

2023 Women's College World Series

Thursday, June 1, 2023

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Alabama Crimson Tide Coach Patrick Murphy Kenleigh Cahalan Ashley Prange

Postgame Press Conference



Tennessee - 10, Alabama - 5

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with Patrick Murphy giving a statement, then we'll go to questions for the players, Ashley Prange and Kenleigh Cahalan.

Patrick, do you have an opening statement?

PATRICK MURPHY: Appreciate it. They came up with some really big hits, and I think one of the key stories was our opportunity in the first inning, and we didn't cash in. First and third and no outs and 3, 4, 5 up to bat. We have to get some runs, something there, because it was a really good start, and then it kind of deflated us.

I was really glad we got 15 people in the game. They got some experience on this field. Some good highlights. Marlie's pinch hit home run, and Cahalan showed some guts and some grit getting that key hit with two outs that extended the game because we could have folded our tent right there, and we fought some more.

So I was pleased with the fifth and sixth inning.

Q. Kenleigh, you had a great game, but I'm going to start off a little bit with the first inning. How much of a gut punch was that for you all to strand those two runners in the first, and how were you able to rebound from that?

KENLEIGH CAHALAN: It was tough, but I knew that our team has grit and everybody believes in one another. So I knew we were going to come back at some point and score runs when we needed them. So we just kept fighting.

Q. Ashley, three errors for you today. How do you bounce back from a tough game in the field like that?

ASHLEY PRANGE: I think having full faith in my teammates. It is a game of failure, and it's about how you overcome on any given day on any play. And it's really cool, Lauren came up to me and she's like, Hey, you've had my back all year that, I got your back. And I don't doubt her for a second. I don't doubt anyone else on that field for a second.

I'm super thankful to be here with these girls, and I know that we play our best when we're able to show how resilient and how gritty we truly are.

Q. For both players, like with the regional and Super Regional rounds, you had win-or-go-home situations. What about that and the adversity you guys have faced all year help prepare you for tomorrow night?

ASHLEY PRANGE: I think building off the adversity we faced all year, it's kind of in our team story from day one, coming out of the gate with the loss the first game of the season. How well can we truly rely on each other and pick ourselves back up when we do get punched and how hard can we hit back in those moments?

I think it's something our team has taken a lot of pride in, is really kind of just I guess took pride in making it a staple of our team this year.

KENLEIGH CAHALAN: I agree. Like I said, this team has grit. I believe in every one of my teammates, and I know that tomorrow we're going to come back fighting and getting ready for tomorrow's game.

Q. Ashley, not the outcome you wanted today, but some good moments with Marlie Giles getting her home run and first appearance in the College World Series. Talk a little bit about that and how exciting it was for her.

ASHLEY PRANGE: As a fifth-year senior, to see her come through like that in such a cool moment, it meant everything. I remember just taking it all in with Coach Aly, and I was like, man, my heart could explode right now on the field, just seeing the joy. And just seeing her come



through like that. She's worked so hard day in and day out, and everyone here has faith in her like no other. Seeing that all come together for her meant the world.

Q. When I looked at the starting lineup today, Jenna is the only one who had played in the World Series game before. Now do you feel like you've settled in and been on this stage, it will help you moving forward through the rest of the tournament?

ASHLEY PRANGE: Yeah, I'd say personally, like I said last week, I never made it out of a regional before, so all of this has been kind of new and something different to take in.

Like I said earlier, I'm super, super excited and super grateful to be here with these girls. Like I always say, there's nowhere else in the world I'd rather be than here.

KENLEIGH CAHALAN: I agree, it's exciting. Especially as a freshman, first year, I'm very excited to see where this goes.

Q. One of the things I think a lot of new viewers to softball appreciate is the sort of excitement in the dugout, the traditions, the superstitions. What does that add to the game for you? Like on a big stage like this, does it sort of bring a sense of normalcy with you? And what are your favorite ones?

KENLEIGH CAHALAN: Our energy is very key when we're out there. We all know that. We've done that since day one. We have leaders in the dugout called the Wolfpack. So Jordan Stephens and Marlie Giles are usually a part of that, and they lead us throughout all the cheers, and it's really fun. Keeps the energy going and more motivating for all the people playing.

ASHLEY PRANGE: I think our team too thrives on momentum. When we have the energy and are able to keep it, we kind of play our best and come together our best, it feels like. It's super important to our momentum and makes the guys fun.

