

2023 Women's College World Series

Thursday, June 1, 2023

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Stanford Cardinal

Coach Jessica Allister

NiJaree Canady

Alana Vawter

Postgame Press Conference



Oklahoma - 2, Stanford - 0

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started again. We're joined by Stanford's Jessica Allister, and then players NiJaree Canady and Alana Vawter. We'll start off with a statement from Jessica, and then we'll do player questions.

JESSICA ALLISTER: Absolutely. What an awesome atmosphere and a great game. You see it on TV. You see all of the improvements they've made and the atmosphere that we've created here in Oklahoma City, and it looks amazing. Then stepping on the field, it was a great day.

Obviously wish the result was a little bit better. I thought we had our opportunities there, but really proud of the two women to my right. I thought they were exceptional in the circle, and I thought we had some really gritty at-bats and excited to get back on the field tomorrow.

This one hurts a little bit. We think we had our opportunities, but really, really proud of this group and really proud of the women to my right.

Q. NiJa, I want to ask you about that fifth inning and the way that things came together there. From your perspective, what happened there? Was it just sort of getting worn down and then finally getting some good swings on you? What's your assessment of that?

NIJAREE CANADY: Yeah, I think she saw a good pitch and hit it, honestly. All I can do is throw each pitch to the best of my abilities. Yeah, I think she just saw the pitch.

Q. Alana, I recognize you guys are trying to get through this game before you set the pairing, but you will be playing Alabama. You did beat them twice in

the regional last year. Every year is different, but what, if anything, does that familiarity help? Have you seen any of Alabama this season?

ALANA VAWTER: I think from a scouting perspective, we've faced the hitters before. We kind of can -- some of us, not NiJa, but most of us can remember each batter there. Like you said, a completely different lineup. Just trying to go out there and give them our best game.

Q. NiJa, I asked you yesterday what it would feel like to pitch her today and you said you couldn't know yet. Today to do it in front of more than 12,000 people, what was the experience like to pitch the way you did in front of that crowd for the first time?

NIJAREE CANADY: I thought it was amazing. Like I said, I didn't know what to expect going in, but the atmosphere was incredible. Like I said yesterday, I had no clue what to expect at first, but to be able to play in front of this crowd, it was something unbelievable.

Q. Coach Gasso said that she thought you were the hardest throwing, most ball movement from a freshman that she's ever had. Do you take any confidence away from this game even though you're disappointed in the loss? How do you move forward from this?

NIJAREE CANADY: I feel like definitely going back on film, trying to see where I could be better. But each game's a learning experience. It can only get better from here.

So I'm excited to make the adjustments needed and get back at it tomorrow.

Q. Jessica, obviously you got great pitching out of your two today, but Jordy Bahl, what she did, can you just kind of assess how difficult she was for you all to handle?

JESSICA ALLISTER: Obviously she threw a great game. I thought we had our opportunities. When I look down at the stat sheet, seven left on base. I thought we had the right hitters up at the right time and just didn't necessarily



come away with it.

I thought she got tough in big situations, got some huge strikeouts. I thought we had our opportunities.

Q. Similar question to the other players. Different Alabama team, but you guys playing each other again. What about that matchup is exciting for fans, and what do you guys have to look out for?

JESSICA ALLISTER: We'll go back to the hotel and start working on it. That was far from anything we have really started preparing for yet. Obviously once you get to this level, every time you play is going to be a great team.

So I think exciting for fans is just the level of softball that's going to be played in this stadium throughout the week.

We'll get back to the hotel, get a little bit of food, and then get to work getting ready for Alabama.

Q. On Montana, not necessarily as an offense trying to figure her out, but just kind of what can you say about her impact on the game and kind of the image she's created and helped support?

JESSICA ALLISTER: I don't know that you can be much tougher. She's a really easy player to admire. I was impressed with the performance that she put on at our regional in Tuscaloosa last year. The amount of pitches she threw in a short amount of time and the grittiness with which she did it was impressive.

Then to see kind of what the last month has looked like, she obviously is incredibly tough and also handles herself with grace and seems to really take care of her teammates.

I think there's a lot of women in this game who are wonderful role models. It's one of the things that makes our sport really, really special, and this tournament is not short on those.

Q. Two aces really on your staff. Can you just walk me through the decision to start NiJa and bring in Alana in relief? I know it had to be a tough one.

JESSICA ALLISTER: It's always a tough one. Yeah, we spend a lot of time on it, to be honest with you. There's different reasons to do different things. NiJa is spectacular against right-handed hitters. When you're looking at Oklahoma's lineup, you know that you're probably going to split the game, and we're fortunate to be able to have pitchers that can play off each other very well.

They're righty heavy, and they usually have seven righties

in the lineup. I think coming into the game, NiJa's batting average against the righties was .83, .63, something like that, so we're going to give her that opportunity. I'm going to pick her against a righty heavy lineup all day.

The lefties stacked together, we knew was going to be an important part of the lineup. That proved to be true. But we thought it was a good matchup for NiJa. She was phenomenal. I think we're right. I think the first hit to left, I think that's the ball you've got to take a chance on. I think we can catch that ball if you go for it. You want to win games like this, you got to take those chances.

I just thought NiJa was incredible, and A.V. was tough as nails coming in in relief.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports