

2021 Women's College World Series

Saturday, June 5, 2021

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Oklahoma Sooners

Patty Gasso

Giselle Juarez

Kinzie Hansen

Postgame Press Conference



Oklahoma - 10, UCLA - 3

Q. What was going through your mind in the third as you go back out there and how did you feel as the game progressed from there and how big was it to get out of that without allowing any further damage?

GISELLE JUAREZ: I just wanted to have Nicole May's back. I went out there and that's what I told her is "I'm going to have your back." And I think the team was just going to have her back. I took it one pitch at a time. My team came back and answered. So I think just like knowing that they are answering, so I've got to answer for them, as well, and just having their back throughout the entire game.

Q. Talk about the distraction of your glasses fogging up. And, Kinzie, you had a great plan for Garcia. If you can get into that, I would appreciate it.

GISELLE JUAREZ: Yeah, my goggles fogged. I was just trying to take my time in the circle, like if I needed a second to wipe them off, taking that second for myself. I had a couple times where I couldn't see and I looked at the batter and it was like, Whoof, so just trusting my pitch if I couldn't see and taking my time in the circle to make sure I was good.

KINZIE HANSEN: Our plan against Garcia was mostly to trust our training. We went out there and a lot of times when we struggle, it's only when everyone is trying to hit home runs every single at-bat, and we get out of our game plan. But today we weren't trying to do too much. We were trying to stick to our game plan, stay on top of the ball and take good hacks.

Q. Curious, Juarez, what she did was pretty incredible

today. You were behind the dish catching her. You catch her in practice and everything. How much could you kind of see this kind of performance coming from her over the last few weeks?

KINZIE HANSEN: Actually, I hit off of her at practice. So I've been (laughing) hitting off of her at practice for the past few weeks. And like I said earlier today, the mental switch has been tremendous for her. When she came out on that mound, I know that I said that we were avenging losses. She came out on fire, and behind the plate, the battery today, it was unreal. It was something that I had yet to experience, and today, I loved it. It was fun.

Q. What was the message in the dugout after you fell behind 3-0 and being able to battle back, not just today, but all day long? What belief does that give you guys going into tomorrow that you can win two games and punch your ticket to the Championship Series?

KINZIE HANSEN: One game at a time. That's our message after Thursday. It's one game at a time for us. It's survival of the fittest and we've got to do what we've got to do to win. And we fell behind and it was no-quite attitude. We're here and we're putting our head down and doing what it takes to win.

Q. Obviously somebody who had a monster day, Donihoo, three home runs. Speak to her day today, absolutely unbelievable in both games?

KINZIE HANSEN: Absolutely, she's my roommate and I'm so proud of her and all the work she's put in. You don't see a lot of girls that size hitting monster bombs three times a day, you know what I mean. So my heart is super proud of her and I'm just so happy for her, and, yeah.

Q. During the broadcast, they told us about something that has been your mantra through the season. You brought up fighting and said your coach made you watch the Gladiator. What is it about that film that that's been the mantra throughout the season?

GISELLE JUAREZ: I think just understanding that you've got to fight. You've got to do what it takes. I think

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something that we've done a really good job of like incorporating is just one moment at a time and sticking together. And I think there's a part in that movie, I believe, where they like get back-to-back, and it's hard to like break them up and whatnot.

And that's what we are doing right now is we are standing back-to-back, protecting each other and we are all around each other and we have each other's backs and just going after it and trusting that we have each other.

KINZIE HANSEN: G hit that absolutely spot on, but one of the aspects we carry with us from that movie is what the head gladiator he fights for, his family. But for us we hold up ours for because a lot of us, we fight for each other. We fight for God and we fight -- we fight to win and that's what we are here for. It's just a big message we fight back-to-back like G said. We have gladiator mentalities.

Q. At the bottom of the third, big two-out triple, she came around third base and had a big celebration from the crowd and the dugout. How big can one hit like that sort of flip the momentum for an offense and how did that kind of come into fruition tonight?

