

2023 Women's College World Series

Friday, June 2, 2023

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Alabama Crimson Tide

Patrick Murphy

Montana Fouts

Ashley Prange

Postgame Press Conference



Stanford 2, Alabama 0

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Alabama.

We'll start with a statement from head coach Patrick Murphy.

PATRICK MURPHY: Just want to again reiterate our thanks to everybody that put on the greatest show on dirt. Everybody from the NCAA Softball Committee, you guys have upped the ante tremendously. We absolutely love our NCAA rep, Miss Kianna, you better be here next year because we will be. You're a pleasure to work with. Everybody.

I know you do it for nothing. It's a long-time commitment for everybody on that committee, so we really do appreciate what you do for us. Just everybody in Oklahoma City. Our hotel was terrific. Everywhere there was signage with the College World Series logo. There's a lot of people downtown Oklahoma City. When they see that sign on the doors of the hotel, if there's any softball players, they come around because they want to see these two and get autographs. I think that's a tradition that's starting to really come about here, similar to Omaha.

The two young ladies from Stanford that are on the mound are terrific. It's a terrific duo that they have there now. They're just tough to square up. Kudos to them.

I don't think anybody gave us a shot in hell of being here once Montana went down in Fayetteville. I can't say enough about our team doctors, Dr. Lyle Cain, Kevin Wilk the P.T. Dr. Brett Bentley, Esi Atinkah our athletic trainer, and everybody that helped nurse her back to what she was.

I am going to miss all of our seniors tremendously. I always say you must have the bigger picture in mind in athletics because there's only one team, one team of 307 that gets to raise the trophy. What do the other 306 hold their hats on? There has to be something else, right?

It's the love for their teammates, the love for their coaches, the love for their staff, the love for the game. You're playing for something so much bigger than yourself when you play for Alabama. They're now going to be friends for life of mine, whether they like it or not.

Any time, anyplace you need me, they can call me. It's the alumni. They can't wait to get the graduated seniors into the Bama U club. I know they're excited about that.

But there has to be something bigger than just a trophy. And thankfully we have that at Alabama.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the players.

Q. Montana, what did your career at Alabama mean to you? I know it's kind of hard to reflect, but if you could on how you're feeling right now.

MONTANA FOUTS: It's tough (tearing up).

Like Murph said...

Give me a second. I'll get it out. I promise. These people are my everything. They really are. I couldn't have asked for a better place to spend my dream. This has always been my dream. I will have people for the rest of my life. I don't even have the words. I don't know if I ever will. I don't know if I'll ever have the words for what this place, Murph, and the coaches, and these teammates mean to me.

I have a home.

Q. (No microphone.)

MONTANA FOUTS: I've been thinking about it a lot recently. I didn't start playing the game of softball just to win a national championship. I started playing because I

love it. I love the game. I love the struggle that it brings me sometimes. I love, like Murph has taught me, to be an overcomer. I love that. I love that about our team. I love the memories. I love my teammates. I love that it's brought me a family.

That would have been great, but I've won in life.

Q. Ashley, your last at-bat in the sixth, you go after that pitch for strike three that was up in the zone. Was your mindset there to swing for the fences?

ASHLEY PRANGE: Honestly, I wouldn't say I was swinging for the fences. My goal at that at-bat was to make her throw a lot of pitchers. She's obviously a really good pitcher. She has all the accolades for a reason. We knew that.

I was just thinking I'm not going down without a fight. Whatever it took, I was going to scratch and claw. I don't know how many pitches were in that at-bat. That was my goal: just fight.

Q. Ashley, what has that program meant transferring in? Montana, it looked like Murph came out and gave you the opportunity to have a curtain call. You turned him down. Why did you do that?

ASHLEY PRANGE: Oh, man, that's hard. I guess kind of like both of them have said, this has been the most incredible experience of my life. Dang it, I was doing good, man.

They truly taught me to find joy in a game that I never thought I could love again (tearing up).

MONTANA FOUTS: You got it.

ASHLEY PRANGE: From day one, they welcomed me with open arms and loved me more than I'll ever believe I deserve. For that, I cannot thank these two enough. I can't thank the other, how many, 19 girls, that gave me a family. They truly, like, filled my life with joy in more ways than they'll ever know. This program is my everything.

Q. Faith really seems to be a backbone for both of you. Could you tell what that looks like in your life, softball career...

ASHLEY PRANGE: I would say to even be here has been completely my faith, completely Jesus. I went in the portal with no ties really to anything and took a leap of faith in that moment to hope for something better.

I just prayed, like I've said before, for a place that could

give me a platform for something bigger than myself, a place I could be welcomed for who I am, regardless of whatever I do on the softball field.

I just had that trust from day one. It led me here to these people. Like I said, it was more than anything I could ever have dreamed of. It's every answered prayer I could have asked for.

My faith, kind of like you said, daily has been something that keeps me grounded and humble to be where I am.

MONTANA FOUTS: I mean, I feel like faith is us. We have that. We are who we are because we have that. I've been blessed beyond measures, not just opportunities or wins or anything like that. I've been blessed with the people. I have faith because these people make me have faith. They show me that there is a bigger picture and there are things outside of life than softball.

I'll never stop having faith and trust.

