

2022 Women's College World Series

Sunday, June 5, 2022

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Texas Longhorns

Coach Mike White

Estelle Czech

JJ Smith

Postgame Press Conference



Texas - 5, Arizona - 2

THE MODERATOR: This is the game 10 press conference featuring the Texas Longhorns. We're joined by head coach Mike White, and our student-athletes are JJ Smith and Estelle Czech.

Q. Estelle, first of all, congratulations on the win. You were in a bit of a jam when you came in here, and you really just kind of rose to the occasion there. What was going through your mind because it seemed like you really thrived out there?

ESTELLE CZECH: Me and Coach had a discussion before the game that my position today was to be the reliever and to pick up Hailey when I need it. That's what I tried to do. Hailey did her job, and I did mine.

Q. For Estelle as well. You had a great first month for Texas, and then things got a little bit rough for you. How did you keep yourself in a good place mentally through all that to be able to be ready when needed in May and June?

ESTELLE CZECH: Well, in that little rough patch, I was having some difficulty with self-confidence. And me and Coach had a couple conversations, and he just said to keep pushing because he had confidence in me and I had to find that confidence in myself because I knew my teammates also believed in me. So just persevere through that.

Q. JJ, you had the big fly, the big swing. What were you thinking coming to the plate there, and just how were you feeling?

JJ SMITH: Honestly, a little nervous. This is my first time

being in the World Series. On deck, the first thing that ran through my mind is this is for the super seniors. Janae, Hailey, Lauren, Mary, all of them, they deserved to be here. I had Katie's back. That's just what was going through my mind right there. I was just doing it for my team, to be honest with you.

Q. JJ, just talk about the performance of Hailey and what she's meant to this team.

JJ SMITH: Hailey, she's been outstanding. She's been a fighter. She said that countless times. She's been a fighter. She wants to be here. We all have her back. She wants to, like I said, she wants to be here.

THE MODERATOR: Estelle?

ESTELLE CZECH: Hailey is a fighter. She has so much grit and passion. I think that's something that me and her share, we have in common. She wants to throw every single pitch every single game. Every moment she's in it to win it. She does it for the team.

Her and Mary have a great connection, so that helps out too. She's just amazing all around. And she's a great teammate.

Q. For both of you, you've played Oklahoma State several times this season. What do you think about getting another crack at them in the semifinals here?

ESTELLE CZECH: We had a good game today, and we're going to focus on that for the majority of today, but we're going to worry about Oklahoma State tomorrow and late tonight. So we'll be there.

JJ SMITH: Going off Estelle, just celebrating this win tonight, celebrating that we're in the Final Four, and just appreciating the opportunity and just staying where we are.

Q. JJ, you guys were down 2-1 midway through the game. I know that's not the first time you all have had your backs against the wall this season. What is it about this team that allows you guys to respond like that and really come out strong?



JJ SMITH: We're really gritty. Over the course of the season, we've all gotten really close and understanding no matter what happens we're still in the game. We're not out of the game until it's over. Just understanding the fact that we're gritty and we can play with whoever's out there.

THE MODERATOR: JJ, Estelle, thank you very much for your time. Congratulations.

Q. Coach, just starting off, what did you see from Estelle out there? Coming in there, it really seemed like she kind of thrived out there.

MIKE WHITE: As I've said before, players can make you look good or bad. She was itching at the -- champing at the bit to get in there because she pitched the first game for us in Regionals, which was huge for us, which allowed Hailey to kind of rest that first day. And then she had to sit until this time, and she was ready. And I couldn't be more proud of her.

Q. Kind of along those lines, Hailey only throws 3 1/3 innings today. How does that kind of set you up -- you have to win twice tomorrow, and I assume that sets you up a little better with her not having to pitch the whole game.

MIKE WHITE: Exactly. We know, there's no secrets between us and Oregon State -- Oklahoma State, I'm sorry. I'm still stuck in the Pac-12. It's that orange. It throws me.

But there are no secrets, and they're an excellent team. I don't care who pitches. I mean, they had our number in the championship series for Big 12. I'm just so excited, guys. I'm just over the moon. It's like fun.

But then again, you've got Maxwell, who's proven to be one of the best pitchers in the country. So it's going to be a tough road for us. We've just got to go out and compete and see what happens, give ourselves an opportunity.

Even yesterday, when we were down by a bunch against Oklahoma, 7-1, we came back, and we gritted it out, and we fought it out, and we kind of didn't give in. So that's why I'm so proud of this club is they continue to fight.

Q. Just to follow up on that, I know you are genuinely very excited. Talk about this journey from the St. Pete/Clearwater Invitational, you certainly didn't play your best, and now you're one of the last four.

MIKE WHITE: If you had told me after that that in March we'd be in the Final Four, I'd say I'm not quite sure about

that one. We've made some changes. The girls have come together when it's really counted -- obviously with some great pitching from Hailey Dolcini throughout the rest of the year. And the rest of the staff has kind of patched together.

And we had some people shine out, like Sophia Simpson in the Super Regional, and now Estelle Czech. And JJ Smith out of the middle of nowhere pops a home run for us.

It's exciting to see these young ladies excel on the big stage, to tell you the truth.

Q. In that period of time that Estelle said she was battling herself-confidence, what were you seeing at that point, and what then led you to believe she was through that?

MIKE WHITE: I've said this before, it's about emotional. She was getting things emotional instead of looking at it analytically, why she wasn't being successful. The harder she'd try, the worse it would get. Really the fact was that she was missing over the plate, and it was that simple.

You've got to focus, understand what you want to do with the curveball. You want that curveball to rise, or you want that curveball to drop? It was really just focusing, coming in and understanding you can't control the pitch once it leaves and just have confidence in your fielders. I think it was she was just trying too hard. So she made a great adjustment.

Q. I think a lot of people felt like you guys should have hosted going into the tournament. You didn't. You won at Washington. Win one at Arkansas. Now you're the Finals. Oklahoma and Oklahoma State are also the Finals. Those are the only three teams from the Big 12 that made the tournament. Just what does this speak to about the league with all three of you being in the Final Four now?

MIKE WHITE: Well, the Lord works in mysterious ways. If we'd have been seeded 16 and hosted, we'd have matched up with Oklahoma, and we wouldn't have made the Supers or the College World Series if we'd played like we did yesterday. It was like, hey, let's make the most of this opportunity. We're in the postseason.

I think we've seen other teams that end up worrying about where they're seeded too much, other than saying, just create the opportunity and go play. Now we're here. This is a lot of fun. This team's unbelievable. Did I answer all your question? Did I miss part of it? Yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you very much and congratulations. We appreciate your time.

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