

2025 Women's College World Series

Saturday, May 31, 2025

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Texas Tech Red Raiders

Coach Gerry Glasco

NiJaree Canady

Hailey Toney

Makayla Garcia

Postgame Press Conference



Texas Tech - 3, UCLA - 1

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Texas Tech head Coach Gerry Glasco, and players NiJaree Canady, Hailey Toney, and Makayla Garcia.

We'll start with an opening statement for Coach Glasco.

GERRY GLASCO: Just exciting. The crowd, the environment here is fantastic. Oklahoma City is just a fantastic place to play. The College World Series has become a great celebration of girls fast pitch softball at the college level, and we're just honored to be here and appreciative to be here.

As far as the game, I guess you got to start everything with NiJaree in the circle. She's just so fantastic. I thought she pitched a gem of a game. She's able to attack the strike zone, and you get to the World Series and you play with the zone, the strike zone here is a very disciplined strike zone. So you have to be able to challenge that zone, especially early in the count.

I think that's what separates her from most pitchers. She's good enough and she's talented enough to really pound the strike zone and still get the ball past hitters. So really hard to square up. I thought she did a tremendous job against a very good hitting team and in a World Series strike zone. I thought she was outstanding.

I thought our defense was outstanding again tonight, no errors, it looks like. Then we just found a way to win. That's kind of what we've become. We pride ourselves on being a mentally tough team, a resilient team that can go out under pressure and play defense when we have to play

defense in tight moments, and then we pride ourselves as a team that will find a way to win, whether it has to be with a double off a wall, a home run, or using our speed and our wheels.

We used our whole roster. We've learned to play everybody at this point in the season. My players all know their role, and they've all accepted their role. We try to give everybody as many -- we try to give as many people as we can an opportunity to help us win a game. They did an outstanding job.

I thought Makayla's base running, that took a lot of nerve to trust me right there. She couldn't have executed it better. Luckily it took some luck. I think some things went our way, and it worked. Could have easily looked really silly. But that's a gamble you have to take at this level.

Then I thought the second run, the home run, I think it was a 3-2 count, I was looking at the stats this morning, the last ten games, and Hailey Toney is hitting like .480. She's been an absolute rock star for us in the postseason. I felt so good about, when she got that count to 3-2, I could tell she was really getting on time. That was a huge hit.

And I thought Raegan Jennings, she was 9 for 16, 9 for 17 pinch-hitting, and you put her in, and she finds a way to get that hit. That was a huge run to go out there in the seventh inning with a 3-1 lead instead of a 2-1 lead.

Super proud of my ball team. I should always compliment Vic Valdez. She does an amazing job behind the plate. She was a great receiver for NiJa tonight. She's the energy of our ball club, and I thought she was outstanding as well behind the plate.

Q. MK, take us through the whole sequence. I guess Coach told you you were going, but take us through the entire moment there until you slide through the UCLA catcher's legs.

MAKAYLA GARCIA: We had a plan. Coach Glasco told me, hey, we're going to go, and we're going to take a chance. I had to trust him in that moment. I trust him.



He's a great coach.

I was like, you know what, we're going to do it. It had to work in our favor, and luckily it did, and it got us all the momentum in our dugout to let NiJa do her thing and let the offense take confidence at the plate and start swinging and start hacking. So I thought it was just a cool moment.

It was just a crazy moment just to slide in between someone's legs at the World Series, but yeah.

Q. NiJa, you held Grant and Woolery hitless. How much did your previous matches with them help going into tonight?

NiJAREE CANADY: I felt like they helped a lot. I know Coach Tara went back and watched all the games, and two of the best hitters in the game. We were definitely smart about pitching to them, knowing the damage they can do. I felt like we had a decent game against them. All credit to Coach Tara, honestly, for her pitch calling.

Q. Hailey, a moment for a freshman like yours to deliver that way, the first home run here at the Women's College World Series for Red Raider softball. Describe that emotion and what that moment meant not only for you but the program as a whole.

HAILEY TONEY: My second at-bat, I was on it. I felt good when I swung. It just didn't happen to go my way. My third at-bat, I was literally trusting my swing and him telling me to get on top, get on top. Then it just happened.

