

2024 Women's College World Series

Thursday, June 6, 2024

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Oklahoma Sooners
Coach Patty Gasso
Kinzie Hansen
Rylie Boone
Kelly Maxwell
Jayda Coleman
Tiare Jennings
Postgame Press Conference



watching us and they're asking questions about, Why do you do what you do? How are you even able to do this?

The answer is always God. I feel like God was really present this season.

Q. Kelly, putting softball aside, what has that past year been like with this group, what's final out meant to you?

KELLY MAXWELL: It's been awesome. This whole team, they're special. I'm just thankful that I got to be a part of this. We've been through a lot this year.

Like Boone said, God was here. He's present. I can feel that. I know wherever we go after this, we'll be taken care of.

Q. Jayda, Kinzie just called it a grind of a season. What was the toughest point in it for y'all? How did y'all sort of push through that to get where you are now?

JAYDA COLEMAN: Yeah, honestly the whole season was tough. For me personally, I know I had very high expectations. Even right off the bat playing our first game, I felt the pressure. I felt the expectations.

As we went on, if we lost one game, two games, lost to Texas, everyone had an opinion about us. It was frustrating just to see everyone on Twitter, Tik Tok hoping anybody else but us.

We'll... That didn't happen, so... We're blessed.

TIARE JENNINGS: I would say the same thing. Not even pressure from the outside. I think pressure on ourselves. I think for me, that was my biggest thing, trying to do everything I can for this team. But in reality I didn't have to do anything at all. I think that was when I was at my best, when there was no expectations on myself. Just to be on this team, just be present, celebrate everyone's successes.

That was my biggest struggle this year.

Oklahoma 8, Texas 4

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Oklahoma. We'll open it up to player questions at this point.

Q. What does it mean to win this championship, for some of you four, some your first? Greatest senior class ever. What does that mean?

KINZIE HANSEN: This one, to me, I definitely felt a little bit more sentimental. We grew up together. I came in at 17 with Boone, then they came in freshman year after COVID. Kelly transferred.

I'm so, so proud of this team, and everyone had their hand in it. It was never one hero at the plate or on the mound or anything like that. This was a team effort. We fought all season.

Everybody had something to say about us all the time. People counted us out. It was just a grind. All in mentally, physically. We fought the whole year. It was all so worth it in this moment.

Q. (No microphone.)

RYLIE BOONE: I think God was in this year the biggest. Just to sit back and think of all the nannies. This one I felt His hand over this program more than I ever have. There's a lot of souls saved this year. Probably some that we don't even know about. But just knowing that people are

ASAP sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

But going through this post-season, I felt so free, so much fun, no expectations, no pressure. Jayda was right. Listening to everybody, hearing all this stuff. We just did a great job of staying within each other. We didn't let it bother us at all. We just came out here and stuck together. This is family.

KINZIE HANSEN: Yeah, absolutely. My biggest struggle this season was definitely more on the physical side. I struggled with a little bit of injury earlier in the season. My whole career I've kind of had things going on like that, so...

Just kind of learning to fight through that, go through. Like we said, this team has fought and fought all season long. I hope being in the leadership role this year, when I was fighting through that, I was able to lead by example.

I'm just so proud of this team's fight truly. It was hard the whole season. We fought through it. It was special.

RYLIE BOONE: I'm with everyone else. This whole season was hard. Mine was just learning to be at a 10. Jayda knows what I'm talking about. Being able to exhaust myself for others, to the best of the ability that God gives me. But just trying to stay in that role but also not trying to do too much while I'm in that role.

I like being nine hole. I'm okay with that. I know these great softball players, once-generational players, they get the job done.

To me, I really just felt the role to be their backbone in any way that I could, whether I'm 0-fer, whether I'm not 0-fer. Just being able to encourage them outside of the field, knowing they're enough without softball.

KELLY MAXWELL: Mine was definitely my decision to come here. I received a lot of hate a lot of doubt. But I'm just thankful for these girls and this team and this staff, just to pick me up and have my back. Everything that I've been through, to have God right by my side working in my life. I'm grateful that I'm here.

Q. Jayda, the morning of that elimination game against Florida, the speech that Shay Knighten gave you guys. How much did her message resonate with you and prepared you for the run you made?

JAYDA COLEMAN: I will never forget that meeting for the rest of my life. I have looked up to Shay Knighten since I was in the seventh grade. First off, for her to be in the same room as me was, like, surreal. For her to just open up her heart and just talk about the Lord, pretty much just telling us that we are not alone. She has been through this before. Anytime we are on the field, if we want to look up

to her, she can give us 30 seconds of encouragement.

I use that very, very often, ever since she told me that.