KINZIE HANSEN: Absolutely. Jocy hit that ball and it was no surprise to me. Whenever she comes up to the plate, I'm standing on deck going, here we go, we're going to score some runs. It totally flipped and it gave us momentum. It completely changed the script of the game and from that point on it was our game to win.

Q. Patty, just the job that G was able to do in both games. She comes in a tough spot in the second game and really settles in and dominates. What are your thoughts of how she stepped up for you guys today?

PATTY GASSO: She's been waiting. She's been throwing really well and feeling really good. She's been waiting for this moment, a little bit of redemption. I know her season in 2019 ended with a couple tough outings against UCLA, so this was, I think, something a little personal to her, as well.

Q. Sticking with Giselle, wanted to ask you about that third inning and to be able to get out of that inning without any further damage. When she came on, how big of a lift was that in creating the start of the momentum that helped y'all start swinging this game your way?

PATTY GASSO: You could feel UCLA -- they are a great-hitting team all the way through. You could feel that they were scoring the ball really well early in the game. So

we needed some kind of relief, some kind of momentum just in the way of a stop, and I don't know, it just brought a little bit of hope, like we are still in the game.

We certainly couldn't give up much more than three early in the game, but we know that, you know, we can catch up when we are within that kind of range with somebody. So Giselle coming in and getting us back in the dugout really changed the whole dynamic, momentum, the approach that the team had going forward.

Q. All season long, you have told your team you have a Gladiator-like approach and even on the pregame radio today, you said the exact same thing. Would you say your team fought like gladiators today?

PATTY GASSO: Absolutely. Absolutely. You could see their passion. You could see their focus. You know, we waited around for quite a while. We were in the locker room for, I don't know, felt like about two and a half hours or so. And I'm thinking, what do I need to do to keep them loose or keep them focused or what have you. They really enjoyed themselves, more than any team I can ever remember.

And it's a very tight-knit group. They are all different but they really enjoy each other. So I felt really good going into this game that they were locked in and ready, and they definitely put on a battle face. They don't want to go home. They don't want to end their season. So the attitude is like we didn't get this far just to get this far, and they really -- I don't know, it was such a great team effort tonight. I think it will build -- that momentum will create itself again tomorrow. That's what I hope for.

Q. I wanted to ask you about Taylon. It looked like she hurt her fingers diving into the base. Talk about her injury?

PATTY GASSO: Very much a gladiator-style, I guess. She did dislocate her finger, and we brought her into the dugout and the doctor came down in and just, I don't know what you would call it, readjusted it, taped it up, and she wanted back in. And we need her. She's very good at first base.

So she was not going to let me pull her out. I'm sure she's going to be sore, and we've got some time to figure out how to help her stay in the game tomorrow. But I think that was part of it, too, the momentum of saying no matter what happens to me, I'm going to keep working for my team.

Q. You talked a lot earlier in the season coming off the double-headers with Georgia and Baylor about everything you learned about what you need to do to

prepare this team, and you have another doubleheader tomorrow if you want to get back to the Championship Series. How do you feel with how you've managed the team so far and how fresh do you feel going into tomorrow?

PATTY GASSO: You know, we have worked really hard all season. We knew what our legs and our bodies would feel like. We used to talk about it all the time. So I think that when you get to this point, your legs are heavy but just adrenaline takes you through this. You can't have any excuses when you go into -- you know, if you're in the Final Four. We're in the Final Four. We've got to beat a very good team, twice. So we've got to put everything we have out on the field tomorrow. They will be ready for it.

I think they know what's at stake. They know it will allow them to almost start the tournament all over if we can get through these two games, it's like a new beginning where it's like 0-0, you start all over with whoever it is that you're playing.

But the matchups that we have tomorrow are going to be a big challenge, and this team, they are going to sleep some, but they are going to be really excited to get back on the field. Really, they had a blast tonight. You could see it throughout. You could see it. It was fun to watch them. It was fun to coach them tonight.

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