Then all the momentum, like Makayla said, it was all in our dugout. I just felt confident going up to the plate.

Q. For all of you, obviously that second inning, bases get loaded. Coach Glasco was a little emotional. Then you get the strikeout. You get the out. Then he comes over to you guys and is just fired up. Can you run me through that, the emotions, and just kind of the coach that Coach Glasco has been for you all in those big moments?

NiJAREE CANADY: Yeah, I just feel like he was firing us up. That describes him as a coach. He's always going to fight for his players. Always going to just be excited for us, and he wants to see us win.

HAILEY TONEY: I feel like he always has confidence in us no matter what situation. Yeah, he fired us up.

MAKAYLA GARCIA: I definitely think you can feel his energy in our back pocket, and that gives us confidence on the field and at the plate. You know he's rooting for us,

and he wants the best for us. It's good to have him in our back pocket with all that energy.

Q. For all of the players, a lot more work to do, but you get another day off, and you're in the College World Series semifinals. Can you all talk about that?

NiJAREE CANADY: Yeah, it feels amazing. Just this being our first time here as a team and being able to get to the semifinals, it's a huge accomplishment by itself. But we're not finished. We're going for the whole thing, like every other team here.

Yeah, it's definitely something to be proud of. We're definitely going to take the day off, rest, relax. Probably do some early morning hitting and get back at it.

HAILEY TONEY: Job's not done. We just have to come out again with confidence in that last inning and have each other's back.

MAKAYLA GARCIA: I would say just coming off a win, getting a day off is going to be nice for us going into our next game. It gives us a lot of confidence.

Also, just like this team is just so special, and we're getting to show the world that. It's just a good moment to have with each other and just being there for each other and fighting for each other, so yeah.

Q. Makayla, you being the hometown kid, being on this team, coming back and being part of this, what has all this meant to you to have that moment being from the Lubbock area and getting that opportunity?

MAKAYLA GARCIA: It's definitely just so special to put Lubbock on the map and getting to show everyone like what Texas Tech is like really made of. It's just so special for my hometown and like seeing everyone at the World Series and seeing so many hometown people coming and supporting us is just so special. And just being a hometown kid makes it even more special.

We get to watch our community, and we love our community, and they're so supportive for us. Just getting to grow this program is a huge thing for us, so yeah.

Q. Obviously a lot of Red Raiders came out here Thursday, a lot of Red Raider fans out here today. Can you talk about how impactful it's been to have all these fans here, especially with these games being as close as they were?

NiJAREE CANADY: Kind of the same thing Makayla said, like we really feel the community. Everyone just loves



Tech in Lubbock, so just being able to feel the crowd in our back pocket. I feel like we can use that momentum.

HAILEY TONEY: I feel like they're always cheering no matter what. If there's a bad call, like they're always on it. We just use that to fulfill our, I guess, journey.

MAKAYLA GARCIA: Just like getting to hear Raider power fill up the stands is something special we do in Lubbock. You hear it at football games, basketball games. It's just so impactful getting to hear it in the softball world. So I think that's very special for us getting to have everyone come out and support us. It's just special for our team.

Q. Coach, can you take us through that sequence with MK and the decision you made at that point, why you wanted to steal home?

GERRY GLASCO: I said we'll wait till two strikes. We get two strikes, we're going to start to run at first. I think they'll look at the runner at first, I don't think they'll throw it, and I want to you go. I want you to just take off and go, kamikaze.

She looked at me like, What? This is not something we've practiced. I said, Look, just trust me. I'll be the one that takes the blame at the press conference.

I really thought that she would stand up and not throw to second, but I thought she would just flip it to the pitcher. I knew that we had to go -- we had to just take off for home in order to make it. That was what I was counting on. What I didn't count on was just to stand there with the ball, but it worked.

Sometimes you just feel like, you know, give the glory to God. That's one of those moments where luck was on our side or fate was on our side.

Q. When we talked preseason, you talked a lot about Hailey's potential and talent, and to see that kind of arise at the biggest moments, how cool has that been for you?

