

2022 Women's College World Series

Thursday, June 2, 2022

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Northwestern Wildcats

Coach Kate Drohan

Rachel Lewis

Danielle Lewis

Postgame Press Conference



Oklahoma 13, Northwestern 2

THE MODERATOR: Game 2 press conference featuring the Northwestern Wildcats. We have head coach Kate Drohan and student-athletes Rachel Lewis and Danielle Williams. Questions for our student-athletes first, please.

Q. Danielle, I wanted to ask you about just the difficulty of facing this Sooners line-up. Obviously had them off balance there the first couple of innings. Just how tough does it make it when they're as deep as they are, and, obviously, it seemed like every pitch almost has to be right on the money.

DANIELLE WILLIAMS: They're a very good line-up. I think everyone here is a good hitter, and I just need to be confident with my pitches.

Q. Is the reality of it different than just preparing for it, though, and how big of a difference is that?

DANIELLE WILLIAMS: I feel like I can just stick with how I'm preparing and just go out there and fight.

Q. Rachel, can you describe the feeling after you hit that home run?

RACHEL LEWIS: Pretty good. I mean, I like hitting home runs because I think it gets the team going, and it definitely did. I think a few people got on after that, and it was a good little spark. And I think we needed to ride it a little more, and we -- yeah, it felt really, really cool to kind of hit one at the World Series.

Q. This is for both Danielle and Rachel. What were the emotions like coming into Oklahoma City and stepping onto that field and seeing the fans out there, especially

being your senior years?

RACHEL LEWIS: It was an awesome crowd to play in front of. I think there was a lot of neutral fans out there too. Just softball fans in general, so it was really cool to play in front of them.

It was just a really awesome environment, and we were happy to -- we were just -- it was a good crowd.

DANIELLE WILLIAMS: It was exciting to be there, and to have so many alumni there was really awesome.

Q. Danielle, OU was in here talking about the adjustments and sort of adjusting to your change-up, and my question is, could you sense their approach just changing on a dime? I thought they might have been sitting on that pitch by the end of the third.

DANIELLE WILLIAMS: Yeah, I think I knew they were going to adjust at some point throughout the game, and I just needed to stay on top of it, but ...

Q. Danielle, obviously, you have had a successful season, and many more good starts than rough outings. Just how have you kind of bounced back throughout the season? Obviously, you had those two rough starts in Minnesota, and then kind of went on that run both in the regional and then against ASU. How can you use what you learned coming off of that to prepare for a short turnaround until tomorrow?

DANIELLE WILLIAMS: I think just knowing how much my team has my back and that they're going to be behind me no matter what.

Q. Danielle, how much does having played UCLA earlier in the season impact the way that you're approaching this game tomorrow against them?

DANIELLE WILLIAMS: It's helpful, but we both have changed I feel like throughout the season, so yeah.

Q. This is for either Rachel or Danielle or both of you. As two leaders on this team, how do you prepare your

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team for tomorrow and bouncing back on such a short time period?

RACHEL LEWIS: I think all eyes are on the game tomorrow now, and we have to put that one behind us. We're going to do everything we can to win that game tomorrow. It's going to be a battle, and we're ready for it. We've been ready for it all year, so we're excited.

DANIELLE WILLIAMS: I think we're excited just to come together as a team again and just focus on tomorrow.

Q. Coach, just seeing the number 13 up there for an opponent, that's the most anybody has scored against you guys this season. Does something like that, when they pile on the runs the way they did today, does that motivate you guys further to try to get back to face them again and change the story that time?

KATE DROHAN: I think it definitely lights a fire. Especially the way -- we would give them a couple of bases, and then they capitalized on it. We talked as a group after the game just talking about how to play better softball in that moment, and if you do make a mistake, you've got to get the next out. Really challenged them to be a little bit tougher, like we've been all year, like we were last weekend.

We know how to do it. It's a matter of bringing it to the table now.

Q. I wanted to ask you about that third inning. Just trying to overcome those first six batters. They were really able to pass the bat. Can you talk about what was going through your mind as a coach and just what needed to be done to really kind of slow them down?

KATE DROHAN: You're right. We needed to slow them down. They squared up the ball pretty well to start the inning, and then they had a couple of ground ball hits and a walk and then the big hit. At that point we hadn't gotten an out yet.

