

2023 Women's College World Series

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

Stanford Cardinal
Coach Jessica Allister
Alana Vawter
NiJaree Canady
Emily Schultz

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by coach Jessica Allister, Alana Vawter, NiJaree Canady, and Emily Schultz.

Want to start off with an opening statement?

JESSICA ALLISTER: Thrilled to be here. Really proud of this group of young women. After a tremendous season, happy to be concluding it here in Oklahoma City. Really, really excited to get going.

Q. Coach, the last time Stanford was here, you were here. I feel like it's probably a little different emotion for you now. Can you tell me what that emotion was like when you clinched that Super Regional in the World Series berth last weekend?

JESSICA ALLISTER: It was awesome. It was awesome just like I said before. The group of young women are tremendous, both in the program now and those for the last six years who believed that we could get here and were willing to put in the work before it seemed like a probable ending.

So just a lot of pride and gratefulness to continue the season together.

Q. Jessica, just a big-picture question. Pace of play has been a popular topic of conversation among the coaches and everything. Do you see that as much of an issue, and if so, do you have any ideas in which you would try to tighten things up a little bit?

JESSICA ALLISTER: You should watch us play. We play fast. I'm just kidding.



(Laughter.)

Yeah, I think it's important. I think any time you're not sensitive to what's best for the game, I think that's a mistake. So I think we should continue to take in all the information and do what we need to do to move the game forward.

I think at the same time you don't want to get painted into a corner when certain moments deserve a little time, and you want to make sure in those moments you can take the time. I think it's important that we keep our finger on it, but I think we should move with a scalpel, not a hammer.

Q. NiJaree, for you, growing up in Topeka, only so far from here, I'm curious, getting to this week, what your relationship to this event was growing up and what memories you might have.

NIJAREE CANADY: I played here a lot growing up. I was part of the Alliance All-Star team. Playing in that league, we played a lot of tournaments here, and it's only 3 1/2 hours away. I'm definitely, definitely glad to be back.

Q. Was it anything you watched on TV when you got to this time of year?

NIJAREE CANADY: I always watched it. It's something my whole family looked forward to. It's definitely different being here now and playing on the same dirt.

Q. Just the idea of being here at the end of year one to finish your freshman season on this field where you're familiar, what do you think it will feel like perhaps tomorrow when you're in the circle?

NIJAREE CANADY: I feel like it will -- definitely exciting. We'll see when it gets there.

(Laughter.)

Q. For Emily and Coach. Coach alluded to it two minutes ago. Stanford was not always a World Series team the last few years. Can you walk me through the journey to get to this point and be sitting on this stage



tomorrow?

EMILY SCHULTZ: We talked about it a little bit, and it was so surreal. My freshman year, we were so excited we got to postseason, and we went to Gainesville. I know it wasn't the best game, but I walked up to Coach Allister, and she gave me a hug and said, Remember this moment. We'll be back here.

I think every year it's been a journey back to that, and every year has gotten a little better. We brought some incredible players in, incredible pitching, and I think we shifted the culture of Stanford softball and made us a name to be reckoned, a force to be reckoned with in the country.

It's pretty surreal to be here. As a fifth year, I think there's no other way I'd kind of wrap it up, so yeah.

JESSICA ALLISTER: Remind me of the question.

Q. Chronicling the journey, getting Stanford back to that point.

JESSICA ALLISTER: I think everything Emily just said. It was always the goal. When I took the job, I took the job because Stanford is the best athletic program in the country. If you look across the scope of women's side, there's no reason that Stanford softball shouldn't be competing for championships like all the other women's sports teams in our department.

I thought it was a sleeping giant and a task that I was excited to take on. Proud to be here and just really proud of the women sitting next to me.

Q. For both pitchers, could you just speak to the relationship you guys have in your bullpen, just what that dynamic is like.

ALANA VAWTER: I could start. I think we all credit everything to Coach Nyberg. She does a fantastic job creating one-on-one relationships with us, making sure we know how important it is to work together, and just like that, you kind of love working together. I think Coach Nyberg is the tip top as far as that's concerned.

These girls are the secondary. They're just fun to be around. We love hanging around with each other on and off the field. It just makes the bullpen a fun place to be.

NIJAREE CANADY: Kind of building off that, I feel like there's this atmosphere in the bullpen, I don't know, that's hard to replicate. Like we all have each other's backs. If someone throws a good pitch, the whole bullpen is kind of yelling and celebrating it.

Like every practice where it says like bullpen, I'm always excited.

Q. Coach, when you match up with Oklahoma so early in the season, is there anything you can take from that game, or since it was Game 2 for you, Game 3 for them, two teams totally different at this point?

JESSICA ALLISTER: Yeah, it was a long time ago, but absolutely. Obviously we'll draw back from that and watch the film and get some information from there, but I think that we're both very different teams at this point in the season. There's a lot of ball that's been played since then.

Q. Coach, I know there's been a lot of alumni that are making the trip. Jessica Mendoza is obviously working the event. I've been told Ramona Shelburne is trying to make the event between her commitments to the NBA. What's it been like for the alumni? Have you heard from the alumni and the excitement around this program now?

JESSICA ALLISTER: We have. I told Ramona, the NBA Finals? What the heck, you've got to go there? Just kidding.

It's been wonderful. It's been surreal. That's been an added bonus just to hear from people that we hear from on occasion. But reaching out, out of the blue, saying, We'll be there, it's special.

When you talk about programs, you talk about sustainable programs, a piece of that is bringing everybody back and having that feel of, once you put on the jersey, you're always going to wear the jersey.

It's going to be great to see some familiar faces, and we told them they'd better cheer loud.

THE MODERATOR: Players, anything you want to add on your season or being here in Oklahoma City before we wrap up?

EMILY SCHULTZ: I'm just ready to go. That's all I've got to say.

THE MODERATOR: With that, we'll wrap things up. Thank you for being here.

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