

2023 Women's College World Series

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

Washington Huskies

Heather Tarr

SilentRain Espinoza

Kelley Lynch

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We're going to get going with Washington, with Coach Heather Tarr and athletes SilentRain Espinoza and Kelley Lynch.

Heather, would you want to open with an opening statement?

HEATHER TARR: We're super excited to be here and grateful for the opportunity. This team has earned its way here, as have the other seven teams. These two young ladies here are proud to represent their teams, their communities, their families.

We haven't been here since 2019, when SilentRain was a freshman, so it's neat to be able to bring a group from that point in time in their career to now at the end of their career, after the pandemic and all that.

We are excited to represent the University of Washington and go out and compete and continue to learn how to play Husky softball as long as we can in 2023.

Q. Both you girls, Kelley and SilentRain, you guys had one of the most remarkable comebacks in NCAA history, down six or seven, whatever it was, going into the last inning. Not just winning and being able to get here, but what does that do for you going forward in terms of fortifying what obviously was high level of confidence and belief? What does that do to even expand those emotions and those dedications?

KELLEY LYNCH: I think just the momentum and energy that came after that game and just in that last inning has really propelled us into Supers last weekend and now the World Series.

We call it Husky Fever, but really just all the energy and

momentum it gave us. Such a special moment for the program and for us and it was an amazing thing to be a part of.

SILENTRAIN ESPINOZA: I think it gave us the confidence to know that we're not out until the last out is played. We still had three outs to work with, and it gave us the confidence that we can come back in games like that and to not give up too soon.

Q. Kelley, you guys come here with a team goal, I'm sure. For yourself, this is your first time at the Women's College World Series. I'm curious what memories you have growing up watching this or watching it from afar?

KELLEY LYNCH: I actually got to come here in 2010 as a spectator and watch. As a little girl, this is the dream. Kind of got myself caught up in the goal of just getting to the World Series, but the real goal is to win the last game.

I think it's the same game we played as we were kids, but also just taking a moment to really be grateful for being here and on this stage and to represent all the little girls that want to be here one day.

Yeah, super surreal and just grateful to be here.

Q. Do you remember who you had been watching? Is there anyone who stands out in your memory? Beyond that, is there anything about this experience that you're most looking forward to?

KELLEY LYNCH: Yeah, I remember I came with a friend to watch the University of Georgia, UGA, but I actually remember everyone talking about some pitcher, Danielle Lawrie, who was playing for the University of Washington. Kind of a full-circle moment being here now.

Just looking forward to take it all in and just be a part of this special week. Yeah, play some Husky softball.

Q. Heather, bigger-picture question, pace of play has been an issue. A lot of coaches have talked about it. I've asked them about it in previous press



conferences. Do you see that as an issue? And if so, do you have any ideas of how you would maybe want to tighten things up a little bit?

HEATHER TARR: I do have a lot of opinions about that, but I think the pace of play can be controlled by a similar time clock that we have in the international game. It's a 20-second pitch clock.

Secondly, what is challenging for these young ladies is the 42 minutes -- and it's a good problem -- of commercials that we wait for. We're normally used to a media timeout between innings of 90 seconds in conference play or other play that doesn't involve media. Then when we get to this stage, which we're grateful for, it's a two-and-a-half-minute break. So it's hurry up, slow down. Hurry up and slow down.

What many people who aren't involved don't see is that. I think the 20-second time clock can certainly help the pitch-by-pitch situation. It's a good problem when you have media, but when 42 minutes of the time is considered for all those between-inning moments, it makes it a really challenging dichotomy of competing.

Q. Coach, kind of fitting with the gentleman who walked in with you, I want to ask you about your coaching tree. The last couple years you've seen players who have played for you go into coaching, coaches you've coached with. Can you just talk about your coaching tree and what it's like to see players who you fostered all the way up now succeeding as coaches themselves?

HEATHER TARR: It's an honor to be able to have coached in a game long enough where I'm no longer feeling like I'm under Teresa Wilson and John Rittman and Brian Kolze's coaching tree. Rather now we all have extensions out of us from the University of Pacific, Cindy Ball at UCF, Victoria Hayward at San Diego State, just to name a few.

There are so many women that have learned the game under us, and it's neat to see the layers they have. I give my credit back to my dad, my first ever coach, and all of my Little League coaches. It's a neat thing to see the Washington coaching tree continue to grow and expand, and knowing that their lessons they teach are probably more efficient and effective than they were when I once received them.

It's an honor to be involved in this profession, and it's a gift from God.

Q. Heather, this sport and this event has certainly

grown from the first time you came here, exponentially, and the sport has taken -- whether it's NIL or the portal, it's grown with every change that's come. Where do you think that next thing is? What's the next thing the sport needs to tackle to be five years -- to be better off five years from today?

HEATHER TARR: I think the sport needs just continued top-down growth. I think the bottom up is really good from a grass roots standpoint and support at the youth levels.

Now, of course, being the national team head coach, you always want more unification from the ground up and how the teachings are done and what the lessons are that we're teaching from a tactical, developmental standpoint. But I also think that you've got to keep up with the times. So whatever the things are that are next, we always have to evolve and grow.