That's where we've got to challenge our leaders. We've got to challenge everybody on the field to slow the game down and to simply focus on getting the next out.

Q. We know it's important for Rachel and Danielle to have each other's back, and, of course, the team to have each other's back, but they also talked about the fan base and alumni here. How important to you is that alumni and fan support coming down to OKC?

KATE DROHAN: So it's -- I looked up in the stands today, and I saw generations of softball players, and you have

Sharon Drysdale in the stands today. So you have four-plus decades of this softball family who have come together to support our program, to support the women in uniform right now.

To me that's everything. That's what it's all about. To see them bring their children back and to have their kids look up to the women on our team now, you know, we spend a lot of time getting better at softball, but we spend even more time preparing them for life and preparing them for the challenges that they experience after college.

And they are so invested and so connected that I think we're -- I think that's very -- it's very, very meaningful to me, and I think that's what it's all about. That's why I do what I do.

Q. Your third inning you get the home run, obviously, and then the walks. Trautwein figures out a way to get out of that inning. Did you feel like maybe, I don't know, she figured out a way to turn off the spigot before things got crazy? What did you think about her in that third inning and overall today?

KATE DROHAN: She's tough. She's tough, but I thought our team did a great job of fouling off some tough pitchers' pitches and extending at-bats. After a home run, getting a rally again is big, but I felt like we let her off the hook a little bit.

But after you give up a run, good teams come back and put the pressure on, and that's exactly what they did. That's something that our team usually has done all year.

We'll learn from it. Our team has been so great in that the -- even in the locker room after the game, we're, like, okay, what can we learn from this? What were we good at? Where were we really uncharacteristically not good at things?

It will take a minute to flush this, and we'll get back at it tomorrow.

Q. About Oklahoma's third inning, and I presume you called pitches or an assistant calls pitches from the dugout.

KATE DROHAN: Yes.

Q. My question then is, how do you go about or what is the challenge as a pitch caller to try to keep them off balance because it did seem like you did for a couple of innings, and then suddenly you didn't. How do you go about making those patterns, whatever the pitches are?

KATE DROHAN: Well, it's pretty complicated. We scout -- I'll give you the short version. It's real simple. It's two things. You got to execute the pitch, and then you've got to stay one pitch ahead of them. It's a combination of those two things. If either one break down, you're going to give up some bases. That's what we did.

Q. You kept Danielle in in some pretty tight situations in the last series against Arizona State. This time when the runs started pouring in, you decided take her out in the third, fourth inning and bring in Lauren and Sydney, knowing there is the potential of a game tomorrow and a few more down the line if this team is to make the College World Series Final. What made this situation different? Why did the pitching switch occur this time?

KATE DROHAN: We took Danielle out because that inning was so long, and she needed a break. A physical break and an emotional break.

It wasn't like she was done for the day, but we knew we needed to change the look. We needed let her have a breather.

Q. What did it mean to you to see Rachel and the rest of your -- and the seniors on the team who have put four or five years into this program to finally take the field in Oklahoma City today?

KATE DROHAN: It's great. It's great. It's been a great week here for sure, but if you ask our team, they want to win here. That's what they're feeling right now.

Q. Coach, I think they asked Patty about whether it was kind of beneficial to see a team that they've seen earlier in the year in Texas. How beneficial is it to kind of go into this elimination game already having faced UCLA earlier this season, and is the idea when you set some of those more challenging early season competitions up that you'll be preparing yourself down the stretch to have already faced these opponents?

KATE DROHAN: So the benefit of playing teams like UCLA and others who are in the top ten, the benefit is we've really got to dial in and connect with the speed of the game that we wanted to play early on in the year. You want to face good pitching as often as you can.

So it's more about playing games like that. Like Danielle referred to, we've been on a long journey since that game. UCLA has been on a long journey since that game. I think we'll get some nuggets from that game, but I think we have to look at it and play tomorrow's game as tomorrow's

game.

Q. The hit by pitch that was reviewed in the seventh, I'm wondering if you received a specific -- also, if you have seen a replay of it since, but if you got a specific explanation from the umpires because it clearly hit and exposed flap of that protective thing on her elbow. It was two inches from her arm. I'm just wondering if they said, tough, that's the rule, or if they even went that far with the explanation?

KATE DROHAN: No. I haven't spoken with anyone about it.

Thank you.

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