

2023 Women's College World Series

Thursday, June 1, 2023

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Tennessee Lady Volunteers Coach Karen Weekly

Rylie West

Kiki Milloy

Postgame Press Conference



Tennessee - 10, Alabama - 5

THE MODERATOR: We will go ahead and get started. We're joined by Tennessee head coach Karen Weekly and student-athletes Rylie West and Kiki Milloy. We'll start with Karen giving an opening statement and move to questions for the players.

Karen, you have an opening statement for us?

KAREN WEEKLY: It's good to get that first game under our belt and get a W. This time of year, that's what it's all about, just get wins.

Really the kind of game we expected based on the scores of our last two games, 7-5, 7-6. Alabama is a great team. We know they have a lot of great hitters.

When we got to 10, you just kind of felt like they're not going to go away, and they didn't. But I'm really proud of our team of just how we were tough the whole game and just kept our foot on the pedal and built up a big enough lead that we could come away with the win.

Q. Kiki, for you, how much confidence do you have in Zaida behind you when they intentionally walk you? And how important was it for you all to capitalize in that second inning with the Alabama error and the intentional walk?

KIKI MILLOY: Yeah, whenever they intentionally walk me, I'm like I don't know if that's the best move because Zaida is going to come up. Every time they walk me, I feel like she's done something to manufacture a run.

That's a tough decision to make as the other team, but I just have so much trust in her.

Q. Just talk about that home run and how important was it for you to come into this World Series and get a home run, with just you having four home runs or five home runs this season. Just talk a little bit about that.

RYLIE WEST: I honestly was trying to get a good pitch. I told Karen before my at-bat that I'm just going to put the ball in the outfield because Brylee was on third and she's really fast.

I was just trying to hit the ball hard somewhere deep in the outfield so she could score. So it was just a pretty simple process, and I got a good pitch, and I went for it.

Q. For Rylie and Kiki, just what's it been like playing with Mackenzie this year, and how has she gelled with the team?

KIKI MILLOY: Coming in, she's one of the people that makes up the heartbeat of our team. She has so much fire, so much passion, and playing with her, beside her, I think she's made this team so much better and so much more competitive.

You know every time she steps into the box or every time she's on the field, you're never not going to hear her. She always has something to say, and it makes us all better.

RYLIE WEST: Like Kiki said, she's a firecracker. From day one, she's been loud. She's talked. It starts in practice. She's a competitor in practice, so she's made us better in practice, and you guys just get to see it on the field.

Q. I know you guys saw Jaala Torrence earlier in the year. Did that familiarity help? And what led to some good at-bats at the start?

RYLIE WEST: We saw her earlier this year, and she did have my number this year. It's nice because you know what the pitch is going to look like when you come out of the box. So that familiarity is cool to see.

KIKI MILLOY: Same thing, but Karen always talks about



how -- they weren't the same team that we saw previously. We weren't the same team. So it's always going to be a little bit different when you see another pitcher.

Like what Rylie said, it's nice to have a little bit of familiarity, especially coming in and playing a team like Alabama for our first game of the World Series.

Q. I'm curious about the Mommy hat celebration, the money. Rylie, today on a big stage, you got your chance. Kiki's done it plenty of times this year. Is the money real? What power does it give you when you go through the dugout? What's sort of the value of these sort of dugout traditions and celebrations?

RYLIE WEST: I think the dugout tradition started with COVID because we weren't allowed to go out. The value was just getting to celebrate with your team in the dugout, still have a celebration.

The money is not real. I wish it was. But it has all our faces on it, so it's pretty cool. And it gives you power because you get to see everyone's faces flying when someone hits a home run. That's about it.

KIKI MILLOY: The Mommy hat, that came from -- I don't know if you know the story. Baseball kind of got their little Daddy hat band for a second. So we were like let's wear the Daddy hat. Then someone made us a Mommy hat.

It's just like, whenever you pimp a home run, you get to have the big pimping stick and walk through the dugout. It's just great seeing all of your teammates celebrating you. When someone who doesn't maybe hit as many home runs or hits a home run during a big moment, being able to celebrate with your teammates and throw the cash on them, it's awesome.

Q. Kiki, you guys talked about what you guys did with your rallies with two outs, but how big was it to strand those two runners in the top of the first, and how much momentum did that give you guys heading into the rest of the game?

KIKI MILLOY: Right. In the first inning, like that's when you really start to punch someone in the mouth. Being able to strand those two runners after a walk and then the single was really great. Obviously Ry getting her nerves out going after it, but that gave us confidence going into the at-bat and into the rest of the game.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Rylie and Kiki.

Q. I'm just wondering how you feel about the home run celebrations?

KAREN WEEKLY: I love it. I love it. The game has changed and evolved. The players have changed and evolved. The more fun they can have, the better.

I've changed in that respect. I used to not even like cheering. Then I realized they don't stay in the game if they're not cheering. So whatever kind of keeps them engaged and connected, and you heard them talk about it's just so fun to be able to celebrate with your team.

My thing on celebrations, and I've told them this, we're never going to allow anything that is directed at our opponent, but we'll celebrate us all day long.

Q. Going back to one of the things that was asked of the athletes, that first inning how big was it for Ashley to rebound after (indiscernible) could have potentially had a good start in the first inning?

KAREN WEEKLY: That was huge, huge. If we go down there, it just kind of depends. If you go down one, you're probably feeling okay. For them to get runners on first and third, and then we get three outs, the ball doesn't get out of the infield, that was big time. Big time. That just speaks to Ashley's toughness. She just willed herself to get those outs, and she did.

Q. Offense really passed the bat up and down the lineup today. How much confidence does that give you that you're facing a really good pitching staff in your opponent on Saturday?

KAREN WEEKLY: It gives all of our girls confidence. The way they perform with two outs is really amazing. They never feel like, oh, okay, we'll just get to the next inning.

I just told them in the locker room, we've been talking about this, the mark of a good team, a team that can compete for championships is the bottom of the order. Everyone is going to have studs at the top of the order. But it's those kids that don't get the publicity, their name's not always in the headline, what do they do?

My gosh, you look at the bottom of our order, you had 5 hits out of 6, 7, 8, 9, and a home run and a double. I mean, they sparked us. They were the heroes.

Q. You touched on it a little bit, but just what is it about this team with two outs they just don't seem to care? They just seem to thrive?

KAREN WEEKLY: They really play in the moment. That's the thing I've been most proud of with this team. You can preach that as a coach, but you've got to have leaders like

the two that were here buying in and then spreading that message to the rest of the team.

They really play one pitch at a time, and they're quick at recognizing when they get out of that mode and getting themselves and their teammates right back into it.

Q. Karen, if Oklahoma beats Stanford here in the next hour, that will be your next matchup on Saturday. Have you followed them closely throughout the season? How do you prepare for a matchup like that?

KAREN WEEKLY: I haven't studied film on them because we never saw them during the regular season, and there was never even a chance we were going to. But we'll get to work on that. It's hard not to know what Oklahoma is doing. I think we all hear about it.

I mean, they're loaded. They're just absolutely loaded. It will be a great game, a great game. I'm excited for our team to have that opportunity to play that game.

THE MODERATOR: That will wrap things up. Thank you.

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