

# 2022 Women's College World Series

Thursday, June 9, 2022

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

**Texas Longhorns**

**Coach Mike White**

**Mary Iakopo**

**Janae Jefferson**

**Estelle Czech**

Postgame Press Conference



young rising stars on this team that can carry their legacy forward and sort of use this season as a foundation going forward?

ESTELLE CZECH: It was an amazing journey. Starting from, obviously, I hope you guys remember Clearwater, but it didn't start out the best, but no one expected us to be where we are today. And they are great leaders, and our team loved them. They stuck up for every single one of us and had our backs the whole entire season.

For next year, just pass on the legacy to new girls coming in.

**Q. Just wanted to ask about the start. It looked like you all were a little bit more yourselves, a little more comfortable out there today. Did you feel that in the game, just maybe less jitters than yesterday? Maybe a little more comfortable facing OU today?**

ESTELLE CZECH: I know I felt comfortable. It felt like the team felt comfortable too. I know my defense was working behind me. They were all talking to me. Everyone is cheering in the dugout, and we were having fun, so yeah.

**Q. Mary and Janae, for both of you again. What's been the best part about this particular group's journey? Obviously, from Florida, to coming back, good but not great Big 12 season. You guys didn't finish as well as you wanted to. What's been the best part of this whole run?**

MARY IAKOPO: I think just seeing how much we bent but never broke. The best part was ending my career here, and I couldn't be more thankful.

JANA E JEFFERSON: I think the best part was our senior class. I feel like as a group we all led well, and with the addition of Hailey and even Lauren Burke, I feel like as a senior class we were all strong. I feel like if our bond was strong together, it spread throughout the whole team. Like Mary said, just ending my career here is the best feeling in the world.

THE MODERATOR: Anything else for student-athletes?

Oklahoma - 10, Texas - 5

THE MODERATOR: This is the Championship Final Game 2 press conference featuring the national runner-up Texas Longhorns joined by head coach Mike White, and our student-athletes are Estelle Czech, Janae Jefferson, and Mary Iakopo. Questions for our student-athletes to start, please.

**Q. This is for Janae and Mary. Janae, when Connie left the program, the program was kind of kicking its feet, but not really going anywhere. You get a new coach; that was a huge splash at the time. You get Mary, Lauren, and just the energy shot that came with that. This is really for both of you. Just what do you think of the journey that y'all have been on to go from where Texas was to now on the brink of a national title.**

JANA E JEFFERSON: I think me and Mary definitely developed a strong relationship with her coming over. I feel like we know each other like the back of our hands. And with the addition of Coach White pushing us harder, we became a very competitive team. And I wouldn't be where I am today without the both of them. I'm just extremely grateful for it.

MARY IAKOPO: I think it was all worth it. The hardships, the hate, all the love, meeting new people, being in a new place. I think it was all worth it in the end to say that we left it all out there and emptied our gas tanks to get to where we are, our fifth year. I'm proud.

**Q. For Estelle, what did it mean for you to go on the journey with the seniors like Janae, Mary, and Hailey? What does it mean to know that you have a lot of**

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Thank you very much for your time. Congratulations.  
Questions for Coach White, please.

**Q. We can talk about the game if you want, but I'm more interested in the journey that y'all have been on. The last four years, when you got hired, your goal was to get Texas to the World Series. You are all about winning national titles and competing for titles, right? Just what's it been like? Now that your program is here, you're knocking on the door, and also, what's it going to take to get over the tank that is Oklahoma right now?**

MIKE WHITE: Wow, that's a lot of questions in there. (Laughing). Do you want to get the microphone back again?

It's been tougher than I thought it was going to be. I thought we had a really good team in 2019, I thought, and then, of course, the COVID year, it didn't turn out. As our moniker said, we were 390 miles short twice, which means one more win. We weren't able to get those darn wins.

We're pretty close. To tell you the truth, at this point I wasn't quite sure we would get here with this team, but they've come together. They've galvanized. The seniors have led, super seniors especially, have led this team with their performance. Hailey Dolcini has been a rock star for us, and that lifted the whole pitching staff.

At times this has been the most difficult journey of my life as far as coaching because it was so up and down. I'm telling you, literally, there were times when I didn't know who I was going to pitch, who could hold somebody down. You saw some of those games.

We gave up 15 runs against UCF. We gave up 17 against Baylor, and you were telling me we're going to make the College World Series final? This is hats off, a great team. They're supposed to win. They have all the studs, right? They're a destination.

This here is the scrappy bunch of young women who stood up against Oklahoma and gave them a damn good game today, and I couldn't be more proud of them. That's where my journey is right now. Next year maybe.

**Q. Mike, I wanted to ask you something about the game. You talked yesterday about needing to score on Oklahoma. The first, second, and even the third inning go on, and you just get those two runs. Were you concerned about that, not being able to take advantage of some of the runners that you were able to get on base and the situations that you had maybe more than you were able to with those two first inning runs?**

MIKE WHITE: Absolutely. That's been the story. We left nine runners on or eight runners on yesterday. I don't know how many we left on today. It's in here somewhere. Six I think.

Those are missed opportunities. Because you know they're going to come back and fight tough. They make adjustments at the plate. Again, we kind of shot ourselves in the foot just a little bit there by giving them extra outs.

They're tough, and that's what they do. We know that. I figured we would have to score five or six to put the real pressure on them. We hit Jordy Bahl really well. Obviously, we didn't get a lot of time with the other kid. What's her name?