Q. Jaala came in and had only given up two runs over 30 innings in the NCAA Tournament so far. Did you see anything different from her today that maybe caused her to struggle?

PATRICK MURPHY: I'm not sure I know. The home run to the lefty was too good of a pitch. I watched the replay on the scoreboard. Other than that, I'm not sure because I thought her velocity was really good at the beginning of the game.

It was the two-out rally that killed us when we went up there as well, and in the SEC tournament they had a huge rally with two outs, bases cleared two outs. It wasn't like two people on and we got two outs. There was nobody on.

They got a thing going there with two outs. We just need to stop the bleeding, and it happened to us up there in Fayetteville and kind of happened again today.

They got like the three-run home run, I think, that was a big hit. The lefty, that might have been a two-run home run. They got big hits with people on base.

Q. Apart from the missed chance in the first inning, were you pleased with the offense, especially given how talented Tennessee's pitching is?

PATRICK MURPHY: Well, one of the best stats was we only had two Ks, one by a starter, one by a pinch hitter. When we faced Miss Rogers up there, I think we only had eight or nine, and only one against her this time. That was a big win, we put the ball in play.

It comes back to that first inning again. Just anything there to score a run, and I think she might get a little tight, they might get a little tight, and it's a different story.

Q. You guys had a lot of opportunities to have a (indiscernible) conversation. Has that message changed for you this postseason, or what do you tell the team before tomorrow night?

PATRICK MURPHY: No. Afterwards, the coaches said their thing, and Montana said, look, we've been here before, twice. Supers and Regionals. It was MTSU, win or go home. Northwestern, win or go home. We've been in this situation, so it's not a big deal.

So it shouldn't be like this nervous. This probably is the way it's been written for this team, to make it the hard way. We have to play better defense. We have to get a good start from the starter. Then obviously the third thing is to key hit, and we need to do that early.

I thought our at-bats got better as the game went along.

Q. Kenleigh Cahalan had a big catch in the fifth inning too, along with the two hits. Talk about the poise and confidence you have with her as an 18-year-old freshman.

PATRICK MURPHY: Yeah, she should be probably graduating high school about this weekend at Hewitt-Trussville. She's very, very steady. She's not an emotional kid, as you can kind of tell. Very even keeled,

doesn't get too high or too low. For an 18-year-old, that's pretty good, especially for a hitter -- baseball, softball.

The best hitters to me are the ones that they can go 0 for 7 and they know that they're due. Not that they're 0 for 7 and I stink. She knows that she's due.

That was a two out, I think two strikes as well, the game was on the line, and she comes through with an opposite field double over the left fielder's head. She's got it in her. I think that was probably a really key hit for her future and for Giles. That's what you want when you come here. You want a freshman to do well because then they want to come back.

Q. You talked about defense a little bit, but that two-out rally started with an error. Just on a stage like the World Series, how important is defense and making those plays become?

PATRICK MURPHY: Huge. Kristen White made a hell of an effort on that ball in centerfield, but she makes that play. This is the World Series. You just said it. This is the World Series. You cannot give somebody 27 outs in a game. You cannot give them extra outs. 24, sorry. It seemed double to me. You just can't give extra outs.

The margin of error is so slim. We talked about this. You just have to play clean the whole time.

Q. As the game progressed, did it become like the plan to save Montana for tomorrow?

PATRICK MURPHY: Yes.

Q. Is she available? What's her status?

PATRICK MURPHY: Yeah, she's fine. To me it's like either tied, within a run, or a lead. So I'm not sure what's going to happen tomorrow, but today that would have been the deal.

Q. I was speaking with Kayla earlier today, and she said playing for you, you don't feel pressure in the big moments. How do you create that relationship with players to get them to be so comfortable in huge moments where they just feel like they're playing a game?

PATRICK MURPHY: You have to get them to realize and believe it's person first, athlete second, everything we do. It doesn't matter if they go 0 for 4 or 4 for 4, I'm still going to love them, and they have to realize that.

When they truly understand that I have their best interests

at heart in all things, they're good to go. They're not worrying about a fail. They're not worrying about if they strike out. They can look down to first base and third base, look at both Alyson and myself, and say they're good with me whatever I do here. I don't have to worry about them.

I'm hoping that's how they feel because it's true.

I also want to say thanks so much for all the Alabama media, and you, and you, for being here though. That's awesome. I'm really proud to be here with you guys. So thank you very much. Jill, I appreciate you representing the SEC as well.

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