It was just a surreal moment. I remember just I started bawling, crying. Sometimes the Lord moves your heart in such a certain way. Like, that's just something I'll never forget in my life.

Q. Kinzie and Rylie, does a four-year career go like a blink of an eye? What were the words of wisdom you got from the older players that you got before you, and what do you want the younger players to know?

KINZIE HANSEN: I would say that the legacy that we kind of wanted to show them was to leave it all on the field every day, never take it for granted. Rylie and I came in, we played about 20 games our freshman year. It was taken away in a blink of an eye on March 13th when we were sent home. I never thought I'd be thankful for COVID, but here I am with a four-peat. Thanks, Jesus, for that, I guess.

Just being able to show them what true tenacity looks like, showing them to never give up and never give in. Just no matter how much your body hurts, how many Ls you take, how much you get punched in the mouth, like I said the other day, always to get back up and to always keep going.

RYLIE BOONE: Yeah, I probably say me and Hansen could agree, it matters, but it doesn't matter. This is very -- spiritual-wise, this is unsatisfying, but you remember like me and Hansen freshman year, you remember the breakthroughs that God moves inside Jayda, Tia, Kelly, like the baptisms. That's what matters.

People are going to remember what you did off the field, not on the field. Records are meant to be broken. We did that this year. For Kas and Ella, Maya, all the underclassmen, being impact off the field, you'll never get forgotten in your lives. You mark hearts there with what you do to them.

Q. Kelly, I don't know if you knew, bottom of the sixth, you were alone, you were looking down and seemed to be really in deep thought. Could you share what you were thinking about? Camera was on you.

KELLY MAXWELL: I was just trying to be present, be where my feet are, be grateful for what's got me here, for these girls, this team. Just to do anything that I can to leave it all out on the field in that moment.

Q. Kelly, we know stuff going on in the background with your decision. What was the most difficult part of

pushing yourself to perform while balancing everything going on as the year continued?

KELLY MAXWELL: I think just through hard work, staying true to myself. Just kind of keeping my head down. Even though, like, you don't want to see it, you still see it, it still kind of gets to you. Not being able to, you know, say something back, just being able to go to work every day.

I don't know, just have fun, to be honest.

Q. Kinzie, you obviously had probably more time with Kelly over the course of this season. How was it unique for her and how did you see her processing through that to get to this point?

KINZIE HANSEN: Like she said, when her decision to come here was not easy. Kelly and I, I caught her in Japan a couple years ago. Our relationship was already built beforehand. Just being able to be there with her through every step of the way, see her grow through it, it was just a special experience.

I mean, her confidence has gone through the roof. Just being able to kind of establish that. I never got my chest bump, but I got the dog pile. I'll take it (smiling).

Just being able to be there for her no matter what. Even if she was giving up home runs or whatever happened, strike-outs, shutouts. I was there with her the whole entire time, and she knew that. I told her a bunch of times she could throw the ball wherever she wanted and I'd still catch it.

I'm just so, so proud of how it started to how it ended. I'm so proud of her. I get to catch her this summer, too. I'm really looking forward to that, as well.

Q. Kelly, you came on in the fifth, two on, for Mia Scott. A weird play at first base. From your perspective, what happened? How big was that moment in the game?

KELLY MAXWELL: It was huge. I mean, they definitely had the momentum in that moment. So just being able to try to stop it. I saw Mia Scott kind of come off the bag. I was just telling Avery turn around, turn around, let's get her, c'mon. She finally heard me. We got it done.

It was pretty cool to see, to be able to get out of that.

THE MODERATOR: That will do it for players, thank y'all. We'll continue with questions for Coach Gasso.

Q. You hear the players talk about all the things they

pushed through this year. When you think about the things they pushed through this year, what new things did you learn about the senior class? How much does it mean to see them push through that?

PATTY GASSO: I think we've hit some times where we were kind of low. I just felt they really look forward to post-season. They're very resilient. They feel invincible. That's the way they play.

You hear their faith has a lot to do with this. So they're never afraid. They're not afraid to lose. This is bigger than a game for them. It's about life. It's about trust. It's about all kinds of things that they've changed each other's lives with.

It wasn't easy, this season. I hear them and I agree. It's probably the hardest coaching season that I've had in a while because of a lot of the naysayers, a lot of -- I don't know.

It's heavy. It's just I don't know how to explain how heavy. Heavy is a head that wears the crown is the one thing that really stuck out. I heard someone say that. That really has felt true. It's been exhausting. These players are exhausted, but they keep going. It's the love for each other. It's the love for the game. It's the love for the university. But they're elite athletes who have extreme passion.

When I first saw these guys throw the bat down, after a walk, I'm like, What are you doing? Don't do that. You're showing up the umpire or you're going to hit somebody. But we do it. They do it at practice. I've learned to allow them to be who they are. The old coach of me would not allow any of this.

