

2022 Women's College World Series

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Oklahoma Sooners
Coach Patty Gasso

Jocelyn Alo
Hope Trautwein

Tiare Jennings

Press Conference



TIARE JENNINGS: Yeah, I think it's just going to be a battle all the way around. Defense is going to have to make plays. Offense stepping up. Backing up our pitchers. I think either way it's just going to be a hard-fought battle no matter what.

Q. Hope, I would imagine this is about as perfect as you could have drawn it up. You transferred in your final season to Oklahoma. Here you are now playing for a national championship. What are your emotions, and what does that mean to you getting to play for a national championship?

HOPE TRAUTWEIN: This is what I came here for, to win a national championship and to be with this team who has such experience. They really have helped guide me through. This is the perfect ending to my career.

THE MODERATOR: This is the pre-championship series press featuring the Oklahoma Sooners. We are currently joined by head coach Patty Gasso and student-athletes Hope Trautwein and Tiare Jennings and Jocelyn will be with us shortly. We'll begin with questions.

Q. This is for both Patty and the players. The familiarity of playing Texas three times in the regular season, once here, how does that make the dynamic different, Patty, from your other experiences, and just what are sort of the pros and the cons of playing a team that you are so familiar with?

PATTY GASSO: I think the pros are that you know them. The cons are that they know you.

There's no surprises here. It's just understanding what we need to do offensively. I think our experience might help us some having been here last year at this point.

I think both teams are working to kind of get on the board quickly, set the tone quickly, but I like the idea that we have this experience and we've been here and done that before.

THE MODERATOR: Hope? Advantages for you? A team that you've seen before, pitching-wise? Do you have to make adjustments, et cetera?

HOPE TRAUTWEIN: Yeah. I've seen their line-up before. This weekend and regular season, and they've also seen me. So just being able to give them different looks and trust Coach Rocha and her pitch-calling. She knows best.

THE MODERATOR: Tiare, for you, you expect them to make some adjustments pitching to you as well?

Q. This is for all of you. To Tiare and Hope, I was hoping you could tell me when -- as talented as you and all your teammates are, when did you realize that Jocelyn was kind of different in that way? Maybe sort of the stardom of her. Patty, you talked a little bit yesterday about people coming to just see Jocelyn. She's selling tickets, that sort of thing. What kind of moment do you feel like this is for softball with her the way she is and the way she's playing right now?

THE MODERATOR: The rule is that we start with Patty first.

PATTY GASSO: Thank you. I don't know that we're going to see another hitter like Jocey any time soon. I think from a team standpoint, as a coaching standpoint. I'm just trying to revel in all of it and just kind of -- because I think we're seeing another level of excellence and power and preparation, and the things that she does behind the scenes a lot of people don't know about. She loves this sport. She's a student of it. She studies it. She loves to play it. She loves to talk about it out loud. She likes to say what she's going to do out loud, and 99.9% of the time she answers her own call.

She's special. I like to use the phrase, she's made

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differently, and quite in her own mold. It's been an absolute pleasure to have her wearing the Sooner uniform.

The one thing about Jocey I know is she's never going to go away. She's always going to come back home. Hawaii is her home, but I know she's very comfortable with being here with the Sooners and people are always going to remember her for that.

THE MODERATOR: Hope?

HOPE TRAUTWEIN: I had the pleasure of pitching against Jocey my freshman year, and that was when I knew she was special because she took a ball that was a ball and nobody could hit, and she hit it to the wall off me. (Laughing).

But playing against her has always been the greatest challenge you could ask for as a pitcher because had he is the best, and she makes you better. Being able to see that and being on a team with her, it has made me better throughout my whole year. I can never thank her enough for that.

THE MODERATOR: Tiare.

TIARE JENNINGS: I've known Jocey since I was 10 to 11 years old. Having her as my big sister, I think just growing up in travel ball, I knew she was special.

