

2021 Women's College World Series

Saturday, June 5, 2021

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Oklahoma Sooners

Patty Gasso

Postgame Press Conference



Oklahoma - 8, Georgia - 0

Q. How do you think your team answered the bell in terms of just energy for today's game?

PATTY GASSO: I couldn't imagine it being much better. Actually we came out a little bit slow offensively, just trying to feel things out. I tried to push the envelope a little bit and got runners in motion a bit more, just to force some of them to have to swing the bat. It worked out really well for Lu. It worked out really well for Hansen. I don't need to mess with Jocy. She handles her business.

Defensively, I thought we were spot on but most of all Giselle, seeing Giselle handle herself on this big stage when she's gone through some ups and downs this season, it's really one of the highlights of this weekend.

Q. Following up on that with Giselle, speak on what that performance means for her after the injury she suffered?

PATTY GASSO: I think it will be a lasting memory in her career. It has been a tough year for her. I think she just really wanted to be the pitcher that she used to be and it just didn't come as naturally as she expected, and I think sometimes she was just trying so hard, it didn't work right for her.

And maybe these last couple weeks, she didn't get to pitch quite as much and it just settled her mind, like why am I even standing in the bullpen waiting to be called, because I've been messing with my mind a little bit. I think she really cleared that out and got right with herself and she had really good practices the last couple weeks and this is what showed today.

I'm very pleased, but I wasn't really surprised because I saw her doing it against her own teammates in the last week or so.

Q. Staying with Giselle, when did you decide to start her in this game, and when did you tell her, what was the reaction and what do you feel like worked for her today?

PATTY GASSO: Coach Rocha and I talked about it last night and I felt very strong, as did she, that we felt Giselle was the right matchup. Giselle pitched against them in the game that we lost and threw really well.

So we were not afraid to put her out there today, but we also knew that we have to, if we want to make a deep run, we've got to have these three pitchers ready to go.

Coach Rocha talked to Giselle and told her last night so she knew. I wasn't there for the reaction, but she wouldn't -- she wouldn't be overly excited. I think she would be hopeful that she was getting it. What was working today was just a mix of speeds. Kind of hitting spots and keeping them guessing. You could see them chasing stuff up out of the zone and just kind of not surprised but not quite ready for some of her off-speed. So she had a really great mix today.

Q. Looking forward to tonight, you have about three and a half hours. What's that time look like between now and UCLA and how difficult was it difficult to prepare for Georgia?

PATTY GASSO: We put all of our focus on Georgia because if you start looking ahead, then you're going to get burned. We know enough about UCLA that we can go back and get ourselves prepared. We've had experiences with them in the past. We know they are a great-hitting team. We know that they have the best pitcher in the country. So this is going to be definitely a challenge, but we really didn't get locked into much of that. We couldn't.

On Friday, we were working with our machines and some of our execution that would align with either Alabama or UCLA, because you really didn't know, when we were hitting, we didn't know who we were going to play.

So this is going to be just purely creating a plan, executing a plan, understanding it, trusting it, and leaving it on the

field. That's all we can do here.

Q. I just wanted to ask you about Mackenzie Donihoo's performance. She doesn't always get the start out there in left field. And I believe this is also her first Women's College World Series. So what do you think of the job that she did today, especially at the plate?

PATTY GASSO: Yeah, she's been waiting very patiently, and understanding -- it's not always easy. There's some other athletes that are dealing with kind of the same thing. But it's about matchups, and this matchup was really good for her. She's really kind of pretty clutch in times, like I was calling a run and hit and our runner was going and if she wanted the pitch, she's hitting it. I think about every time, except last at-bat, we called the same thing.

I think that really energized our team, as well, because it was just really clutch-style offense that we were producing with Lu, and energized the team. So she's been waiting her turn, and she's going to get more opportunities as long as they align with her swing. But she was the catalyst today and I know that was really exciting for her and the rest of our team.

Q. I wanted to ask you about the bottom of the sixth inning there. G obviously could have finished it, and I assumed you pulled her out, gave her a little reception from the crowd. Was that the case?

PATTY GASSO: No. I'm happy they did that, but this was really more about getting Nicole May on the mound before we start tonight. It was really important, even if it was for two hitters, she had to feel the energy of the crowd and the environment before we keep rolling here.

So it was purely for that reason.

Q. Obviously you have bigger fish to fry now, but just wondering about Georgia. Obviously they are a very young team. You played them earlier this year. I think their entire starting lineup comes back. Just some observations on them as they head back home.

PATTY GASSO: I'm always a fan of Georgia's ballclub and Lu Harris and Tony and the job that they do with young talent. They develop it really well. They are fighters. They fight.

Very uncomfortable coming into this game because I knew what it was like playing against them. They are scary. They can swing and they can hit it out at any time. They are very rally-oriented.

Avant is something special, she really is. She's an outstanding pitcher, one of the better pitchers we face without question. So I respect their program and I was -- gave Lu a big hug because she helped us get better and I hope we helped her get better back in early April, late March, whatever it was. For us to see each other here was a cool moment and I know they will be back. I know her and I know her ballclub; they will be back here.

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