GERRY GLASCO: She's an enormous talent, and she's also an extremely hard worker, extremely good student. She's extremely sensitive. So my coaching style and her learning style, I probably wasn't the right coach for her the first month of the season.

Finally I caught on, like when I said anything critiquing her, it just cut her. Once I learned that, then I just have to always -- I don't need to -- she doesn't need push. She's pushing herself. Once I understood her personality and her work habit and her desire, just encourage her and just

keep building her with positivity.

Once we did that, we hit another level. I think we go back to the very beginning of the season, we start off with a pretty -- we struggled to hit early. Then when she got going, she caught fire. There's been a lull or two, which is normal for freshmen. In the scouting reports, you'll find something, and you've got to fix it and take that away.

Oh, she's just special. The same way on her defense. In the fall, I kept going on saying she never makes an error. The kid never makes an error in practice, ever. That's not normal. Then the season started, and at first you look at the first half of the season, the first 25 games, there was like errors. They were like the easiest balls in the world.

One day we just leave her alone, don't bother her. Don't talk to her, don't say a word, just leave her alone. Man, when she got going, it's been unreal, her defensive play. Her talent level allows her to be highly successful when she's comfortable.

So just an enormously talented athlete, but also that kid that is always early, always late to leave practice. I brag on NiJa's work habit all the time. Hailey is right there trying to emulate everything she does, and that's a really good -- a really good aspect of our program to have her leadership and know it's going to be here for a few years.

Q. We obviously know everything about NiJa and how good she is, but how important is it for Hailey and Makayla and Raegan to have those moments and kind of you can rely on everybody to step up in different aspects when you need them the most?

GERRY GLASCO: I think it's really important to give them a chance, like give kids chances to help us because you're asking them to get up at 8:30 and go to hitting at 9:00.

We've had to work where offensively we're not the juggernaut that -- we don't have that talent maybe that some of the top programs that's been around for a while. We've worked really hard to get where we can score runs, but we know we've got to work really hard. So I'm asking everybody in the dugout is working really hard. Everybody is doing the same thing every day.

They may only get one at-bat, but that one at-bat is really important for them mentally to know that they had an opportunity to help their teammates and to play for their sisters in the dugout. It has to be like a sisterhood. It has to become like a family of players that they're fighting for each other.

That's your strongest emotional -- you get more power out



of that emotionally than any other thing, when you get them playing to take care of their family. You've got to give them a chance. You've got to put them in.

Raegan, generally, you look at, she pinch-hits well. She also pinch-hits really well on any flat pitch or curveball, rise ball. That's where she's at her very best. It was a good matchup for her.

I was just playing a hunch there. I don't even remember, I think it may have been Demi. They can't take that personal. It doesn't have anything to do with them. It's got everything to do with giving Raegan a chance to impact our team, especially when I didn't get her in last night. No, I did get her in last night. I didn't get Logan in last night. So I had to get them in. I thought I want them to have a chance to help us.

Q. Coach, you were obviously pretty animated there early on in the ballgame and fired up. How much of that was to fire up your team and a lot of your players that haven't been in this stage before?

GERRY GLASCO: Are you talking about the umpire?

Q. Yes.

GERRY GLASCO: Steve Gould is really good. I've watched him umpire for years and years. He's a tremendous umpire, and he's here for a reason. He's a tremendous umpire.

But he's calling a World Series zone, and they're doing exactly what they've been asked to do at the World Series. We talk about it in our bullpens. Take the umpire out of the equation. You've got to pound the zone early, and once you get ahead in the count, then the batters will swing at anything like they normally do.

I also -- he's a veteran umpire, and he was really -- I told him, I said, you're not easier or am I not easier when he gave me the warning. He had to warn me. I gave him no choice but to give me the warning.

But I thought it was really important for my team to know I'm going to fight for you here. I'm going to fight for you. Because they're still learning me and still learning who I am.

It was nothing at all to do with Steve. It was everything to do with me making sure my team knew I was going to battle for him. He's a tremendous umpire, and the strike zone, I'm sure, when we watch it, it's going to be like it always is, it's a tremendous strike zone. But it's a World Series strike zone. Catchers and pitchers and coaches

don't always like it, but it's a true strike zone. It's what we need here at Oklahoma City.

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