To answer your question, the curtain call (smiling). I feel like I wouldn't change a thing. I would take any second to be out there. Home run or not, I love playing softball. I wouldn't change a thing. I think Murph knew that before he ran out there, that I wasn't coming out of the game. I would never take a pitch off from playing a game with these girls.

Q. When you think back to this team years from now, what adjectives would you use to describe this team?

ASHLEY PRANGE: There's a lot of things. It's obviously kind of hard to describe all aspects of this team with a couple adjectives.

The first one I would say is family. These girls, kind of like me and her both said, they are our worlds. They're the most amazing, energetic, goofy, anything you could use to describe a person, that's what these people are.

The team as a whole, this tournament and season was resilient. From day one we got punched and we never stopped fighting back. That's something that's defined our season and something in these girls. You can't teach grit. That's something this team has and these coaches have.

MONTANA FOUTS: We are a lot of things. I feel like we're goofy, very faithful. We are resilient. We all have grit. But to me this team is love. That's what I'm going to remember the most. That's what we're going to have 50 years from now.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach Murphy.

Q. Did you know that's what she was going to say when you went out there?

PATRICK MURPHY: Yeah, I figured. That's why I ran (smiling). You know the old Jerry Maguire, when the gentleman is on the ground, he's injured, he starts to hear the roar of the crowd. He's like, Wait, wait, wait. I didn't think she'd want that. That's why I ran. I ran back out because she's like, No, that's good. I figured that was going to be the answer.

Q. (Question about team bonding.)

PATRICK MURPHY: It's getting harder and harder to coach like kind of the way I want to. This team allowed me to do it again. I tell them at the beginning of the year, We're going to take the seniors on a magic carpet ride and everybody is going to do it for 'em. We're going to end up here. It's a magic carpet ride for the senior class.

But they gave me the magic carpet ride this year. Because they bought in. They paid attention to the little things, to the details. They were great teammates. They were coachable. They showed grit. I mean, you just don't get that very often nowadays. You don't get role models, you know? Role models for other kids. They are. That's what's so cool about it, you know?

I just absolutely love that they brought back that sense of, for lack of words, Bama U. It's just been our tradition to be like this and they brought it back. I'm really, really happy.

There's no such thing as a bad day at the World Series, so I'm a happy guy.

Q. You mentioned I think a couple days ago something to the effect of this being the most gratifying season you've had as a coach. What was it about this team that makes you feel that way?

PATRICK MURPHY: I just think overcoming so many things, losses. I don't know what it was. That's probably the most losses we've had in a season, ending here. But they didn't give up. They did show grit. They showed resiliency. They showed a growth mindset.

You can preach it and preach it and preach it and preach it, say it over and over and over, and a lot of times they don't do it. This team did. That's what was so gratifying.

They were coachable. Just really good attitudes. I can't even think. I was trying to think of, like, the worst thing that happened this year. There's always things that happen. I couldn't even think of one problem that we had off the field.

The biggest issue was her injury. That's going to happen unfortunately. They were just a really, really fun team to coach. It's probably why it was so gratifying.

Q. Why is Montana Fouts a player that's worthy of a curtain call? What has her career meant?

PATRICK MURPHY: She has just been, number one, like she said, she just loves the game. She does. She absolutely loves all of it.

I've read this thing about giving all the feelings, give me anger, upset, happy, sad, all the feelings. That's what she wants in softball. Give her the heartache. Give her the triumph. She's been like that from day one.

She has the most competitive spirit I've seen in a pitcher that wears the 'A.' I mean, she's come through time and time again. You guys know this who cover us, but she can talk to an 80-year-old as easily as an eight-year-old. Not many kids can do that. Not many teenagers, not many college kids, not many adults can do that. She can. She makes everybody feel special. She takes her time with everybody.

She's just an icon in the sport. I hope to God that she gets to wear the USA uniform in 2028 in L.A. because I think that's the next time it will be in the Olympics. But she will be on the cover of every newspaper, every magazine, you name it, on the way up to the Olympics in '28, guarantee you, because she's not done with the sport by any means. You're going to see her for a long, long time.

Q. Sorry to end on a down note.

PATRICK MURPHY: Don't make me cry (smiling).

Q. More game related. Got shut out for the first time this season.

PATRICK MURPHY: Okay, damn (smiling).

Q. We talked this year about the possibility of adding assistants, whatever. Would getting a hitting coach be a possibility in the future?

PATRICK MURPHY: I've already been told by my bosses that we will be doing that, which is really cool for us and the sport. So we'll get to add. We did have a volunteer coach, don't get me wrong. Now that person becomes a paid assistant coach, which is now legal on July 1st.

I'm very excited about that. I'm very excited about the kids we have coming in. We have a pitcher from Phoenix that was excellent. Jocelyn Briski, righty, righty. We have

Jenna Johnson's little sister Lauren Johnson, who was in the crowd today. Fast, righty, righty, got some pop, really good base runner.

Ju-co first team All-American in Kendal Clark, who was like a seven-sport athlete in the state of Iowa but decided on softball in junior college. We're going to add probably a couple here in a couple weeks because now it's off-season recruiting time in the portal. We'll probably have at least two more that will join us.

I'm really excited about everybody. Hopefully we'll be back. But again, thank you. Thanks to everybody here 'cause it does mean a lot to the sport when you guys are here and you cover us 'cause that means people are going to read what you write, they're going to think it's a special sport, which it is. Thank you very much.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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