

2022 Women's College World Series

Sunday, June 5, 2022

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Florida Gators

Coach Tim Walton

Hannah Adams

Cheyenne Lindsey

Natalie Lugo

Postgame Press Conference



what contextually has your time at Florida, your time with Coach Walton done for you as a person.

NATALIE LUGO: Sorry.

THE MODERATOR: Take your time, Natalie. It's fine.

NATALIE LUGO: I don't really have enough words to explain my time at UF. There have been a lot of ups and a lot of downs, but without Coach Walton, I wouldn't have grown into the woman that I am right now. He has just taught me more than I ever thought I could learn and growing up into someone I'm really proud of being right now.

I don't know. I don't really have any words. It really is truly great to be a Florida Gator.

CHEYENNE LINDSEY: Waking up every morning knowing that I'm a Florida Gator is like one of the biggest honors to have. I'm just so proud to be a Gator, and I know it didn't end how we want it to, but being on this stage, being able to be a role model for little girls that are playing in travel ball tournaments looking up to us is just an inspiration.

HANNAH ADAMS: Yeah, I agree with everything that they said. I'm just so proud to be a Gator, and I'm really, really proud of our team this year. We made a goal at the beginning of the year to make it back to the World Series, and we worked really hard to do that even at times when our season wasn't looking so great, but we'll forget about that because we're at the World Series right now.

I'm proud of every single person on this team. They're my best friends. Coach Walton has been there since my freshman year. He's turned me into the person and player I am today. I wouldn't have been able to do it without him.

I'm really grateful I got a fifth year here too. I've taken in every single moment of this last year. I'm just really glad I got another year with my teammates, and the freshmen that came in, I was lucky to play with them too.

I'm really grateful for the senior class. Coming up together, we've all grown so much. I've seen so much growth in

UCLA 8, Florida 0

THE MODERATOR: Game 9 press conference featuring the Florida Gators. We're joined by head coach Tim Walton, and student-athletes Hannah Adams, Cheyenne Lindsey, and Natalie Lugo. Questions for our student-athletes to start, please.

Q. Was this kind of like last night's game in that you just ran up against another really good pitcher?

HANNAH ADAMS: Yeah, she was a really good pitcher, but I don't think we let last night's game affect us at all. We moved on from that game to the next game and tried to focus on our next opponent. I think we gave it everything we had in all our at-bats.

CHEYENNE LINDSEY: I agree with Hannah and exactly what she said.

Q. Cheyenne, the way you guys were hitting the ball coming in, to have only five hits in these last two games, would you have thought that was possible the way you guys were playing offensively?

CHEYENNE LINDSEY: I think there was a lot of like hits that we had that were hit hard, but it was right at people. You can't really control where the ball goes, only your contact. I think that was a big part of it.

Q. I hate to do this to you ladies, but I know this didn't end the way you all wanted it to, but is there any way you can put into context for me -- and I'll start with Natalie, if that's okay -- what your careers are over here in Oklahoma City. That's a really good thing. Just

ASAP . . . when all is said, we're done.®
sports

each and every one of them. I'm just really proud of them not only as players but as people too.

This program really makes you a better person off the field too. It's not just about softball.

THE MODERATOR: Hannah, Cheyenne, Natalie. Thank you very much for your time throughout the week, and congratulations on a great season.

Questions for Coach Walton, please.

Q. Just an assessment of the game perhaps.

TIM WALTON: We made some really nice defensive plays. Obviously, Katie Kistler, Hannah Adams, nice play, and Wilkie threw out a really good base runner. Just didn't have any answers offensively. We hit a few balls hard and right at someone. We didn't get any leadoff runners on very often. It makes it hard to run an offense with that.

I think maybe the best hit, quote/unquote hit, but maybe Charla's hit, but still nothing to follow behind. Holly can throw her change-up really any time she wants, and it's 18 miles an hour slower than the other pitch. It makes it hard to get your timing right, keep your timing right. I think even a couple were looking, hunting change and still having a hard time being able to square it up with the speed differential and the movement.

Overall, with the athletes not being here, it's really just the same stuff that we've dealt with the entire season. You run into a good pitcher, can't really manufacture much. It feels like we're -- we gave them six outs in one inning, dropped four balls. It's really tough.

But I thought overall good approach, just not good enough.

Q. Does the general fan understand how much better the pitching gets once you get here?

TIM WALTON: It's obvious. We just lost to a team called UCLA, who's probably got more wins in this tournament than any program. I'm not confident in that, but I'm pretty dang sure it's probably that. It's a good team. It's a good program. They're trained. They're coached. They're groomed. They've all been in these kind of moments before, whether it be in high school, in travel, or even now in college.

It's a good program obviously. We've got a lot of young players, but at the end of the day, we as coaches, we've got to do a better job and get them ready for this. Last year's season ended the way it ended, and, again, but last year was pretty similar to this year in a way. We're trying

to get 21 outs, and it seems like everybody can score at will when they want. It's just a grind.

Q. Can you look back now at the season and reflect on how the team kind of maybe grew and really came together toward the end?

TIM WALTON: Yeah, I think -- I told them that before, even after -- even once we got to Blacksburg and we got to Super Regional, I was really proud of them for just being able to buy into just being more than statistics and being more than winning a game, just learning how to be unselfish, learning how to be a better teammate, just really try to pick each other up a little more.

It's a lot easier. When things aren't going your way and you're just focused on you, it's really difficult. If you can learn how to pick someone else up and celebrate their successes makes the game, it makes it more fun.

It's not easy to do what we did with six pitchers because every one of them want the ball. Rylee Trlicek came in and did a phenomenal job again today.

