a team that's relevant. Our history, we keep saying it right from the start even when we're going through a struggle was it's going to pay dividends. Adversity creates opportunity.

We've had a number of people -- like I said in the press conference with some other people, I had my first four or five out there, and the other ones, you know, what fits best for this game and this program. Today it was JJ Smith, and I think she may have got two hits maybe. Tomorrow it could be Parker who is in there. And that's what I like. We have to be ready to step up and do it.

Do they have a chip? Yeah, I think they do. Like Mary mentioned, it's been a tough year. Not a lot of things have gone our way, to tell you the truth, but they've kept their head about them. It's not an excuse. It's one of our mantras, is no excuses, no regrets, and we're here to play. It's fun.

Thank you, everybody.

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