

2023 Women's College World Series

Wednesday, May 31, 2023
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Oklahoma State Cowgirls

Kenny Gajewski

Kelly Maxwell

Chyenne Factor

Rachel Becker

Press Conference



we talk about what we practice.

We're talking about communication, and I'm telling them that, hey, we're going to be in OKC, and you can't communicate like this. You have to communicate a different way because we're going to be there and 13,000 fans make it hard. So this is what you've got to do.

So that kind of stuff is just the way we communicate at practice and we talk. Getting here and getting checked in just feels like -- honestly, it just feels like another road trip.

Q. Kenny, I'm curious your thoughts on playing a team you're very familiar with here as opposed to someone you don't know all that well. And then for Chyenne after that, what are your memories from the 2019 Super Regional down in Tallahassee?

KENNY GAJEWSKI: I think for us playing Florida State is kind of an interesting deal. Obviously we played them three times this year. We played them two or three times last year and the year before. Know them well. They know us well.

Honestly, I haven't even really thought about it. I've watched some video, and I just want to turn it off. I feel like I already know what they are and who they are. They're obviously a little bit different than what they were when we played them in, I don't know, April.

But they're really good, well coached. Got a lot of respect for what they've done and the way that Lonni's done it. I got to watch her get started when I was at Florida. So I think we've gone through those same growing pains. So it's kind of cool.

I've talked to her a lot over the years about our program and their program. So it's been fun.

CHYENNE FACTOR: Probably looking back on my time here, that's probably been my best memory so far. I think we were the 13 seed going into the defending national champs and just being able to come out of that and see where we've gone from there, I think it's cool.

THE MODERATOR: We're going to go ahead and get going with Oklahoma State. We're joined by Coach Kenny Gajewski, athletes Kelly Maxwell, Chyenne Factor, and Rachel Becker.

Kenny, you may want to give an opening statement if you have one.

KENNY GAJEWSKI: Obviously excited to be back here for the fourth year in a row. This team is in a really good place. We've been through all kinds of fun stuff the whole year, like where they're at.

Looking forward to tomorrow night at 6:00. That's all this team is focused on. I expect we'll play well.

Q. Kelly and Kenny, you guys having now been here for the fourth year, curious what you feel like the carryover is as far as experience and just knowledge of what this is all about and how you think that could impact what you guys do this week.

KENNY GAJEWSKI: Go ahead, Kel.

KELLY MAXWELL: I think just being grateful for every single time. It's hard to get here and credit to all the teams that are here. But I think just our experience, me, Chy, Kiley, all of us who have been here for the very first time, to be able to use that and help these kids that haven't been here.

KENNY GAJEWSKI: It's obviously tougher to get back, it feels like. Once we've been here, it feels very normal. It feels like what we ought to be doing. Feels like what we talk about and work for and work to. This is kind of what



Q. This question is for the players: Do you have any memories growing up of watching this event at this venue while you were in high school, maybe a little younger? What's it like being role models for a younger generation of softball players that are growing up and kind of idolizing you like you may have idolized players growing up?

KELLY MAXWELL: I remember at a young age I watched Danielle Lawrie play for Washington, and I think she sparked my fire of wanting to be a pitcher. I think that's why we play this game is for those little girls to dream big. We want to showcase our hard work and dedication and put on a show for those girls.

CHYENNE FACTOR: I grew up like 20 minutes from here, played here a lot in summer ball. Came to a lot of the World Series. I think it's cool I get to be here now and watch the younger girls want to do it too.

RACHEL BECKER: Honestly, I remember watching it on TV when I was really young and just thinking how cool of an experience that would be. I think it just shows that, if you really work hard and are consistent, anybody can end up here, if that's what you really want. So I think it's just really cool.

Q. Kenny, just a bigger picture question: Pace of play has been a big topic of conversation. Do you see that as an issue at all? Are there any changes that you would like to see made?

KENNY GAJEWSKI: I think it's somewhat of a problem because I know that we don't want to lose the support that we have from TV. So I think we do have some issues for sure.

I think it can be fixed too. I'm watching baseball and what they've done, it's fixed that. If we're going -- if Major League Baseball is being played at a lesser pace than us, then we've got issues. I think we can get it fixed, though, and I think most everybody would probably agree. I don't know. I don't really talk to everybody about that stuff.

The beauty of this game is how fast it's played, and in this day and age with attention span and cell phones and all that, 2:00, 2:15 would be an ideal time.

Q. Keeping with the big picture, this game, this sport, this event has all changed since you took over at OSU. If I asked you what's the next thing the sport has to do to keep moving forward, to improve upon, what might that be? Maybe it is pace of play or something like that.

KENNY GAJEWSKI: Good question. I don't know. I think just continuing to -- I think just continuing to showcase these kids, the female athlete. I think that's something that's really caught on here, and I think it's -- I don't necessarily think it's caught on in every sport, but it's caught on here. So we've got to capture that and be the leaders.