This generation, they've taught me a lot about coaching. They taught me how to accept who they are and how it looks. I mean, I think that has a lot to do with a lot of things, that I just allowed them to be them.

It's hard sometimes because some of it I'm like, Oh, no. But it's important to them. They've taught me how to coach better.

Q. There's never been a team, a program before you guys, to win four straight. It's hard to put in perspective, but what goes through your mind when you think of a four-peat and winning four in a row?

PATTY GASSO: How do I explain this? I'm so in the moment with them all the time, it's almost like, Well, here we are again. I think when they're on their own, I'll start understanding it more.

It's almost like, Let's go. Okay, let's go. Let's go win another one.

People say, Let's go win one.

You're like, Okay.

It's not like that. It's very difficult. Everything has to go right. The thing about them is they're resilient. They have a lot of pride in that. With that, it's hard for me to comprehend. I continue to say this one was the hardest to manage. We lost a lot in the summer. Players through the portal, brought in some great ones.

I can tell you that Kelly, this season, but this post-season, especially the World Series, Kelly will be changed forever. That is the greatest gift she could give us. Not the championship, but watching this young lady break out of her shell and smile and laugh and just enjoy being a good pitcher with good players who really appreciate and respect her.

It's not anything to do about anything else except what I know happened here. I watched it, experienced it. It was amazing. Amazing. That's just a tribute to all these names here and those who aren't.

What's really weird for me is in four years, I've never had a cry up here. But I did anyway. Because they were all sitting here. When they're out, it's easier. It's like I haven't felt the hurt of the last loss. That is just incomprehensible at this level. It's crazy. But it's an honor.

Q. First press conference of the year, asked you about the five that have been here the whole time. What are you going to remember off the field about those five?

PATTY GASSO: I'll tell you, it's funny that you ask that because on Twitter there was an interview, Jayda Coleman at 13 years old. I don't know. Anyway, she's doing an interview. She's going, Well, Patty is really hard. She's just a little kid and she's talking, saying my name out loud, which she would never do right now.

She's like, I won in junior high. I'm expecting I'm going to win in high school. Now that I'm going to OU, we're going to win it all there. I'm going to win it every year.

She's speaking it into existence as a 13-year-old. I just watched these athletes grow into women. They come in as girls, they really do. They'll admit that. But each one of them has something about them that is unique.

I'd say Jayda and Rylie Boone have so much energy.

What you see is exactly what they are like every single day. They crash. When they crash, they crash hard. But they live life hard.

Then you got Hansen, who is like the brut. Punch us in the mouth. I'm like, Don't do that, don't do that. But that's Hansen. They all have their own...

Kelly has gotten to learn about these guys. Tiare is just the calm, quiet, level. They all have such big personalities. Then there's a balance of someone like Tiare.

Tiare and Hansen have been voted captains, and this is a tough team to be a captain of. They've done a really great job with that.

But the same time I shout-out to Boone and Coleman because those two make this program go. They are full of energy, and that energizes everyone. When they aren't energized, we aren't energized. They took it upon themselves with some guidance to know that was going to be a very special situation, if they could do it.

We called them the Chaos Coordinators. They took that title and they ran with it. It really sparked this team.

So they all have brought something different. As much as I'm going to miss them, they've been here for a long time. They've done everything you could do and more. It is time for them to fly.

So Olympics, pro, marriage. There's lots of things coming their way. I'm really excited for them. I just think, Oh, gosh, I'm going to miss 'em.

We're going to be at championship reunions like four years in a row. We're going to see each other a lot. Hansen, Karlie Keeney and Tiare are going to stay at graduate assistants. A lot of them are going to be great coaches, go into coaching. This one right here is going to go to vet school.

They all have wonderful things ahead of them. They've cemented this program in history. They've cemented themselves in history. History can change, but these guys will never, ever be forgotten.

Q. How do you evaluate the path you have going forward to continue on what you've built these past four years?

PATTY GASSO: I'm ready to start coaching again because I don't have to coach this. They know it. They've got it. They coach each other. I'm really excited about what's coming.

I love what has happened with our freshmen. Oh, my goodness. I did not anticipate that. So the future is very, very bright.

I know you haven't asked the question, but I have to say I respect Texas and that program and what they've done. They are an elite program, and they're going to maintain that for a while. They've got a lot of very good young players, great coaching. They've done a great job with their staff. Their pitching staff is outstanding.

I would be remiss to make sure I didn't shout that out because I do tell you we're both going into a new conference together, but Texas always makes us better. I think that we could both agree that we do that for each other.

That's how we get here. That's why we're looking at each other on the national championship stage.