**Q. Nicole.**

MIKE WHITE: Nicole May, sorry. Nicole May. I think she did a pretty good job in relief here. Hope, I think she was looking ahead to the championship trophy, but we fought back, and I couldn't be more proud of the team.

Especially in a difficult situation like being out there in this climate. It's tough.

**Q. Those of us that love softball, you know, certainly love your senior class. Iakopo, your catcher. Janae is one of the great players of the world. What does this senior class mean to you as you continue to develop your program moving forward?**

MIKE WHITE: I'm from New Zealand, and there's a book called "Legacy." I don't know if any of you have read it. And it talks about clean the sheds, you're never big enough to clean the sheds and be humble and leave the jersey in a better place.

That's what all those seniors can say they did. They've left the jersey in a better place. We've set all sorts of new records and standards for our program. We're not the standard of Oklahoma. I get that. But this program is rising. That's what we want.

We set a new women's college world record for double plays. Amazing. A first unseeded team to make the woman's college world final. Amazing. We fought back from so many adversities. I think seven times or six times we were behind and came back and won.

The grit, determination, and all the things we talked about, and I'm telling you, it was a really hard job building this thing from where we were. We were in a pretty tough place.

The seniors, hats off to them. They've led this team strong.

**Q. I know it might be hard to look ahead right now, but you have three sophomores on the All-Tournament Team. You have Sophia, Mya, all these youngsters that now have this experience. How important is that for all going forward, and how excited are you for the future and to build on this?**

MIKE WHITE: I've talked about a lot before about you can't practice this. You've got to get here to experience and know what it's like. You can tell them all you want, but until you get out there and do it, it's hard.

We have that experience. Now, can they spread it? Can they spread the word that Texas is a real place to come play softball and it's a great university? You are going to get an awesome education there as well. There's a lot of factors that we need to start spreading the word about it. Texas softball is for real.

**Q. Mike, I wanted to ask you about a moment in the game. Jayda Coleman's catch there in the first inning. That takes two runs off the board. Just how much that hurt, and obviously, it would have been a different game had that gone a different direction for you.**

MIKE WHITE: It's a game of inches. I told Courtney one more Wheatie might have done it, but she was close a few times this weekend.

Her transformation this week was great. I think we've always seen the ability in her to hit the long ball, but I think she's just one of those kids, and you saw her up here. She's really mild-mannered, and we have to kind of prod her a little bit.

I'm hoping this is a turning point for her and she turns it on and can be that 15- to 20-home run kid that we so desperately need in our program.

**Q. I wanted to ask you about the Oklahoma fifth. It seemed like they really started getting to Estelle at that moment. What did you see as a coach? Also, what I wanted to ask you, ESPN's cameras caught a little interaction and emotions after the game. Can you describe what happened during that process?**

MIKE WHITE: You're talking about with the ball and the umpire or --

**Q. Yeah. With your assistant coach and he was angry.**

MIKE WHITE: Yeah. I'm not going to elaborate too much

about it, but Coach Singleton was just trying to get the home run ball back for Mya, and the umpire wouldn't respond back. Steve said, "Hey, can I have the ball back?" The umpire barked back at him.

After the game was over, he rolled the ball forcefully at Steve. That's what happened. That's what happened. Steve took exception to it. I don't know how much more I should say about that.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, you want to talk about the Oklahoma fifth inning?

MIKE WHITE: Yeah. That's all a blur now. It's like you blink, you give an inch, and they take a mile. That's what happened.

They just -- it started going downhill pretty quick on us, and, of course, they scored the four runs there back-to-back. Kind of put it away. We had them a little bit nervous there for a bit. That's what we wanted to do.

We wanted to obviously make it a lot closer game than it was last night. That wasn't a great game by us. It was embarrassing. We felt like we kind of let our Longhorn Nation fans down. I know they don't feel that way, but the kids feel that way, the players feel that way.

My job was to pick them back up, come back out, and fight. Do the Texas fight. I thought we did that. I thought we fought well. Just didn't turn out our way. We just didn't have enough -- I mean, you look at the numbers on paper, and you can tell how the match-up goes.

**Q. Just one more question about kind of the future and going forward. Obviously, Janae and Mary, your seniors have gotten a lot of attention, but so many young players coming back that got this experience. What did you see out of them last night and this morning at the hotel and again today, some aggressive at-bats? Just a team that wanted to compete and keep fighting.**

MIKE WHITE: I think there's so much in that. I use a lot of different hyperbole, so to speak, to try and rally around them and give them different ideas. It's hard to coach them just as one group and say, hey, let's go, rah-rah.

You have to find a chord that strikes with them and latch on to it, like be the most dangerous team in America. That was our moniker. We're not ranked, but let's be dangerous. Let's make some noise.

We made a lot of noise. Those types of things. And be carefree and not careless. We were carefree a little bit

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until yesterday. I think the -- we blew it up.

Today we came out a little bit better. We still made some errors, but I'm hoping they learn from those mistakes, and that's what it's about. We have to use those as teaching moments to go forward as coaches and work our team and get them to understand what it's going to take to be here.

That's one of the things I said in the locker room after was, hey, this is what it takes. This is what you have to be. Look at the catches they made in the outfield. Look at the plays they made. The throw to second base.

Not only is Oklahoma a great hitting team, they're a great defensive team. It's hard to score runs. That's what we have to learn.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Appreciate your time throughout the week.

MIKE WHITE: You're welcome. Thank you, guys.

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