I think just having a parent of our sport, is it Major League Baseball? Is it USA Softball? What is it? That would help this. The WNBA looks to the NBA for sometimes its financing and initial kick maybe investment-wise. I think it's just. At the college level, we're peaking, we're rising, and the support these guys see is amazing.

I just think from the top-down is something that could be game changing for women in this sport.

Q. Heather, just wanted to ask one more follow-up. Given your experience with the national team and going back to my question about pace of play, how much of a transition was that to have the pitch clock? And like how long would it take to sort of implement on this level?

HEATHER TARR: I think it wouldn't take long at all, but I also think there's something that an international most sanctioned events by the WBSC, you can't leave the batter's box. You have to have one foot in the batter's box.

Now, some players that have advanced their mental game routine wouldn't like that, but you'd adapt, and you'd overcome that. I think that's another thing to consider. But I don't think that would be that big of a deal because the clock right now, like in basketball, it's three seconds in the key, and the athletes that might be 3.5 seconds in the key sometimes are forgiven, and/or maybe you had 2.5 seconds, and I wasn't in there that long.

So I think the clock is somewhat ambiguous, and I think it would actually help the officials manage the clock more effectively if it were present and out there.

Q. Sy, what do you remember from your first World



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Series here, and have some of the players that are not fifth year seniors been asking you and the other ones about what it's like here in the last week or so?

SILENTRAIN ESPINOZA: It's been four years since we've been here, but I've watched every year, and I remember just kind of being overwhelmed as a freshman, coming into all this. This year I feel like I've been able to be present and be in the moment, and that was kind of what I've been voicing to the younger ones when they ask.

Just take it for what it is and be as present as you can because that's how we're going to ultimately win this thing is being as present as you can and not letting the moments get bigger than they are.

Q. Heather, I think your first year here was '97, I think. Do you still think about the old days when you walk in here? Spediacci and Rosie and those other teammates that you made a big splash with?

HEATHER TARR: I definitely look forward to my experience to lead this group, but also to reflect back on the opportunity is the same feeling. The same feeling we had coming here is the same feeling I still have to this day. It's so exciting. When I don't have that feeling anymore, then maybe I retire.

I think one of the opportunities we got as players at Washington is our first year going to the World Series was actually in '96, and that was actually in Columbus, Georgia, as the showcase to the '96 Olympic games. So we didn't get an opportunity to go to the World Series in that way. So the second time was here.

Going back to those times, we believed we could win that thing and do it. I think the pride that comes from being a Washington Husky and growing up in Seattle, that continues to fuel me, but also try and give it to these guys and never take it for granted. I think that's really what the lessons are that I try to impart on our gals and just continue to make it bigger and better for those that come behind you. That's one of our messages as well.

Q. Coach, good to talk to you again. You're playing Utah once again. You played them in the regular season and the Pac-12 Tournament. How does that affect preparation? You know this team so well, but yet you both are probably different today than the last time you played.

HEATHER TARR: It's a great opportunity for the Pac-12 to have three teams here, and maybe what some might consider three, quote, unquote, nontraditional Pac-12 teams. I think the opportunity to compete against a

common opponent, a known opponent is a challenge because, just as well as we know them, they know us.

You know it's on a big stage, and what a great opportunity again for our conference to showcase itself. It's unfortunate that we match up right away, but we've had these situations before. In SilentRain's freshman year, we matched up with Arizona.

It's the good and bad of being in a conference like ours that showcases these teams at this stage. We're trying to sharpen our sword and trying to use these opportunities to continue to improve and become the best version that we can be.

Q. Coach, you mentioned showcasing of the Pac-12, a lot of change coming with the Pac-12 with UCLA moving out, them considering other teams coming in. What do you think the Pac-12 needs to do to showcase that visibility more, say, on the East Coast, the middle of the country, where a lot of your games during the year come on 10:00 after from that standpoint?

HEATHER TARR: Obviously one disadvantage, we're going to always be geographically disadvantaged from the greater population of the United States, given a population map. If you know that, you can look and see, well, the majority of the United States lives east of the Mississippi. So that's always going to be a challenge.

Also, being able to become part of a network that has more access than a specialized network. There's times when even I can't get the Pac-12 Network when I'm trying to watch a game or two. I understand how challenging that is or has been.

I don't think it matters who's part of our conference so much, but it's what kind of networks we can align with that can give access beyond just one channel or eight channels that people have to get.

To answer the question of UCLA, we're obviously saddened softball-wise that UCLA is leaving our conference. It was very weird thinking about, wow, this could be the last time we play in Westwood. This could be the last time we compete in the Pac-12 championship, our first ever, and UCLA's last time is here. That's a different place.

We had Utah come in, Utah and Colorado -- they don't have softball -- come in more than ten years ago. Look what Utah has become not only softball-wise but football-wise. I think anybody that enters our conference could be an advantage, but also I think the conference has its work cut out to negotiate something beyond what it is

today.

THE MODERATOR: That will wrap things up for Washington. Thank you, Heather, SilentRain, and Kelley.

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