So at the end of the day, I think that it's the reflection is just that we weren't good enough and we knew it, and we really did a good job of getting better.

Our catchers did a phenomenal job just getting better. Defensively we're obviously really, really good. And offensively, when we go, we go, when we don't, we don't. That was pretty much the same story a lot of time through the season.

Q. Hannah Adams is sitting there next to you for the last time. Can you kind of sum up not only what she's meant but also this class? Going through COVID and all that stuff.

TIM WALTON: I think, when you sit in my chair and you just -- you don't get a chance to -- the next kid that wears No. 1 is going to have to be a special, special kid. That's one of the best college softball players that I've been around. Just the personality and to do what she does with the leather, it's unbelievable. To be an All-American, to be a graduate of Florida and just be so humble.

Listening to her talk, when she was doing her interviews before, it was 500 miles an hour, heart's racing, and she's learned how to answer questions well and just do a good job.

But the teammate piece is the hardest part to teach, and she's such a great teammate. She just really embraces people in the dugout. Here she is, she goes 4 for 4 with

two homers and makes two really great plays. She's more excited for someone else when they do something well.

She's just a good kid. She's been as consistent as any player we've ever had in all phases of the game. It's good stuff. The class itself, obviously Natalie, just to be able to do what she's been able to do. Would we have liked a lot more wins and All-Americans in front of her name? Of course. But she really did a good job. She talked about the ups and downs. There were a lot more ups than downs, and I think the expectations were more of the downs than most people realized.

Cheyenne, she just finished the fourth year as opposed to the fifth like the other two. And we don't have Marissa Mesimore, who came in and just played in her fifth year. But Cheyenne had as consistent of a year as she's had in her career. She's healthy, did a really good job.

Moved her to right field, which really had nothing to do with Cheyenne but the little people out there running around and making SportsCenter Top 10 Plays, just how fast they are and some of the things they can do coverage-wise.

I'm really proud of Cheyenne, just a good teammate, super, super consistent. She just had a really solid year for us.

And then Marissa, I told Marissa after the game we wouldn't have been here without her, being able to minimize the Virginia Tech onslaught in Game 1. She had the score where it was, not to get run ruled on the road, and we were able to find our way and get after it. She really pieced that together for us and helped us conserve Natalie and conserve Rylee and conserve some of the other ones. It's hard to do, but she did a great job of it.

Q. Coach, you get to the World Series, you win that Super Regional on the road, you host an SEC tournament. When you think back to this year, what you're going to think about.

TIM WALTON: It's really going to be hard for me not to think about Blacksburg. Just the -- just what we were able to do as the 14 seed going in and upsetting the No. 3 seed, and then the way we hit and then the way we carried that into the World Series.

Just the growth and the humbleness that we approached that series with, I thought we really did a good job of buying into the plan, buying into the preparation, building on the confidence, making good plays, being able to be -- the one thing I look at this entire year, we were very resilient. They did such a good job of just being able to roll with the flow.

Today we had to go hit inside as opposed to hitting outside

because of the weather. They didn't bat an eye. They just said, all right, what time? I think the one thing that I really felt is the players and the team trusted me and trusted us, and they really did a good job of being able to just understand no matter what we do --

Here's a simple moment. Cheyenne Lindsey, how many people take a player out of the game in the middle of the game. Not very many, but I'm going out there to bring Mia Buffano in. Why? Mia Buffano has the best throwing arm we have on the team, so put her in right field. Cheyenne jogs off the field and gives me a hug. She knew. She understood exactly what we were doing in that moment.

That to me makes me the most proud is that our players just understand. The get it factor is really high. I questioned that along the way a little bit, but I think the team did a good job of buying in, trusting, and just made me feel a heck of a lot better about my leadership skills because I was questioning them at times with just some of the moves we'd make. But I think that overall took two steps backwards and took five steps forward, and I'm really proud of our young people and our older people for just buying in to what we do.

Everything I told them along the way, we've got to do it this way to get to the World Series, we've got to do it this way to get to the World Series, and they did it, and we got to the World Series. It didn't end the way we want, but there's probably 292 teams that would love to end their season at the College World Series, and we're one of them.

Q. You said it just there about your young people, and we saw what the Kendra Falbys and the Lexie Delbreys of the world did this year. Obviously you're losing important players, but what excites you the most about the future of Florida softball?

TIM WALTON: I think if we can take what this experience felt like, we still won every road series in the SEC. We went to Blacksburg and won a tough regional. We came to the World Series. We won the first game. Obviously we didn't match up the right way the next two. I think the excitement is this team should be able to reflect and should be able to look at all the positives and all the negatives and figure out a way to not dwell so much on the negatives but be realistic, be accountable, and say, hey, I've got to get better at this, whatever this is.

My strength coach and I will navigate some things we need to do a little bit better job of. I'm disappointed in my preparation of getting our team to look better here at the World Series, to be honest with you, but I think the key for me is that I reflect really well and I learn really well. I learn a lot about things and people and skills and making moves.



I think the key is just being able to not just reflect all on the negative, look at all the positive, see what we're good at, and then try to get better at those, and then identify some things, key things along the way.

I think, again, got to get better. Got to create -- we still have to have more power. We've got to have power, whether it's technology, whether it's the strength coach, whether it's recruits, the way we hit -- all the things. I'm not going to just blame one thing. I'm not a blamer.

I think, when I look back, just a bunch of good -- Katie Kistler's season was phenomenal. I think I'm so proud.

THE MODERATOR: Congratulations, Coach. We appreciate your time.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports