

2024 Women's College World Series

Wednesday, June 5, 2024
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Texas Longhorns
Coach Mike White
Katie Stewart
Joley Mitchell

Press Conference



Oklahoma 8, Texas 3

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Texas. We'll start with an opening statement by Coach White.

MIKE WHITE: Obviously we started off on the wrong foot tonight. Got down 2-0 straightaway. Hats off to Oklahoma for creating that pressure straightaway. Maxwell threw very well throughout the game. A little bit too late for us.

We got to see some pitches and scores some runs there, so we took something away from that. Mia Scott had a nice home run, made it close. We weren't good in all phases of the game. I shouldn't say good, but we weren't good enough. We didn't play well to be able to hold them down, so...

But fortunately we got one more shot at it.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for players.

Q. Katie, your first time here. What was the atmosphere like playing a really good team in front of their home crowd?

KATIE STEWART: I mean, we got a taste of it in the Big 12 tournament, being all of their fans here. It was a little bit different, but just kind of staying within ourselves, reminding ourselves that it's just a game that we're playing. Listening to the fans is only going to hurt us. Just kind of remembering that our feelings are going to be important for the next games to come.

Q. With dropping the series opener in the regular season, coming back and winning those two games, how big that is for you to fall back on?

JOLEY MITCHELL: I think we've done a good job of shifting the momentum. We've done it regular season series, against Texas A&M in the super regional. We're a tough team. As long as we stay together, do the job, we'll be just fine the next two games.

Q. Neither one of you struck out anything. It seemed like a lot of your teammates were chasing pitches out of the strike zone. Is that accurate? What was it about Kelly that made her so effective?

KATIE STEWART: Yeah, I mean, I think we were expanding our zone 'cause we were -- our game plan was different than what she was throwing. Really executing as well as we would have hoped. Just kind of reminding ourselves to stay within the game plan, within the zone.

She was throwing a good game. She was spotting her pitches. We were chasing. Just kind of bounce back off of that.

JOLEY MITCHELL: I have to agree. I think we got a little out of our wits there in the middle of the game. I think we were taking too many good pitches and swinging at ones out of the zone. She was able to expand.

Yeah, I think we just have to stick to our plan.

Q. You two haven't been here for much of it, but OU is a dominant program. Do you feel in any way they're an intimidating force, it gets in your heads?

JOLEY MITCHELL: I mean, we have a lot of respect for them. We talked about them in our postgame meeting. You just have to respect the opponent. It's not necessarily that we're intimidated by them. I think it's just that we have to stay within ourselves. We don't need to worry about anything else. It's just the game of softball. We have to play Texas softball.

KATIE STEWART: I think like she said, we got a lot of respect for them. I think that just made us put a lot of pressure on ourselves to succeed and execute.

Just remembering that we're a good team also and that



we're meant to be here I think is going to be important to remember as we go see 'em again tomorrow.

Q. Obviously your pitching has been elite, but maybe today had a little bit of a rough start. How do you as a team come together on the other side and pick up the slack when the pitchers are having not their best day?

JOLEY MITCHELL: I mean, it's always a team effort. I had to pull Teagan aside and say, Hey, it's fine, just one bad inning. It snowballed a little bit there. We have to do our job individually and as a team. We got away from our plan. We weren't helping ourselves. We really need to stick to our plan and just play Texas softball.

KATIE STEWART: Like she said, stick to our game plan, play how we've been playing, just leaning on each other. That first inning we could have been on our own little islands, everybody could have been distant. Every time we got off of defense, we had to remind each other to stick together, we're not on our own island. I think that helped us in the sixth inning when we started passing the bat, leaning on each other, not relying on one person to save the game and all that.

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

Q. Can you talk about the experience factor. You have an Oklahoma team that's been to four or five straight title games. Your team is younger.

MIKE WHITE: Yeah, I guess we just got to, like the ladies said, take off of our efforts earlier in the accept, being down with our backs against the wall a couple of times in early series games.

Just do a better job. The key here was we did start expanding the strike zone, started chasing. You get somebody with the caliber of Kelly Maxwell, it makes it difficult to be able to score runs to overcome the deficit we had.

We have to come out and control the game a little bit better in the first inning. A rough start for our freshmen. Hoping that she learns from that and we'll be better for it in the future.

Q. Can you go into what the strategy was with using all four pitchers, what may have gone wrong for Teagan tonight.

MIKE WHITE: Obviously Teagan was our hot hand. If I hadn't started her, somebody else giving up the runs, I would say why didn't I start Teagan? You have the luxury

of sitting in the armchair and making those decisions.

You ride the horse that got you there. I mean, why did they start Kelly Maxwell? She could have started somebody else.

We just didn't execute very well, or the pitchers didn't. We have to go back and look at their tape. They were hunting pitches. We know they hunt. They look for certain pitches in certain situations. That's what happened really.

Q. You have a lot of young players that weren't here two years ago. What's the message to those players specifically after a game like this? What did you sense from them in the locker room about what happened?

MIKE WHITE: Obviously they were very disappointed. Disappointed in our effort and the execution of the game plan, as they said. You have a certain game plan, you got to adjust midway. I've always said he who adjusts last loses. We didn't really do a good job of that. We tried to switch plans. They mixed their plan up. Happens all the time. It's like a chess match.

I feel like it's like I said to them, it's not how hard you fall, it's how high you bounce. We have to come back and bounce back from adversity right now or we go home. It's pretty simple. It's fight or go home.

Q. You think the fast start, how much did that hamper your young team?

MIKE WHITE: Well, I would have said it probably played a lot more into it. Coming back with that one run straightaway was a pretty good answer.

But I think the third and fourth runs were the ones that got to us spread out a little bit. I'm not there. I'm not in their minds. I don't know what they're thinking.

Like you said, they're young. 18- to 22-year-olds. There's a lot of stuff going on. They haven't experienced that much yet.

Again, I'm hoping it's not so much we had a loss, it's what we learn from it. Can we create some new opportunities, go out there and create some pressure on them. Now it's theirs to lose in some respect. They have to win one of the next two games.

I like being in that position, sometimes being the underdog. We're the top dog for a little bit, so to speak, but were we? They're three-time national champions. It's a mind game. Champions reframe. How can we reframe from this loss, what we're facing right now, come out and have a better

game and see if we can play some good softball.

Q. Obviously Reese seems to be pressing. Spilled over into her defense. Do you feel that's the case? How do you snap her out of that?

MIKE WHITE: Wish I had the answer for that. She's been the one that's got us through the season. Been really steady for us.

This game, it's tough. It can be awfully humbling sometimes when things happen. There's not always a big fix for those things. That's why slumps happen and you get people that can't throw from second base to first base kind of things. Who knows what goes on in the mind.

All we can do is address it and say, Hey, look, give your best effort. I'm hoping she's going to have a better game for us. She's been there for us the whole time, so yeah.

Q. In a best-of-three series, is it good or bad to be so familiar with your opponent? The toughest out, you mentioned it was Kinzie Hansen. She came back to hurt you again. Talk about her.

MIKE WHITE: Yeah, I mean, we do know each other very well, tendencies. It all comes down to execution. Maxwell executed better than our pitching staff. I thought our relievers that came in did a good job. You asked why we had four pitchers in there. Some of them haven't seen the mound very much. It's just to give them experience.

It's not we are worried about they are going to see them. They already know them. I don't think that plays into it. We just have to get our kids right to go play.

Kinzie Hansen? Has she graduated yet? I think I asked that the other day. Just kidding (smiling).

She's a world-class ballplayer. Just tough. She's one of those kids that has an ability to hit bad pitches. Pitcher's pitches. That's what makes her tough. You think you have an edge, next thing you know she'll poke one off, hunt for a mistake. I think she fought off a couple inside drop balls or inside pitches, and then mistake over the plate, home run. That's what she does.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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