

2023 Women's College World Series

Friday, June 2, 2023

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Utah Utes

Amy Hogue

Ellessa Bonstrom

Haley Denning

Postgame Press Conference



Oklahoma State 8, Utah 0

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Utah.

We'll start with an opening statement from Utah head coach Amy Hogue.

AMY HOGUE: Yeah, as long as I don't look at these two, I might be able to get it out.

The pride that these ones displayed and the way they wore those colors, super proud. Proud of what they did because it's an entire season, right, that we're talking about. They accomplished so much.

So it was fantastic year for the Utes.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the players.

Q. Haley and Ellessa, you had a long day. Oklahoma State had a long night last night. You've played softball all day long all your lives. How different is it on this stage?

HALEY DENNING: Honestly, it didn't feel like a lot of pressure. I think -- gosh dang it, I'm going to start crying. This team has been so much fun. It's been an experience to come here.

We've tried so hard our past five years to get here. It's just awesome to be here. We just wanted to try to win for our team. But obviously it sometimes doesn't happen like that, so...

I just want to give a shout-out to my team because this has been amazing with them and they're awesome people, so...

ELLESSA BONSTROM: I mean, after the first loss today, we just went back to the hotel and just honestly did a reset. We knew coming back tonight was going to be a fight. I mean, this team has a lot of fight in them. This just wasn't our day.

I'm excited for the future Utes because this is going to be a big steppingstone for them. Like last year, it didn't go our way, and so I can't wait to see what the Utes are going to do next year.

Q. Looked like Lexi was pretty dialed in. Could you both give me an idea of what you saw from her.

HALEY DENNING: She's a great pitcher. Hands down to her. We just didn't make our adjustments as a team. Just got to see ball, hit ball sometimes, and we just didn't do that today.

ELLESSA BONSTROM: Like Haley said, she's a great pitcher. We knew she threw drop balls and we just couldn't make our adjustments early enough, couldn't get the ball in the air. It was just a lack of adjustments today.

Q. Your coach just said it, you're here, today is probably not fun, but this has been a season for you guys that's had a lot of moments. Can you tell me what this season has been like for you.

HALEY DENNING: I know after last year, we met as a team after we didn't make post-season, kind of just came together, like, without coaches and just said, This is how we want to be different.

This has been a season that's been building since the day we didn't make post-season last year. Being able to do it with, like, we have grit, we have energy, we have all the things. It's just been really cool to see how we turned the program around from what we were, having the belief and faith that we can make it here, so...

ELLESSA BONSTROM: Yeah, I mean, last year wasn't how we wanted to end. So from the very beginning of this year we knew what the World Series was our goal. It



started from the very first practice to the very first meeting. I mean, we knew we wanted to end at the World Series.

To say that we actually did is honestly a dream come true. I'm so proud of this team, just the season we've had this year. I mean, we broke so many records. It was such a historic year for us. To be a part of kind of this rebuilding group of seniors, I mean, we didn't start out great, and we are leaving the program better than what we came into.

I mean, that's anything that I would hope. I mean, Coach H stuck with us for all five seasons. We rebuilt that program. I'm so happy that she got to get back to the World Series and that she has the team that she deserves.

Q. When did it become apparent during the game that it probably wasn't going to happen for you guys? What were some of the emotions you were feeling at that point?

HALEY DENNING: I don't think there was ever a point where we thought we couldn't do it. We're a team that likes to come back when we have our backs against the wall.

I don't think there was ever a point really where it felt like it was the end for us. The last inning we thought we were going to score, so...

ELLESA BONSTROM: Yeah, I mean, there's not a doubt with this team. Doesn't matter how many runs we're down. We're going to find a way.

I mean, if you saw the dugout the last inning, we're all up, there's no tears shed until the very last out. I think that just goes to show, I mean, we believe in ourselves and we have all the confidence in the world regardless of outs, strikes. It doesn't matter. This team can get it done whether or not it shows up. It just wasn't our night.

THE MODERATOR: We'll continue with questions for Coach Hogue.

Q. What Ellessa said right there, the fact that even in the seventh inning that belief was there. What does that say about your team?

AMY HOGUE: They spend so much time together that the belief just grows and grows. The desire for each other to succeed, the support they have, it's never ending. It doesn't matter who's up, they believe they're going to get a hit.

If the hitter actually doubts, she's outnumbered. We always talk about there's too many people in that dugout

that believe it, so you're not even allowed not to believe it.

I think that's what she's talking about. It's Capo's turn. You probably don't even know Capo, but we know Capo. The kid gets hits all the time for us. That's what they're talking about. They look at each other and they believe big. That comes from all the days together and all the things they've seen each other do.

Q. You got the short straw on the switched around schedule. They made a lot of policy changes with the bracket, trying to avoid multiple games in a day. At some point is there just nothing you can do with the rain?

AMY HOGUE: Yeah, I mean, I would have loved to spend a bunch of time getting angry about it because that's what I wanted to do. But that wasn't going to do anybody any good.

If there's things that need to change, then those are things we need to talk about, but not today. Today, this is what we've been told that we've got to do, kind of like the day we got two feet of snow on our field and we wanted to play, so we got shovels out and we got it done.

Then later you start to try to figure out how we can schedule things different to make it better. There was nobody complaining about it. Not me and not one of these 23 gals I brought with me.

You won't hear us complaining or making an excuse. It doesn't feel like it was only one day today. It feels like two. But, yeah, they did hard things today. They didn't come up on the winning end, but I couldn't have been more proud.

Q. Is there any way that Mariah could have pitched in the night game or the trainers said, don't risk it?

AMY HOGUE: I didn't talk to the trainers. I wouldn't have. She would have wanted the ball. The scout on them said drop balls would be the best way to get 'em out. It wasn't going down good. Didn't work out.

But I think Syd would have got the call anyway. She looked great, started really great. Left the ball up. They got on a roll, and you saw the rest of it.

No, Mariah could have gone. I'm sure if we would have caught up, we would have got her ready. But it was a day for those two seniors to go out there and do what they could, and they gave everything they had.

Q. There was a point in the game where you started to

pinch-hit a lot of your main lineup, put some graduate students in there. At that point in the game, what was your thinking in terms of why you wanted to change things up? Seemed like maybe you wanted to give as many people a chance to play.

AMY HOGUE: Yeah, it was a little bit that. But also I needed them to get uncomfortable. I was hoping maybe they didn't know anything about those kids I had in the dugout. You saw how they did; they did great. Came off the bench ready and excited, gave us a little spark.

So it was twofold. I believed in them big. It was a little bit uncomfortable maybe for them because they hadn't scouted our bench very well.

Yeah, some of 'em hadn't played in a while, and I wanted to give them a chance to get a turn in the World Series. I guess that was threefold. I think I said three things, so...

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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