Then we've always talked about we're going to get one year together, and then COVID happened, so we got two years. For me that was the best thing because I got to learn as a person from her and as a hitter. So she definitely makes all of us better on the field and definitely she makes us better off the field as well.

THE MODERATOR: Jocelyn, do you want to run it back so we can talk about you some more? (Laughing).

Q. Coach, you mentioned last year that the format needed to change. We're at the point now where pretty much everything about the format that needed to change has happened. What do you think of it? How did it affect the tournament? Just your thoughts.

PATTY GASSO: I would change one thing, but first, I'll say the days off are really important for rest, recovery, mobility. But also, student-athlete welfare. And coaches' welfare, if anyone cares.

I would change one thing, and I felt this yesterday. I felt it for us and Oklahoma State. The last time we played a double-header was in March, and we are in the final four and we're playing a double-header 30 minutes after -- I

mean, you're playing two games with a 30-minute break to decide who is going to play for a National Championship. I didn't like that.

Even though we came out victorious. I think if the teams that come through the winner's bracket lose, that we should be playing on a Tuesday night so you get the day off, but we don't get it done. Don't make us play a double-header because we've earned that right, but play us tonight in that "if" game, and if we lose that day off, at least we got the morning off and throughout, but playing a double-header just is something that we have not been used to.

There's a lot of difficulties behind it for us just trying to get food in to feed your team. I mean, there's a lot of things that go with this. Again, I'm talking about the welfare of the student-athlete, and it's felt like 200 degrees yesterday. You're putting your season on the line in a double-header situation.

I didn't really look through everything, but I certainly felt it yesterday. That's the only change that I would make.

Q. For everybody up there. It's pretty rare to get two conference opponents competing for a national title, but let alone a storied rivalry for a national title. Can you all just kind of talk about maybe the grandeur of having this game on this stage?

PATTY GASSO: I get to start. So I will tell you, it's just an honor for the -- I think the Big 12 has really showcased itself.

We only have seven teams in our conference, but three are in the final four. That is tremendous. Representing was a big deal for us because we don't get talked about. I think the Big 12 doesn't get talked about very often.

I think all teams played their best softball when needed. When you talk about Texas, right now we are not caught up in Red River Rivalry. We're not caught up in all of that. The fans can get into that, but we're playing for a National Championship. We don't play with anger or anything like that. We're just here to try to win against a very good team. We don't take it personal. We don't play well like that.

We're just really worried about the Sooners and what we need to do to be successful.

THE MODERATOR: Jocelyn, could you take that, please?

JOCELYN ALO: Yeah. I think Coach Gasso said it best. It's not -- it is a Red River Rivalry, but at the end of the day

we are competing for a National Championship, and it doesn't matter whoever is in that other dugout. It just is a matter of us going out there and playing the game that we know how to play and just continually staying one step ahead of the other team.

So, yeah, for us it didn't matter who else was in that dugout, but it just so happened to be Texas. Just going to go out there and compete.

Q. Patty, this is for you, and I have a question for Jocelyn. You've been asked this multiple times. How soon did you know that Jocelyn was going to be the player that she was going to be when you were recruiting her? Did you see that then? And then for Jocelyn, I heard a story about how when you were -- during your recruiting trips, you went to Oregon, got an offer, went to Arizona, went back to Oregon. Can you take me through that a little bit with Coach White and maybe the process and how you did not end up at Oregon?

THE MODERATOR: Coach Gasso.

PATTY GASSO: I saw her on the Batbusters. I saw her swing. I saw her strength. It was kind of a "wow" factor.

Don't look at me when I'm talking about you. (Laughing).

Okay. It was a little bit raw. A little bit raw, but it was powerful. I thought, this young lady is going to make a big splash.

She had already committed to Cal at that time. When I knew that her recruiting or recruitment was back open, I remember JT showing me a video of Jocelyn wrestling for this Hawaii State Championship, and I was -- first, I have never seen women wrestle except on, like, WW -- you know? (Laughing).

