

2022 Women's College World Series

Saturday, June 4, 2022

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Oklahoma State Cowgirls

Kenny Gajewski

Cheyenne Factor

Julia Cottrill

Kelly Maxwell

Postgame Press Conference



Oklahoma State 2, Florida 0

THE MODERATOR: This is the Game 8 press conference featuring the Oklahoma State Cowgirls.

Questions for our student-athletes first, please.

Q. Julia, at what point did you find out you were going to be starting today? What were your initial thoughts? Talk about your overall performance.

JULIA COTTRILL: So, I found out probably an hour or two before the game. You know, just being ready to go and keep practicing, working in pregame and stuff like that to keep myself in games that I'm not even in to get me ready for whenever my chance is.

Q. How many times did you catch Lugo in your career? How well did you know her when you were coming to the plate?

JULIA COTTRILL: Yeah, I spent two and a half years at Florida, so two and a half years I caught Lugo. I mean, I credit her. She did a great job, kept us to six or seven hits. I credit Florida on their great performance.

But, yeah, probably two and a half years.

Q. Julia, I think if I'm correct you saw four pitches in the first two at-bats. What was behind the approach tonight?

JULIA COTTRILL: I don't know. I was kind of ready to go up there, like get after it. My first two pitches were good pitches to hit, so I just wanted to attack early.

Q. Kelly, after those first two batters get on in the first inning, something changed and you got the next 15 batters out. What was that?

KELLY MAXWELL: Yeah, I think I was battling with umpire strike zone a little bit, so just being able to make an adjustment and go after what I do.

Q. Two excellent pitching performances. Is this the best you've ever pitched in your life?

KELLY MAXWELL: No (laughter).

Q. Tell us more.

KELLY MAXWELL: I mean, it's a big stage. So credit all the teams that are playing and stuff. I just think my performance probably is as good as it's been in the past.

Q. You've seen Morgan go against her former team, and Miranda. Did you rely on them for any talks before the game?

JULIA COTTRILL: I did talk to Morgan a little bit. I think just remembering at the end of the day softball doesn't know who's playing. Keeping it simple was a really big help.

Q. Cheyenne, a couple weeks ago Oklahoma passed an anti-abortion law. It looks like that will go into effect as it looks like Roe versus Wade is overturned. Just wondering if you think women athletes, college athletes, in the next few months or so, next fall, if that issue is going to resonate with college athletes in the way that we've seen in the last couple years, mental health, social injustice?

KENNY GAJEWSKI: I think I'll try to help Chey on this. I don't know that this is the time and place to be talking about some of this stuff. These kids are here to play softball and represent their schools.

I'm just not sure that -- I think one of the things we need to be talking about is student-athlete welfare, okay? I think

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that's probably as big as anything that we need to be talking about here in this press conference.

We just had a big game here, had a pitcher here that had to drug test after our first game, and didn't get home until 3:15. I think that's one of the things that needs to be talked about here, not what you're trying to get these kids into here.

I think if we really want to do what's right and help keep growing our game, keep growing collegiate sports, student-athlete welfare would be at the top of this list.

Q. With all due respect, Cheyenne is a three-time first-team academic all-conference player. It sounds like you're suggesting she can't play softball and have thoughts on this.

KENNY GAJEWSKI: Yeah, I think you're wrong on that. I think your assumption is wrong on that.

THE MODERATOR: That's enough. Any other questions for our student-athletes?

Q. Kelly, with throwing 126 pitches, your first game, not getting back till 3 a.m., throwing a complete game, what has this been like for you, your World Series experience?

KELLY MAXWELL: Yeah, my rest has been a little short just with what happened the other day.

I think I got some sleep and just recovered and then focused today on going after the hitters. I did get a little tired at the end, but I was able to push through.

Q. Cheyenne, take me through the first RBI in the game.

CHEYENNE FACTOR: Yeah, with Coach, I tried to think along with him. I think it was coming. I get those calls a lot. I got a ball my first pitch of the at-bat, then he gave the call. So I was kind of waiting for it. That's what I wanted to do right there. It worked out. Julia was going on the pitch, so...

Q. I know there was a lot of talk in the lead-up this week about when getting here became the expectation for you guys. I'm wondering now, one win away from reaching the World Series finals, can you tell me when each of you realized that was maybe a possibility when you got to OSU?

KELLY MAXWELL: I think the expectation was to be here, but I think the standard now is to be in that final game, so

we're just doing everything we can to be there.

JULIA COTTRILL: Yeah, so I've got to watch this program for quite a while now. The way they hold themselves, they're never out of a ballgame, continue to make that the standard every year. It was really fun to watch and it's really fun to be a part of.

CHEYENNE FACTOR: Yeah, I agree with them. I mean, we think we can beat anybody, and that's what we're here to do.

Q. Do you remember maybe a few years back when you maybe realized that?

CHEYENNE FACTOR: Yeah, I mean, my freshman year we got here and I was kind of -- that's what we were happy to do, you know. Then last year we thought we could win it last year. We went 1-2. This year, I mean, that's what we expect to do.

THE MODERATOR: Kelly, Julia and Cheyenne, thank you very much for your time.

Questions for Coach, please.

Q. Kenny, what went into the decision to have Kelly go twice in two days?

KENNY GAJEWSKI: Yeah, I knew after we won the first game that we'd go right back there. She's our ace. Just didn't think much about it, to be very honest. I mean, I felt like once the last pitch was thrown in the first game, that's right where we were going to go.

With the day off, it made sense. If we didn't have that in the old format, I probably would have went to Morgan Day.

