

2024 Women's College World Series

Monday, June 3, 2024

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Texas Longhorns

Coach Mike White

Alyssa Washington

Joley Mitchell

Teagan Kavan

Postgame Press Conference



Texas 1, Stanford 0

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Texas.

We'll start with an opening statement from coach.

MIKE WHITE: Obviously that was an old-fashioned ballgame right there, 1-0. Pitchers jewel, two tremendous pitchers going at it. Whoever was going to blink first was going to win. We created some pressure in the last thing.

Tremendous job by Teagan, pitching for the second time against that club, a World Series contender, showing no nerves. I now call her Ice Kavan.

Congratulations to Stanford on a great year. They battled through some adversity. I think that was their third or fourth time facing elimination. We know what that's like from back in 2022. We faced six times. Had nothing to lose. They were giving it everything they had.

NiJaree Canady, what can you say? She's really, really tough. We're fortunate to be going on to our second World Series final in three years.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the players.

Q. Teagan, how did this game feel different?

TEAGAN KAVAN: Honestly, I was real calm today. I was more in control of my breathing. Felt more in control of the game. Had no doubt we were going to pull through.

I was real calm today and ready to get after it.

Q. Alyssa, could you walk us through the run? What were you thinking?

ALYSSA WASHINGTON: Yeah, I mean, at first my initial reaction was go, but then I saw like quick the pitcher had got it. I froze up a little bit. Instead of going back, I wanted to beat her, get into that rundown.

What was going through my head was whatever it takes to score. I know in a ballgame like that, it takes one run to get ahead. It was going through my mind whatever it takes.

Q. You haven't allowed a run in these three games, been competitive. How much did that super regional, getting tested, improve what you're doing right now?

JOLEY MITCHELL: I think that we just really tapped in and are focusing on ourselves. Super regional was a really tough weekend, took everything we had. We had to get together and do our job.

I think that we did a great job as a team putting our heads together, putting all of our effort. We left it all out there.

I think coming into this week, we knew it was going to be the toughest week of the season. We had to have the same mentality: sticking together, doing our job pitch by pitch.

ALYSSA WASHINGTON: I would agree definitely with Joley. Definitely sticking together, leaning on one another. It's not going to be just one person, it's going to take all of us to do the job, to win the big games. In those big moments, just lean on one another.

TEAGAN KAVAN: When they were doing the which side was louder, the first base or third base, I actually thought out there that I think Austin was louder. I think that's how well that prepared us for this moment and how intense it could be out there.

Q. Teagan, your coach said it best, it was a pitchers duel out there, you and NiJa, just throughout the game. Can you describe the intensity and how it impacted



your game?

TEAGAN KAVAN: I think I knew going into it that I needed to keep them off the board. Just keep my offense. Reese told me every time we went out there, keep us in it, we'll come through. That was just the mindset going out there through each pitch.

Q. Alyssa, it was a safety squeeze play, it wasn't a suicide squeeze?

ALYSSA WASHINGTON: No.

Q. You were trying to get the run, not get back to third?

ALYSSA WASHINGTON: No, sir. Like I said in that moment, she did put it down. It went straight to her. I recognized that. I stopped in that moment. Then I realized, when the catcher was coming at me, that I wanted to bait her a little bit and get in that rundown.

Q. How did you get over the tag?

ALYSSA WASHINGTON: Just recognizing where the catcher was standing and the third baseman, when she was chasing me down, instead of the ball in her hand, she had it in her glove. Recognizing that's going to take a little time with the transfer to get it in there. Sliding my hand in there, recognizing where the catcher stands and the timing of the transfer.

Q. Joley, when you go against a pitcher like NiJaree, what can you learn after seven at-bats?

JOLEY MITCHELL: I was just focused on keeping the ball down. We talked about that all day, especially we emphasized that we did well first game this week.

I mean, I kind of shortened up and was just looking for good contact, trying to stay away from pitches that were up, pitches that were in, just try to make contact, get it through the hole.

Q. Teagan, can you talk about the defense, particularly outfield, how much confidence it gives you.

TEAGAN KAVAN: They all made big catches for me today, every single one of them. Bella had a handful, Kayden had a big one.

I couldn't do it without them. Might be a different ballgame without those catches. I'm just grateful they're out there for me.

Q. Teagan, can you describe the loud foul ball and the clock violation.

TEAGAN KAVAN: I mean, I think that's a momentum shift for us. I think that's what propelled us. We used that. We knew we could use that to push us and get runs across the board. It worked out in our favor.

Q. Did you feel more pressure down the wire, did the pressure build up in you, or were you relaxed?

TEAGAN KAVAN: Maybe a little, but honestly I felt pretty good. I felt a lot better my second time out here on this stage.

I don't know, I was just calm, focusing on my breath. I knew we would pull through. I knew my defense had my back.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, players. We'll continue with questions for coach.

Q. The development of Teagan, she goes against the best pitcher in the game twice this week, and she comes out on top. How would you describe her development over the season and where is she at in the hierarchy of college softball pitching right now?