This is a whole other plane. Wrestling for a high school state championship. I'm watching it, and I was just glued to it. It's intense, and it's tough. I think she pinned the kid, but dislocated her shoulder. Right?

JOCELYN ALO: I didn't pin her. I won by points.

PATTY GASSO: All right. I just know that her shoulder was dislocated. I'm like, my God. I need this. I need this. I need this. I want this on -- it was focused, and the way she celebrated after, I have -- I like to see athletes that I have play other sports, and I remember going and watching Jayda Coleman be an outstanding volleyball player.

When I get to see them do other things, it just gives me a different feel and an eye for their personality. That won me over completely.

THE MODERATOR: Jocelyn.

JOCELYN ALO: Yeah. When I was in the recruiting process, very, very young at the time. I'm very happy that the rules have changed now. I was 12 looking at schools, which is crazy to me. Yeah, I went to Oregon. Mike White was the coach there, and he had offered me at the time, and then I went to Arizona just to see what it was. I remember going with Dejah Mulipola, who I had played with. We've always been friends, and we went at the same time.

I don't remember getting an offer from Arizona. Then, I remember after that I was, like, okay, I'm ready to make my life-long decision at 13, and I called Mike White and said that I had wanted to be a Duck, and just the offer wasn't on the table anymore. I don't know what happened.

Yeah, didn't go to Oregon. Committed to Cal right after that. Just as my time went on, I -- my heart just wasn't with Cal anymore and reopened my recruitment and committed to Coach Gasso on my 18th birthday just knowing more so like what it was that I wanted out of college besides just to play softball.

Yeah, I'm very happy about the recruiting rule change. I can't believe a 13-year-old made a life-long decision, so yeah, happy about that.

Q. Hey, Jocelyn, I know you're focused on what's happening between the lines with your team, but your star, I guess, seems to be rising even higher in these World Series. I saw you retweeted some things that some pretty predominant people were saying about you, so I know you're aware that there's a buzz out there. Do you have to ignore that? How do you handle that? But then, also, is there a part of you that says, My sport is being elevated along with me and that's important? Do you have to sort of be thinking in those terms too?

JOCELYN ALO: Yeah, for sure. I know we are having some little girls come to our hotel. At the same time it's cool that they're coming because little girls are following us to our room, but at the same time I'm going to put my blinders on and have my "do not disturb" sign on because at the end of the day, I'm not going to be signing 1,000 autographs down at the lobby when I should be in my hotel room resting.

But happy where our sport is going. We're going to need a

little more security now. That's the good thing about it. It's growing, and people are watching.

I got a DM from Tom Brady, too. I mean, I did play with Maya. So, yeah, it's growing. It's elevating, and I'm just excited to see where it's going to go. Especially for people like Tiare Jennings and Jayda Coleman. It's only up from here.

Q. Do you share any of what Tom said?

JOCELYN ALO: He was just, like, you're a really good player. Congrats on your career. You know, just keeping it simple.

Q. For Tiare and Jocelyn. Obviously, you guys were at the stage last year. A lot of teams talk about how hard it is to make it back. Especially the next year. Florida State, who you met last year, lost pretty early in the playoffs. What has stood out this year and just making it back? What has stood out about this year, and Patty, kind of a similar question. How hard is that quest to make it back, and what has stood out about this year's team?

THE MODERATOR: Start with Patty, please.

PATTY GASSO: I think we did a good job not looking behind us. It's easy to go, well, last year we did this and this is how we did that. We talked about it early. The team did a good job of focusing in the fall on creating a new journey and a new path for this group, which is quite different.

We've got new pitchers. We've got a different pitching staff that's really been holding it down for us. They're a really tight-knit pitching group. A team within a team, and I feel that.

Never looked back in the rearview mirror. Just kept looking forward. Trying to really talk about the importance of sticking together. Not listening to the outside.