What that looks like and how we can help other sports and draw more young girls to our sport. You know, I think we just need Oklahoma City to keep improving the things that they can just to continue to make this event. We need people to support it. We need our state here to be able to do whatever it takes to keep it here. I think it's an amazing place.

But it takes money and effort and resources like that. That would be my thing, just how can we keep making this event so more people can get here, more parking, more whatever. To me that would be one of the important things.

Q. For the players, without putting any one of you on the spot, all three of you, the game has changed even since you began your careers, NIL, with the portal and all that. From a student-athlete experience, is there anything in the game of college softball you feel like could be better five years from now that would benefit the student-athletes like yourself?

CHYENNE FACTOR: I'm not sure.

KELLY MAXWELL: I think Coach G hit them all.

(Laughter).

Q. Kenny, you've been good, obviously it's the fourth year you've been here. Each year your team is probably a different personality, stuff like that. How have you built this team compared to, say, the first one? Transfer portal is part of it now that wasn't three or four years ago. Just how have you built this team compared to some of your earlier teams?

KENNY GAJEWSKI: This one has been a little bit of a different journey. They all are obviously. But with 12 newcomers, we just started from day one. We hired a program called The Program. They came in here and put these girls in some stressful, physical situations, some mental stress.

I can remember the day after the first two days of that -- well, it was two days. I can remember Lexi Kilfoyl and Megan Bloodworth were walking down our hallway, and I said, hey, you guys good? They were obviously new, and

we even turned our returners' worlds upside down for a couple days. I said, are you guys good? And they said, yeah. I said, I just wanted to make sure the first couple days didn't scare you away. They said, honestly it's the best thing we could have ever done because it forced us to get to know our teammates in the first week.

And that's how we started. Then we've continued to do the same things like we've done, like go to Broken Bow in the fall and then to watch the show, the Selection Show. We haven't shied away from that stuff.

We've just kind of taken things as they come. That's kind of the way I work. I kind of let things evolve and then hammer out whatever issues that we may have. These guys will tell you that. If we've got a problem, we just hit it head on and move forward.

So I think starting out with the program, that's how we've done that part of it to build this group. We built this team -- if you're asking me how we built it, we built it out of high school and the portal, if that's what you're asking, and we'll continue that same route.

I have a hard time here convincing young high school kids that Stillwater is a cool place. It's really hard. I have a hard time with that. Instead of being upset at that, we've just embraced that. We've figured out that we can grab some portal kids, because they have a better idea of what they want and what's most important to them. We become very attractive in that moment.

So we'll continue down that path. Hopefully the winning will keep attracting some younger kids because I do want those kids to be here. I wish we could have had Rachel for four years. I wish we could have any of these kids who have come in here for four years.

But the way the game is changing and with NIL and everything that we've got, just going to jump right in and go and see where it takes us.

Q. Rachel, this is your first Women's College World Series. I know you played here for the Big 12 Tournament. Have you had to keep emotions in check as this week's gone along? And for the rest of you, to have somebody as veteran as Rachel but to be going through this for the first time, I'm curious how that's impacted. You guys maybe have a different sort of experience through her eyes in a way.

RACHEL BECKER: It's just been an amazing experience so far overall. Like with the events we've done and just knowing that, when we come to the field tomorrow, there's just going to be a huge crowd. Like I'm just so excited.

I can't think of a better way for me to kind of finish off my college career. I'm so thankful that I have my teammates who have been here before to kind of guide the younger girls and someone like me who's never been here, and just make everyone feel more comfortable and confident going into it.

KENNY GAJEWSKI: I've caught myself kind of watching her a lot. Just the third out against Oregon, we went and had a cool experience at Nike today. To watch her -- these guys have had it, so it's still awesome, but to see the young kids and then somebody like Rachel to get that, just the little things.

She's been so amazing at embracing everything from day one. Like she's just jumped right in here and said, tell me what you want. Tell me how you'd like me to be. We don't tell her any of that stuff. We said just be you. That's the best thing we can tell you. Just be the best you, and everything will be great.

Q. Kenny, I think you had talked about after the win over Oregon on Friday that every time you get to come down here, you just feel a different energy. What does that feel like on the other end of the spectrum from Rachel, somebody who's been here for four years now?

KENNY GAJEWSKI: It gets bigger and bigger, and you drive in. By our hotel we have a couple of restaurants that we've gone to. It's crazy. I think Chy was with me last night or yesterday, we went to a place to eat lunch, and I sat down, and this older lady sat down next to me, and she started asking me some questions. I was like, it was kind of cool. Then this mother, her daughter walked up and wanted to take pictures of all them.

It doesn't get old. I don't want it to stop. I love it. It's what -- it's just cool to see how these people that support this event, it's cool to see how excited that they are about this and how much they're invested, whether you're an OSU fan or not. It's really cool.

It feels good to be sitting here because I could be at home and not here, and I'm very appreciative of that. So I'll never complain about any of this kind of stuff because this is really neat, and it's an experience that each year it just changes and gets better.

THE MODERATOR: That'll wrap it up for Oklahoma State. Thank you to Kenny, Kelly, Chyenne, and Rachel.

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