

# 2022 Women's College World Series

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Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

**Texas Longhorns**

**Mike White**

**Mary Iakopo**

**Janae Jefferson**

**Hailey Dolcini**

Postgame Press Conference



to come back and fight and go to two very tough places to play in Washington, which I believe had not lost a Regional at home for a long time, if ever, and also Arkansas, where there was 3,100 fans that wanted to see us lose.

We were resilient. We didn't give in, and we turned the ball over to our freshman in the last game after Hailey Dolcini had carried this team with her arm, and we were able to get that big win, and here we are.

We're very excited.

THE MODERATOR: Hailey, you transferred into Texas for exactly this opportunity, and now you're here. So what are your feelings now that you have actually arrived in OKC?

HAILEY DOLCINI: It's a special feeling, for sure, and I think just trying to take it all in. Ending your career here is every kid's dream, and so the fact that we get to be out here and how much the game has grown since we started watching it as young girls, I think it's special to be able to play here in front of these big crowds.

**Q. For you, Mike. There's a lot of talk about parity because there's some unseeded teams in this tournament, and yet the No. 1 seed, Oklahoma, leads the nation in every offensive category and earned run average. You own one of their two defeats. How do you do it? How do you challenge a team like Oklahoma?**

MIKE WHITE: Well, it's not always the best team that wins. It's the team that plays the best, and on that particular day we played better than they did. They had their No. 1 pitcher throwing against us. It was a 0-0 game for a while, and we were able to score a big hit at the right time, and Hailey pitched one heck of a game, and that's what you have to do.

I've always said good pitching beats good hitting, especially in pressure situations, and Hailey was able to put together one of the best games of her career, and that's the way to do it. Hopefully we can repeat it sometime.

THE MODERATOR: This is the pre-tournament press conference featuring the Texas Longhorns. The Longhorns are making their sixth Women's College World Series appearance after having defeated Arkansas in the Fayetteville Super Regional. We are joined by head coach Mike White and student-athletes Hailey Dolcini, Janae Jefferson, and Mary Iakopo. If you could start us off and tell us a little bit about the Longhorns' fantastic journey back to OKC.

MIKE WHITE: Thank you, everybody. It's nice to be back for sure, without a doubt. It's the first time for the Longhorns since 2013, so it's been a while. A few years for me since 2018.

Never gets old. That's for sure. The excitement. I've been telling the players about it. This is the show. What's been happening here right now, especially with the upgrades to the stadium, what Oklahoma City has done, the city itself looks beautiful, the way the tournament has been run is great so far. But this is the pinnacle for our sport, without a doubt.

I would like to thank my administration -- Chris Del Conte, Chris Plonsky, Rob Novak, and Sarah Baumgartner -- for their support throughout all of this. We've had a long way to travel, both coasts, more or less -- if you can call Arkansas a coast, but you know what I mean, it's close. A lot of travel, a lot of money spent to make sure we're here. Our fans have been tremendous in following us.

Obviously, we couldn't do it without a great group of student-athletes who have worked their tails off, been through a lot of adversity throughout the year with a losing streak there that was well-noted, but we created resilience



**Q. Hailey, could you tell us how you pitched through that line-up, or how you even tried to pitch through that line-up?**

HAILEY DOLCINI: Yeah, we had a good plan going into it that week, but I think even that first game, yeah, they got those three runs. But in hindsight, looking at what they've done throughout the season, that was a small win in our book already.

It was truly attacking them with no fear. You've got to trust that your best stuff will beat their best swings and keep the ball down for a team that hits a lot of long balls.

**Q. Hey, Mike, question on the evolution of sort of the strength and power that we see in softball nowadays. There's always been strong players that hit it hard, far, all that sort of stuff. Now it seems like it's more. And I'm sure you recruit some gals, and you think they're going to be a power hitter, others maybe not so much. But what have you seen just in how that has evolved, and what do you all do maybe throughout your career? Has it changed in how you try to develop the strength and the power of your players?**

MIKE WHITE: Well, to tell you the truth, I've never had a 21 home run hitter play for me. Not that I don't want one. I'm still looking for them and still want one. That's a quick way to score runs.

Obviously, Oklahoma is a recipe to that, but you also have the ability to play the short game when they needed to as well. I remember back in World Series here there was a two-strike bunt that was put down that stalled that rally.

The beauty about that is, yeah, you want the home run hitters, and you have to have the ability to be able to go to something else to get it done.

Our team knows that with us. We have to get that first run, and we are blessed to have three or four kids on this team with good speed. You can see that with the stolen base numbers.

I also like some power hitters in there as well, so it's really a blend. The game itself has evolved into a really home run-type hitting thing, and that's good for the game. It brings excitement. There's very few other women's games that have the blend of power, speed, defense, and pitching.

So it's exciting. That's what makes this game great for TV.

**Q. Hailey, at a certain point, maybe a couple of certain points in Fayetteville last weekend, I'm not sure how you were still moving. How are you feeling now? How**

**is the week been since Arkansas? Have you gotten some rest? Tell me what your week has been like after the super regional.**

HAILEY DOLCINI: Yeah, no, feeling great. We're very fortunate to have a great training staff and having a massage therapist that travels with us. That's very helpful.

Being slated the Thursday-Friday-Saturday super, at first we kind of looked at it as almost a disadvantage, but we just got an extra day off. So we had Sunday to rest up, Monday to rest up, and then Tuesday headed here. It's been a good week.

**Q. Later this month the Rules Committee will have its annual meeting, and we've heard a lot more from some quarters this season about a double base, and I'm wondering where you think that debate is headed in the coming weeks, coming months?**

MIKE WHITE: I'm on the Rules Committee, and it's something I'm looking to bring to our game. I think it's a good thing. Obviously, there's some people that don't think so, but I've seen some things over the years.

I remember a Regional we had at home when I was with Oregon against Minnesota with their player Groenewegen, who was a hitter and a pitcher, who was in a collision and had a concussion from a throw down the line.

I think if you look at baseball, they don't have it, but they have 90 feet. We have only 60 feet. A lot of the players are close. They're bang-bang. I just think it's something that we should bring in.

The other thing is, too, that the survey shows that the umpires really like it. So it's not just from the playing point of view. The only ones that really don't like it, I think, and you would have to survey the players, but the coaches are not necessarily for it as a group.

So far we haven't had a full reply back from the group, like the numbers back were only 40%. So we don't really know, I'm just guessing here, but I would say it would be pretty close. But I know the umpires are definitely for it.

**Q. This question is for Mary. Mary, have you told your teammates at all what this week is like and what this experience is like and does this -- what you experienced with Lauren, maybe Bella too, how much does that experience being in Oklahoma City help?**

MARY IAKOPO: Playing here for the Big 12 Tournament has been somewhat of an advantage for the Big 12. The three teams that are here have played on this stage, have

practiced here before, so it only gets better for us.

Especially our young kids that are here. It makes it easier that we've been here and more exciting that more people get to watch us. I just tell everyone to soak it all in and enjoy the moment because some of us only get here once. A couple of us twice on the team, and if you are really good, you get to come here four times.

**Q. Just wanted to ask Mike and Hailey about Sophia coming off that complete game shut-out against Arkansas. Curious how important she's going to be for you all in OKC and what's did been like watching her grow into her role this season?**

HAILEY DOLCINI: I think it's huge to have a freshman on that stage of a win-or-go-home Super Regional to take us to the World Series and step up and do what she did.

As a team, everyone had her back out there as well. You had Janae's great play, and then the offense came through for us as well. Having a freshman that can get the job done in that kind of situation is huge for the stage we're about to play on, and hopefully she carries that confidence all the way through.

MIKE WHITE: I agree with that. I've really seen a pitcher be able to go through that much adversity in a game, especially early on, hold it together. She threw some pitches that were in a different ZIP code at teams times, and the crowd was on her about that.

I would say most of us would melt in those situations. She did not. She rose to the occasion, got the big outs, and trusted her defense.

Alyssa Washington made a great play at home plate, the double play. Just hats off to her to step up in a moment when her team needed her. Hailey needed her. University of Texas needed her. It was great.

**Q. Coach, I'm curious. You've mentioned earlier you're back here after 2018. Of course, Coach Bartlett, Coach Singleton, I'm curious, what have they meant to you in helping get back here to Oklahoma City and getting Texas back?**

MIKE WHITE: Well, the great thing about the two staff members, Coach Singleton and Coach Bartlett, is they're different than me.

Coach Bartlett is, "Hey, girls, let's go have a coffee" and gets to know them and is the good cop, so to speak. Coach Singleton has an ability to be able to -- Janae Jefferson had never hit a home run, I believe, until Coach

Singleton was her coach and tuned her how to tune on the ball and hit with power. So that's hats off to him. That's just one player, and he has done that consistently.

If you look at our numbers, we're up there in the country and batting average. Maybe not so much in home runs, but that's a personnel-type thing. We find ways to win with our offense, and that's due to Coach Singleton.

Defense, Coach Bartlett was an all-American at Notre Dame in the outfield and has been able to help our outfield improve each week as well.

It's just a good mix. It's a good marriage of personalities to be able to help this team compete and come back from adversity we had this year.

**Q. Janae, you guys beat Oklahoma. You beat a really, really good Arkansas team on their home field. How does that help you guys moving forward as you begin this week in the World Series?**

JANAЕ JEFFERSON: I think just the crowd at Fayetteville prepared us well for this stage right here. That was probably about 3,000 fans out there, and just being around that atmosphere I feel like it gets us welcome to what OKC is like.

Just having that and going into is this season -- or going into this World Series with that attitude that we can come back from anything and do it in front of anyone no matter who is watching. Just being prepared in that aspect.

**Q. Hailey, what is written on your bow, and what is the significance of what is on your ribbon?**

HAILEY DOLCINI: So it says "Rae Strong." There's a girl back home battling Hodgkin's lymphoma, and she used to play softball before cancer kind of found its way into the mix. Just kind of playing for her this season. And it's a lot easier when you play for something bigger than yourself.

We talk about it all the time, yeah, softball fields, like it's the only thing in our life, but there's so much more bigger than this game. Anything I can do to bring a light to her and her situation.

**Q. Back to something you said about playing in front of the road fans in Fayetteville. You're going to be sharing the same session with Oklahoma tomorrow. There will be plenty of Texas fans here, but a ton of OU support. You relishing being able to play in that environment, hope you get the backing from the Big 12 fans? What's that going to be like as far as entering that lion's den?**

JANAE JEFFERSON: I'm not expecting us to get much support from the OU fans out here, but we had 20 of our fans in Fayetteville, so I'm sure they'll be just as loud out here. We're going to need that support for sure. We're ready.

**Q. Mary, only three Big 12 teams got a bid to the NCAA. All three of you made it here. Does that boost your confidence as well that, hey, you guys -- confidence wasn't that well-respected, but clearly it was tough sledding in that league for all three of you guys to make it.**

MARY IAKOPO: Yes. I think it just means a lot to us as players that we played good competition, and to see all of us here boosts the conference and our confidence coming into the World Series.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much. Thank you. Good luck.

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