It's interesting how -- I love the fans. The fans here are so supportive and wonderful, but sometimes with football or softball, they get a little spoiled, right? You're the number one team, go win it all. You should win it all because you're No. 1. I'm like, wait a minute. Now, it doesn't quite work that way.

So it's making sure that we're just really sticking in a neutral space where we understand what's in front of us, that we stick together. It's a very tight-knit group, and that is very important on these big stages.

If they're a group that doesn't care for each other or they're infighting going on, it just doesn't work. This group has been arm-in-arm from the beginning, and I think that has been a big difference-maker for us.

THE MODERATOR: Tiare.

TIARE JENNINGS: I think Coach said it best. We didn't look in the past, and I think we all dove deeper to find our why, find our passion for the game, and we all stuck within our inner circle.

We knew this is a new journey, a new road that we're going to have to keep grinding and trusting in our preparation to get here, and we're playing for our seniors, you're playing to have their back, and to find the ultimate goal. That's pretty much what our goal was this season was just stick together, find our why, and just stick together and going out there and competing.

THE MODERATOR: Jocelyn.

JOCELYN ALO: I think Tiare said it best. Just embracing that it's a new journey and every year is going to be something different, and we're going to have new adversities every single year. It's how we overcome those things. I think Coach Gasso does a really good job of holding us to really high standards.

There was one point we were, like, run-ruling teams, and we felt like she was just grinding us, and we're, like, but we're run-ruling.

That's just the standard is here. I feel like that's what sets us apart from a lot of people. It's the preparation that comes with it as well. We have really good practice plans, very detailed practice plans, and we don't practice like any other team in the country. We're going to put on our pants, and we're going to get our hands dirty, and we're going to go to work. Just a testament to Coach Gasso and the coaching staff for how they have prepared us well for these moments.

Q. Patty, with your captain Lynnsie, I'm wondering when you first recognized her leadership and what she could bring and what that's done for you guys and then for the players, what does Lynnsie's leadership look like in practice, in a game, and what does that do you for you?

PATTY GASSO: I noticed it when she was very young. She was a catcher in high school and pretty much a leader for her high school team. Been at our camps. She keeps showing me pictures when she's, like, 8 years old of her and I together and her growing with me in approximate our

camps.

She has a heart of gold. She is a true selfless teammate. Always looking out for her team. She kind of oversees them, puts them before herself.

Anything you could ever ask for in a captain. She doesn't need friends on this team. She will say what she means in the circle and say it strongly to get them to follow. Sometimes she's in the game. Sometimes she's not, but she's 100% in with the Sooners 24/7.

She's been our leader for two or three years. She's been -- I'm going to say it out loud. She's been my best captain I've ever had.

THE MODERATOR: Hope?

HAILEY DOLCINI: Lynnsie Elam, Coach says she doesn't need friends, but every single person on the team loves her 1,000%.

Coming here into such a tight-knit group who had just come off a National Championship, Lynnsie Elam took me under her wing and really showed me the ropes and how to keep up.

It's a different game of softball that we play, and it's something that I came in and was kind of overwhelmed by, and she really just helped me along. Having that pitcher/catcher relationship, it was just amazing. On top of her being a captain and taking care of everyone else, she really, really reached out to me and took care of me coming in here. I can't say enough about her.

JOCELYN ALO: Lynnsie is one of the sole reasons that I have made it through the program. She was my roommate my freshman year so she was always making sure I was up for weight. She was making sure, hey, did you get to eat today? Do you need to go to the store today? Do you need to do this? Do you need to do that? She would always give me first shower too, so it was super nice.

She's always been a mainstay, not only in my softball career, but in my life as well. We're definitely opposite ends, so I feel like that just kind of made us -- what makes us connect.

Yeah, you won't meet a better person or better player, and she's worked really, really hard for what she's accomplished these past five years, and she deserves every accomplishment that is coming her way. She's earned the right to be a captain.

THE MODERATOR: Tiare.

