

2022 Women's College World Series

Thursday, June 2, 2022

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Oklahoma State Cowgirls

Kenny Gajewski

Miranda Elish

Kelly Maxwell

Karli Petty

Postgame Press Conference



matter what, even though I might not have a good at-bat the first time, knowing that they have my back no matter what.

During that at-bat Miranda came up and talked a lot to me, and so just having the support and confidence in them just helps me relax and do my best.

Q. Kelly, I don't know what your routine is when you are in the dugout while your team is batting. I don't know if you are watching the action or if you sit and meditate. I don't know what you do, but what were you doing in that sixth inning when your teammates were at bat? Describe your emotion as you saw it all unfold with the two runners ask then the home run?

KELLY MAXWELL: Normally I sit off in the back of the dugout and don't really cheer or really watch the game. I knew we had runners in scoring position, and we were down, so I was, like, oh, let's change up the mojo. I went and peeked my head through a little crack, and I got to see Karli's big hit, so it was awesome. It gave me the chills.

Q. Miranda, I was told from someone on the field that you were throwing some dirt. I was wondering if it was Cowgirl Stadium. You and the players were throwing dirt on the infield there. I wonder what that was all about and also what you thought about Cowgirl Nation kind of coming out to Oklahoma City and the environment you saw today?

MIRANDA ELISH: That was actually dirt from Cowgirl Stadium. Coach G brought a bag. We have seen it on the bus all week. I didn't know what it was. Why is there a bag of dirt on the bus in Coach G's seat? He told us today that it was dirt from our field. We're at home and just kind of ease any nerves that we could have because we can't make this series or this game any bigger than what it is and playing on this field.

Those fans tonight absolutely showed out, and we had a huge crowd, and they were loud the entire game. They were awesome. They're just going to keep bringing it. So it was awesome to play in front of them.

Oklahoma State 4, Arizona 2

THE MODERATOR: This is the Game 4 press conference featuring the Oklahoma State Cowgirls. We're joined by head coach Kenny Gajewski and student-athletes Karli Petty, Kelly Maxwell and Miranda Elish. We'll open with questions for our student-athletes, please.

Q. Karli, take us through your at-bat in the sixth.

KARLI PETTY: Going up to bat just knowing with runners in scoring position, I needed to put the ball in play. I really focused on just getting on top and driving it through the middle. That was my whole approach that entire at-bat.

Q. Miranda, you had some pretty big hits, and you had it in front of quite a crowd with your whole family here and your sister in the other dugout. What was it like all those people around for this game?

MIRANDA ELISH: It was awesome. I don't think my entire family has been to a game since probably my freshman year, and just being able to compete against my sister and having her there too and my mom, dad, and brother, it meant a lot. I'm just excited to have them here for the next couple of weeks, so yeah.

Q. Karli, I know one thing that's talked about and Coach Gajewski has talked about your abilities to deliver in big moments. What do you think has made you able to do that throughout the season and then especially on this big stage tonight?

KARLI PETTY: I think especially the teammates I have and them having my back and them supporting me no



Q. Miranda, follow Barry's lead, what gets said when you go speak to Karli before that at-bat, and what are you feeling when she comes around and you are waiting for her at home plate?

MIRANDA ELISH: I looked at her, and I told her that she was made for this, and I had a little pick on the pitcher, and I just told her what I was seeing just to give her any edge.

Then, I was at third, and she absolutely crushed that ball, and it was awesome. I was really pumped up for her when she was -- when she came around third to home. I probably screamed in her face, but I think everyone was yelling.

Yeah, I was super pumped up. Karl has been hitting great these last couple of weeks, so really lucky to be her teammate and have her on our side.

Q. Miranda, two things: When you were at Oregon or at any point had you faced Bowen before? And the other part of the question is, not just you, but it seemed like everybody was getting behind in counts. 0-2, but it wasn't bothering, and people were hanging on. People were still coming up with hits. I think you only had one strikeout. Talk about battling back from 0-2 counts, and if you have ever faced Bowen?

MIRANDA ELISH: I don't believe I've ever faced Bowen. I don't think I have.

But you have three strikes for a reason so, you just have to get your hacks in and find a pitch that you want. Even if you do get down 0-2, you still have one more chance and one more swing to take. Just can't let that count get in your head too much.

Q. After leaving the bases loaded in that inning and then you come back in the sixth and you do finally strike and get those three runs. How important was that to finally break through and deliver thousand that you had multiple runners on base? This is for Karli.

KARLI PETTY: Just coming back from the inning and knowing that we need to have Kelly's back. I know just needed to help Kelly out and get as many runs on the board as possible because she's doing a great job out there, and she's doing her best, but we have to pick her up. And just doing anything I can to help her out.

Q. Kelly, you had a ton of strikeouts early. I'm wondering how crisp you thought your stuff was and if that -- how you've kind of felt getting up with 126 pitches in the game. How crisp do you think you were, and how did you start feeling later in the game when

you were able to power through those late innings?

KELLY MAXWELL: I definitely felt my rise ball was on tonight a little more than probably what it normally has been. Normally I've been relying heavily on my change-up. So that was a bit firm tonight. It wasn't moving as sharp, so I was glad that I had my rise working.

Then just going after hitters. 126 pitches isn't crazy efficient, but I got the job done, I guess.

Q. Karli, I'm guessing between travel ball, high school, and now a couple of World Series you probably had a decent number of games in this stadium. Do you have any idea how many, and have you ever hit a home run here before? Then, just what did it feel like to have that release and celebrate?