Q. Is it almost unfair to try to say where does this team rank among all your national championship teams? Is it almost like trying to pick your favorite child because they all mean the same to you when you look at all of them?

PATTY GASSO: You know that answer. Exactly. You answered that question for me. Yes. They're all so unique. They're really unique. Every team has something different that you'll remember.

This is a high-energy group. All of 'em. For me, as I'm getting older, and they have so much energy, it gets exhausting for me because I just can't keep up with them.

I think what they're going to be known most of is just records, winning and records, breaking records, winning streaks. We lost one game last year. We lost one game. We lost six this year, and you would think, Oh, man, they're going down.

Wait a minute, wait a minute.

We have to keep resetting. I have to keep resetting. Our coaching staff has to keep resetting. I will tell you also, this is not your question, but I have to shout out to my coaching staff is unbelievable. I'm sitting here. It's like pitchers, they get the glory, but the catchers make the pitchers great. They are phenomenal catchers.

I'm proud of JT Gasso, my son. Jen Rocha was a former athlete of mine, who is now the best pitching coach in the country. And Fale Aviu. Fale Aviu Steele is now back on staff.

It's just been an amazing coaching experience with great coaches who help create this greatness that you see on the field. A lot of hard work goes into this.

Q. What has it been like to watch Tiare the last four years become one of the greatest hitters this sport has seen?

PATTY GASSO: I'm a fan just like everybody else. She's just really, really calm. She doesn't really get mad at herself she often. That's what I love about her. She's very, very steady. I think that's what makes her great.

But what I'm really proud about, too, is the biggest question all of you guys were asking was who is going to be the next shortstop after Grace Lyons. Who is it going to be? I think it's going to be Avery. Nobody was really talking too much about Tiare. Tiare did a great job on defense. Everyone talks about her hitting. Our defense was as good as it was last year, and Tiare is just...

Man, I really hope that she keeps going. I think a few of these guys up here have great opportunities for be Olympians if they keep going and they stay the course, stay disciplined. That's going to be a phenomenal honor on top of this. What can beat this? An Olympic gold medal. I hope they continue on that way.

Q. What exactly was the pitching plan? Did it go sort of the way you were hoping it in terms of the sequence? How pleased were you with the way they threw?

PATTY GASSO: I tell you, this is one of the most enjoyable games I've ever been a part of because of that. We have not done this this season.

We knew we couldn't throw Kelly. We just can't. I did that one time with a girl named Paige Parker. I'd never do it again. It wasn't worth it.

It was exactly planned out, and it worked exactly how it was supposed to, to a T, to a T. Jen would say, It's time.

Are you sure?

Yes.

Are you sure now?

It was new to us. What I loved is every pitcher had a part in this, for the most part. Even if it's one batter. At the same time our hitters are going, This is cool, let's score them some runs. When Texas would score, they'd want to

come right back. They wanted to see this whole thing play out.

It was really wonderful to see Nicole May. It was wonderful to see Karlie Keeney on the mound with a start. I know you don't know much about her. If you did, you would know why I feel that way. This girl grinds every day. Never complains. Total team. Always positive. A big part of the faith of these young women, as well.

Then Nicole May coming in, I like her in that second half. She just dealt. Speaking of dealt, Deal was dealing, as well, if that makes any sense at all.

It was really wonderful. Paytn Monticelli comes in for one. That's all we need from you.

It was really, really cool. That's one thing I'll always remember, is just what this felt like. It was probably the least tense I've ever been. I mean, I'm looking around like, This is the national championship. We could be winning this right now. Usually heart is doing that all the time. But I'm laughing. Having a wonderful time with them because it just felt easy. It just felt, I don't know, so real. It was so real.

Q. You referenced the future. What was it like seeing your freshmen, a lot of your sophomores and juniors, blossom on this stage? How excited does that make you for the future?

PATTY GASSO: I'm really excited. They are, too. This group of seniors really left their mark. That's one thing you want them to do, is leave the program better than you found it. They really did a good job of training and teaching these young athletes what it's going to look like in the future.

I think they both won awards tonight. I didn't hear. They were, like, sobbing on each other. I'm like, What is the matter? What just happened? There was pandemonium down there.

That's something to build off of, as well. We have some really outstanding future Sooners on their way. I'm going to be coaching again. Rebuild this program, get it back here hopefully.

THE MODERATOR: That wraps things up. Thank you.

PATTY GASSO: I lastly want to say thank you to all the NCAA, the groups that work here, all you guys that put it on. You guys back there are great. You've made this World Series just so enjoyable. You guys listen and you help. It's been awesome. All of you guys, thank you for

covering softball. Back in the day, there was like me and James and Barry and a few more. Now it's a full house and it's awesome. Thank you, guys, for following.

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