TIARE JENNINGS: Yeah, I would say last year the first time I stepped on campus, there was still COVID protocol, so I couldn't really hang out with the team much, but whenever we did, Lynnsie was, like, okay, you're coming over and I'm making you dinner.

She always helped the freshmen. She made us at home. She took us under her wing. Whenever we had questions, go to Lynnsie. Her character, I have never met anyone like her, and I'm just so thankful that I get to learn from her because I will never meet someone like Lynnsie Elam again. Just her passion for the game. She's selfless, loyal.

She's just awesome to be around, and her energy feeds off the team, and I know that I'm going to learn so much more from her. I love her to death.

Q. This is for Coach and for Jocelyn. You talked about the overall growth of the sport. Now you've got Athletes Unlimited that's starting to establish itself. You have WBF that's starting to make an effort to establish itself as well. How important are those things, because a few years ago those things weren't there at all. How important is it for those things to be in place in line with the growth of the college game?

PATTY GASSO: Extremely important. I think that's one of the victories in our sport. For someone that's been in it for such a long time, I remember when Keilani was going off to Japan and making six figures. I'm, like, wow, we are making a living off of this sport.

That is the goal now. Are these athletes getting paid enough to make a living? Not quite yet, but as long as it's a good product, people are going to want to come out. Wherever Jocelyn is playing, people are going to want to continue to come out to watch her. It's about our coverage, sponsorship. They need help. They need help with sponsorship and with financing, but if our athletes can make a living playing softball, that is one of the checkmarks at least for some of these old coaches that are, like, wow, this is tremendous to see. Not just in playing, but in marketing and promotions and the money that the NILs are bringing these athletes. I never thought in a million years I would be seeing what is going on right now. It's been fabulous.

As long as it's handled the correct way, it's been fabulous. It is great for our game. We just need more help. We need to continue to finance what's going on here.

THE MODERATOR: Jocelyn.

JOCELYN ALO: I'm just, one, excited to be a part of one

of the two leagues. I don't know which one I'm playing in yet, but I know some Sooner fans and fans all over the world are going to continue to follow me.

Another thing I think is good is how far they've come. I know how hard Lauren has worked to become -- to have WPF become a thing, and I know the hard work that has gone in behind AU.

And, one, I'm excited to join one of the two; second, I'm excited to see how good it's going to get from here because of the college game and how much people want to watch it and stuff like that. I'm excited for players who want to continue to play that they'll have the opportunity and even little girls in the stands will now say, like, oh, now I can become a professional softball player.

Yeah, I think it's going in a really good direction.

Q. I've got one more Hope and one for Coach. They're two different, though. Hope, this program has been to three straight champ series, but you, Alyssa, Jordy, all new additions. What's been the message from the team as far as playing on that stage, and just kind of what's different once it flips to the Champ Series? Then, Coach, yesterday you mentioned Jordy had a lot of adrenaline flowing and all that stuff. From a recovery standpoint today, day after, that subsided, is she at a point where she's still comfortable, that if you need her to call upon, she'll be available?

PATTY GASSO: Jordy will be good to go.

HOPE TRAUTWEIN: Yeah, this team has a lot of experience, and that has definitely helped me and Lyss and Jordy out a lot, just taking after the footsteps of these guys who have been here and won this before.

Really the Champ Series, yes, it does mean a lot, but we can't treat it like that. We have to treat it like any other game because, I mean, it really is another game that I have to perform. I don't have to do anything different than what I have been doing. I'm just trying to do my best and leave it all out on the field.

Q. I wanted to ask Jocelyn kind of following up on what Jenny was asking you earlier about having a public profile. You can train your whole life softball skills. I don't imagine that you train to be famous, to have a platform, to have people recognize you. How did you learn to make peace with that and embrace that and have that be a part of your life?

JOCELYN ALO: Yeah, I think Coach Gasso has really taught me well how to handle certain things. With that

being one of those. Now Coach Gasso has really made me think twice about what I say and think twice about what I do, think twice about what I post because everyone is watching. All eyes are on me.