KARLI PETTY: I've won State a couple of times here, and slow pitch state here and I played travel here. It's really nice to come back and play somewhere that's really familiar, and it's just even better to come back with over 12,000 fans. It's really exciting to see how much this place has grown from when I was little growing up. It's an amazing feeling to be in this moment in all aspects of my life.

Q. Was this your first home run here?

KARLI PETTY: No, it wasn't.

Q. Kenny, pretty good day for the Big 12. You guys got three in the tournament, and now you are assured of three in the final six. Is the Big 12 just showing a lot better than people thought it was?

KENNY GAJEWSKI: I was really happy to see what Texas did here today in the first game. They're really playing well. They've been playing well. They've just had a couple little hiccups here, but they're a really good team. They've got experience like we do. Maybe not as much here, but they've got kids that have done it.

OU being OU and then us coming in here and didn't look so hot to get going here, but kind of woke up.

I think what it does is validates the fact that this conference is really good. It's been really good, and it's good to have three of us here and three of us getting the winner's side. That's what it's all about. Very happy for all of us.

Q. Not always are pitchers durable and come up with their best stuff this time of the year, but that last strikeout was Karli's 14th of the night, but it was her 55th so far in NCAA tournament play this year. That's

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

kind of a freaky number for her.

KENNY GAJEWSKI: Yeah. I agree with her assessment. I thought her change-up today was not very good. It was way too firm. The ball that their kid hit out wasn't off-speed. Because it's firm enough, it didn't disrupt her timing. I don't know if she was sitting change, but I know that she hammered it. Really it was the only bad pitch that Kelly made.

The fact that she could kind of power through, like Sam said, late there was big. She couldn't do that last year. I turned to one of our coaches during the game about fourth or fifth, and I just said, man, Kelly looks different here this year. She looks like she's coming at you. Last year against Florida State I thought she was kind of ho-hum and feeling her way through. She wasn't feeling her way through today. She was coming at you.

They're scary. They have some scary numbers. They have some big, strong kids, and you have to make -- you've got to make them work. You've got to disrupt their timing or they're going to make you pay.

I thought she was great. Velo was good. Change-up like she said was just okay, but the rise was as good as it's been in a long time.

Q. In that sixth inning Miranda battled back in her count to get a walk, and then Sydney had a 2-0 count before hitting her single, and Karli had a 2-2 count before hitting her three-run home run. What does that say about the poise of your team when they're in the batter's box, being able to battle back in those counts and not getting lost and still prevailing in big moments like that?

KENNY GAJEWSKI: I was a little disappointed in the way we started this game. They came out hacking, and we didn't, and I just told our kids, guys, we're swinging at balls over our head on first pitches. We're just kind of out of character. I don't know if we were trying to do too much or it's just the moment.

I got them up I think in the third or fourth there and said, hey, we've got to chill out. Kelly is pitching good. We just need to give some good at-bats here. And it's cool to see Pennington do what she's done here today, what she did here today. Elish is just Elish. The moment is never too big. And then Karli, she has been going very, very well here. First two at-bats were not very good. I debated, to be very honest, we talked about pinch-hitting, and I just said, you know, let's let her go. She just needs another at-bat, and wow, it was big. It was big.

Q. Why was it important for you to bring that dirt from Stillwater to Oklahoma City?

KENNY GAJEWSKI: I don't know. We've been working with Brian Cain a lot, and it's something we talked about early on in the week. Just maybe kind of continuing our mental preparation. Just it's amazing what little things do to kind of rally these athletes. You think they're big and bad and strong, and little tiny things like that I was hoping would kind of ease any tension that we may have. Just, hey, everybody grab a little dirt as you go out there for the line-ups and just drop it out there. We'll just -- this is home. Let's just make it feel like home. That's all that was about.

Q. You've spoken a lot this spring about managing your veterans one day at a time and all at-bat. Four of your six hits come from Sydney and Miranda. Kelly is in the circle. How are you seeing that come to fruition now this time of year?

KENNY GAJEWSKI: All those kids have played such a huge role here. Kelly now in her third year -- fourth year, and Sydney in her fifth year and Elish obviously just joining us, but in moments like these here, you want to lean those guys. You want your young kids to look at them and go, this is how it's done.

It just makes me happy. I'm really ecstatic for Sydney. I mean, to get to do it here. I was looking out when we were doing the line-ups, and I just kept looking up there going, Oklahoma, Oklahoma, Oklahoma, where all our kids are from, and it's wild.

Then to have Pennington and Factor and Alexander and goes on and on and on, to have them play such a huge role in this program is really cool.

Q. It kind of caught my eye when John Bargfeldt gave a visit to Kelly. She hasn't really needed many pitching visits lately. Do you kind of know what the message is to her? She's such a calm kid. You probably don't tell her to calm down or anything, but what's kind of the message traditionally and maybe specifically today when he went out to talk to her?

KENNY GAJEWSKI: Normally I think John just likes to hear his walk-out song, "Big John." They didn't play it, so I think they had to talk.

She gave up the home run and then went 1-0, and I think he just was, like, hey, let's just get out there and catch our breath and calm down and talk about how we want to attack.

That's all it was. He doesn't go out a lot. I have to -- most

time I feel like I have to tell him, hey, you want to go talk?
He is, like, eh. I'm like, let's go talk and settle it down and
go.

John has a great feel. I know he was mad at himself on
the home run. It wasn't his fault. The ball was thrown right
down the middle of home plate, and she did a great job on
doing what she's got to do.

I think it was an easy talk. Just calm them down.

Thank you.

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