MIKE WHITE: That's a really tough question.

Still early in her career. She's still working and getting better, developing our pitches as well. I think right now, just her ability to stay very calm in those situations is great.

Early on, especially going back to regionals and super regionals, she was nervous. You could visibly see it. You couldn't see those nerves this week. I think that Dean Whellams, our sports psychologist, has done a great job with us, and of course the coaching staff as well. Coach Pattie Ruth Taylor has done a tremendous job with our pitching staff. Working with them day in, day out, as well.

Like they said, they've got confidence in each other right now. I think that also helps.

Q. Can you talk about what was going through your head during that rundown at the end. How have you seen Alyssa grow from two years ago?

MIKE WHITE: Yeah, obviously she's become a leader for us, being the captain on the team. I like the way she's stepping up in some of our team talks, tough moments, things you don't see on the field that make a difference. She's a galvanizing person for us. On the safety squeeze, it was her read. We knew third baseman was quite a way,

could get a pretty big jump. Decided to get in the rundown at that point.

We felt with that part of the order up, we should be able to score if it didn't work out. As it turned out, NiJaree just stepped up the gas and got the next three out. Sometimes you just never know when you're facing a good pitcher like that. We were able to force the issue and create a run with a great slide.

Q. Did the philosophy change, we got to make something happen here, because you had the stolen base?

MIKE WHITE: Yes, sir. I mean, it is what it is. When you're facing a great pitcher like that, you're not going to score a lot of runs. She showed last week how good she is when she gave up six runs. I could be wrong on the number, but she gave up six runs against LSU, came out and threw two doughnuts right against them. And that, to me, is a mark of an excellent pitcher with a lot of guts.

We knew we were going to be in for a fight. Even though we won the first game 4-0, didn't mean anything to her. She's going to come right at us, and she did.

Q. Erratic at times, maybe not the number one strength of your club, but how would you rate a lot of these plays your team has made?

MIKE WHITE: Our defense gets a pretty bad knock, mainly because we get to a lot of balls. We make plays on balls. We don't care about the errors. We care about making the plays and making the outs. I think that's the difference.

There's some teams, I'm not knocking anybody here, they don't get the errors because they don't get to the balls. But our kids are selling out. They're learning what it is.

It's great seeing this game elevate. You're seeing so many great plays. You look on SportsCenter, you see these great outfield plays going on, infield plays, people throwing from all angles. It's dynamic right now. You've got to stay up with it. It's pretty cool.

Q. The level of play we've seen from catchers. Reese is a huge heartbeat of your team. In general, how do you evaluate the level of play at that position?

MIKE WHITE: Yeah, there certainly are a lot of good ones out there. Jocelyn Erickson. She's probably one of the hardest hitters in the tournament. She can really rake. She's tough.

Then of course Reese. We have another one in our club, Katie Stewart. Kinzie Hansen is just -- has she graduated yet? My gosh, she's tremendous.

The list goes on. I don't want to keep naming because I will forget them. It's a position where I've been fortunate in my career to have some excellent, excellent catchers. It makes a huge difference. Not just the receiving, but they've got your back. I think that's what Reese is learning to do right now, is to calm Teagan down and say, I've got your back. You throw it, I'll stop it.

Q. It's the last Pac-12 team in the tournament. You spent some formative years of your career out there. What is your takeaway from that?

MIKE WHITE: It's very sad. We all don't know how it's going to turn out in the future, what's going to happen, how it's going to play out because of -- you know, it was a money move, just for TV and everything.

I'm just sad to see that conference fold. I wish they could have stayed together because that's the conference I started out in. Great rivalries, coaches. Even the umpires. They're all looking for jobs now from the Pac-12. There's a lot of carryover through that.

I'm sure things will level out. We just got to work through it and see what happens, do the best we can with it. There's going to be a lot more travel for some of these kids. We have to figure out whether that's good for their health, not good for their mental health. Just work through it.

Q. You've been to the World Series as a No. 1 seed and unseeded. Is there anything from the 2022 series you want to keep in the back of your mind?

MIKE WHITE: It's a tough one. Right now I've got to think about that.

We are just relishing on the chance to get back and play in the series for the championship. It's tough. It's an honor to be sitting here right now as the No. 1 team. I think there could be several teams that could have that title. Obviously one of them's Oklahoma. They're an excellent team.

Whoever comes through, Oklahoma or Florida, we've got to be ready to go. I think the last time we kind of got off to a pretty rough start obviously. But our team never stopped fighting. So we're using some of that adversity that happened a few years ago from our older players on the team to be able to spread that to the younger players. We'll certainly use that in the next day or two to talk to them about that, what we need to do.

Right now, we faced a lot of adversity already. We faced one of the toughest schedules in the country. We've faced that super regional against our archrival that was just one of the toughest series I've ever coached in. We came through on the right side of it after being down numerous times.

I just don't know. I don't want to put a lid on this team and this program on what their capabilities are and what they can do.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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