It's not all eyes just on me. It's a bunch of other girls too, says you know? I think just taking it for what it is and just running with it. You never know when people aren't going to remember your name, and records are meant to be broken. Trophies get dust on them. I'm just going to embrace this for however long it happens and just try to get my message out there that anything can happen.

Q. Patty, I wanted to ask you, it's been well noted how much you have evolved as a coach, and I'm curious when that idea of -- not trying to seek revenge, not trying to look too much into a rivalry. When did that come in your playing or maybe coaching career just inspired you to keep your team focused on the top priority?

PATTY GASSO: I guess I learned when I -- if I coach with some other premonition of, I don't like you or I'm angry or I'm supposed to feel this way, I don't feel that way about anybody. I don't know a lot of these people. I don't know a lot of these coaches personally, so how can I have any kind of feeling one way or another?

I've learned to care, number one, about my family. You care about your family. I'm going to care about my family. I can't worry about your family because I don't know your family.

On video I'm going to study your family, but I'm going to take care of my family. That has made me understand how to keep my focus in the right place. Whether it's Bedlam or Red River. We seem to find UCLA in postseason. There's just no -- I don't have any ill will or feelings at all. I just want to win. I want to get our team in a position to win, and that is all I care about.

All the other pageantry and all the sounds and voices, I don't even -- I don't follow it. I don't like it. I don't dislike it. I just don't pay attention to it. I'm not one that's on my phone a lot looking to see what other people are doing because I really care about my family.

Q. I just wanted to quickly follow. Do you always feel like that's kind of been you as a coach and a player?

PATTY GASSO: I don't think I've started that way. I came in really feeling -- didn't even know what Red River was or Bedlam meant until people start telling me I'm supposed to not like the other programs. I'm, like, why? Why?

I kind of fell into that when I was young -- like a younger coach. Then I just evolved into understanding, I don't operate like that. I really don't.

Q. When you think back to taking the job in October '94, what were some of the things you knew you needed to change the culture, establish the high standards you hold your athletes, and get players who at that point you hadn't recruited to buy into you?

PATTY GASSO: That's a loaded question. Well, when I took the job, I was pregnant, so I was really just worrying about taking care of little D.J., who is now 28 years old. Whatever he is. I don't even know how old my kid is.

There was no stadium. There's no field. We played over at Reeves Park. I'm the California kid. I wanted to coach in California. That's where my family was, but a junior college coach from Long Beach is not going to get a D1 job in California. What are you going to do?

I came out to the World Series. I would watch it with Mickey Davis, who is one of the all-time great softball pros in the world. She was my boss, and she would bring me out here, and I would watch it. There were 2,000 people here. I'm, like, oh, my gosh, look at all these people. This is crazy.

To see where we are now is incredible, but when I got here, we played at Reeves Park. Couldn't even fit all the players in a dugout. We would go over before we would practice picking up beer cans from the night before and just trash everywhere.

So it started there, and then I knew I needed to go into the junior colleges to recruit to get some immediate help right now. That's what I did. Then I thought I've got to -- this kid is a big recruit. I remember it was Lana Moran, left-handed pitcher out of California. I'm, like, I'm going to go for it. If I get her, wow, that would be great. If not, I'm just going to go for it.

I was not afraid to go after Natasha Watley. I sat in her living room. I'm in Oklahoma. There's not a lot of history there, but my attitude was, I'm going to make them say no to me.

The first time I got my yes, I'm, like, yes, let's go. It was Lana Moran. Then it became Lauren Chamberlain who got me other -- they just started feeding and talking about their experiences at Oklahoma.

It was really by word of mouth, but I just as a young coach was, like, you're going to have to say no to me. I'm going to make you say no to me, and I fought like heck to try to

get them here, but that's kind of how it began.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much for your time. Appreciate it. Congratulations.

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