Q. Decision to play Cottrill and how she came through, then the small ball inning that Chey was talking about.

KENNY GAJEWSKI: Yeah, the Julia thing, I mean, we're going up against the best running team in the country. Stolen 130 bags. That's a lot. It's wild. It's a lot. They can run and do some things.

Tuck, her arm is probably her weakest spot, so we just felt like it was a good move.

Then obviously the coaches look really good when she goes 3-for-3 and drives the ball. That's good. That's on that.

Is that it?



Q. Small ball.

KENNY GAJEWSKI: Yeah, I mean, we do that a lot. I mean, it's not like it's something new. If you're watching our film, you know that we make that kind of stuff go. Since we've really been playing our best softball, that's the way we've been playing. Credit them because they limited us when we had runners on. We had a lot of runners on here tonight. We just couldn't get the knockout blow. Credit them on the way they pitch called, the way their pitchers executed. Skylar made a nice play at short to beat Chelsea. It was just a well-played game.

Q. As a coach, do you take pride in winning the old-fashioned way, three or four bunts, a pitcher that's basically not hittable?

KENNY GAJEWSKI: You know, I guess I do because it's something that we talk about and we work on, is part of our daily work. That's the way I was brought up. It's the way I was coached up from my days in junior college, was that game.

I think we've all been enamored with the home run. The home runs just don't get hit here, so you better find ways to make other things happen.

It did feel good. But we'll just take what we can do and make it happen.

Q. The last two times you've come here you've won, lost, lost. What does it feel like taking that step as a program?

KENNY GAJEWSKI: It feels good. It wasn't easy. The last inning, the last couple innings were kind of touch-and-go there. Kelly was on fumes. We knew that. We had Morgan Day hot. We were probably one hitter away, one hitter reaching base away from going to Morgan Day.

It just feels good. I'm really happy for our fans. I'm really happy for our alumni, happy for our team. So many people put so much into this program, I mean, it's wild.

Just happy for all of them. They're all up there, all cheering. We have an absolute mess with tickets, trying to take care of everyone. We're on the secondary market trying to buy 'em. It's absurd what the prices are. It's great but it's absurd.

We want to get everyone here, let everybody be a part of this. I'm just grateful for our kids and the way that they played.

Q. Student welfare is an important conversation as anything. I would actually like to know more about what went into Kelly's drug test, how long was the process, was it random?

KENNY GAJEWSKI: Yeah, it was a random test, which is totally fine. I mean, I have no problems. It's part of what these kids are used to.

So I'm just going to tell you, because I think it needs to be kind of heard. We had five kids. She was one of 'em. She went, she gave a sample immediately, okay? But if you can imagine these kids sweat like crazy and they hydrate all game long. So her sample was diluted, okay? Explain that stuff. It's wild. I don't know what we want them to be, but her sample is diluted, so now she has to sit here and try to pee again.

I don't know if you've ever had to drug test, but it's not fun. People are staring at you. You're doing that. You're trying to test. You're tired. It's 12:00. She got back to the hotel at 3:15. If we have to play the next day, if this format hasn't changed, if we have to play again, this is a tough deal.

I'm not mad at anyone. I just know this process needs to probably be looked at to see if we maybe can do it in the mornings of game days or something. The first games, no problem, right? They are done. But we have a long game, we start a half an hour late, then we go through this deal. It's rough.

She was out of gas here tonight. Like all of us know when you're out till 3 -- she got back at 3:15. Now you have to shower, unwind, get to bed. It's a 4, 4:30 proposition with no food. She didn't get to eat.

It's not like we don't have food. I'm not trying to go down that road. I'm just saying, like, so everything is disrupted in the biggest stage that we have. So I think we just have to take a look at this. If we don't talk about this kind of stuff here, it will never get changed.

I know the committee is working their tails off. We got this format changed. It's awesome. I mean, it's rewarding the winning teams, and that's what we should do, okay? It's another part that we need to keep looking at this.

These girls are important, they are highly talented, they are wound tight, their muscles are wound tight, they're fit and strong. When you disrupt rest on these type of kids at this point in a year, it really has a negative impact that can really last.

So I just want to make sure that her voice is heard. She's not going to say a word. So that's really all it's about. I am not complaining about, hey, we don't feed 'em. I think that's a process that we need to address and take a look at, a hard look at.

Q. With all that said, Kelly became the third player in your program tonight to eclipse the 300 strikeout threshold this season. What has that meant and what has she meant to your program?

KENNY GAJEWSKI: She's a special kid. The story is kind of wild. After Kelly's first year here, we had a serious talk about, hey, if we can't get some changes made, I'm not sure you're going to be good enough to pitch here. That was a conversation that we had.

She couldn't get anybody out in our fall. She ended up really kind of working through the season part. John came in, we talked about a few the changes. I should take myself out of that. John did.

She went home with her old pitching coach, Kyla Holas, they worked on that stuff. She came back and I was, like, what happened? It's unreal. It was that challenge.

We're in a society of the portal. Most kids, when they get that talk, they leave, okay? So I think that tells you about our program, the honesty that we're going to talk through, the honesty that we're going to have.

We're vulnerable, we all are. We're going to put ourselves out there. But there's nothing better than being able to be honest and a kid looking at you and saying, I got this, going okay, then coming back and doing this. It's wild.

I just credit her, her family. These families are the biggest parts of this. It would be easy to say, He doesn't know what he's talking about, okay? They're not there each day. We saw what we saw. Talked to her. She made that change.

She's special. She's stoic. She's going to be crazy successful in life. It's a cool story that we'll talk about for a long time.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you.

KENNY GAJEWSKI: Thanks.

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