

2023 Women's College World Series

Sunday, June 4, 2023

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Oklahoma State Cowgirls

Kenny Gajewski

Kiley Naomi

Morgyn Wynne

Lexi Kilfoyl

Postgame Press Conference



Tennessee - 3, Oklahoma State - 1

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions for the Coach.

KENNY GAJEWSKI: First off, congratulations to Tennessee. They have a really good ball club and was great competing against them the right way.

Karen, what she's done with her staff and that team, very impressed with what they've done. They've had a great year up to this point and wish them all the very best. I want to say thank you to Kelly Gatwood. I know this job is not easy, and what you guys have done here with the NCAA to put this tournament on and to get this field set, being on the All-American Committee now, I don't want to be at any of these things anymore, it's hard work.

Kristi Bredbenner, thank you for your friendship. The way you took care of us while we're here, I love competing against you. More importantly, your friendship means a lot.

I too will thank the highway patrol officer Vincent and his crew. For those of you that don't know, we did start that. I want to take credit on that. I know we got in trouble the first year, but I don't care because I think, like Murph said, this is an amazing event, and anything that we can do to make this event better, it's what we've got to do.

It does make you feel like royalty. I feel like that anyways, just being in my job. In my position, coaching these type of kids, I feel like that every single day. Driving down the wrong side of the highway is a pretty cool experience, and those guys, they're incredible.

I'm so proud of this team, what they've done, what they continue to do.

I need to thank Liz. Thank you. I saw you over there, and you're a major part of this. So thank you.

I'm just so proud of what these kids have continued to do here at OSU. They've raised the bar again. We fell short, and that part hurts. That part is the toughest part, but like I told them, if you just keep kicking shins, they'll eventually break.

That's what we're going to do. We're just going to keep kicking the shins of our opponents, and we'll eventually break this door down, and we'll look back to teams like this. I call them Team Eight. We've had many more teams here at OSU, but this is my eighth team. I couldn't be more proud of these kids and what they've done. I'm honored to coach them. I'm honored to have this job, and I'm just thankful.

We'll take some time and regroup to figure out how we can improve, and we'll be back. We'll be right back here next year and make another run.

Q. Kiley, you've been through this four times now. I'm sure it doesn't get any easier. As you're here at the end, what have the emotions of this last one been like for you.

KILEY NAOMI: I'm just really grateful to be a part of such an amazing program. To be able to get here for the fourth time is just the best experience ever.

But I'm also really, really sad because I never get to be with these girls ever again. I'm just feeling a lot right now.

Q. Morgyn, can you talk about your home run? But also, just more generally, the offense seemed to have moments of surging but you guys could never kind of get it all together tonight, it didn't seem like.

MORGYN WYNN: We knew that our game plan against Ashley Rogers was not to chase. I think that's kind of what we did a little bit tonight was chasing that rise ball from the



box. I guess it looked good tonight.

So that's kind of where we fell short was chasing after those pitches that were intended for us to chase them. I kind of fell victim to that my first two at-bats, and then I turned and looked to my hitting coach right before that last at-bat and said what did I do? She said, you just got long.

I knew the only thing I wanted to do was get short in my last at-bat. The first two strikes were too elevated for me. Those were the pitches I was chasing the first two at-bats. And the third one I hit out, that's the one I want. Stayed short to it and long through it.

Q. Lexi, you came in 3 2/3. You didn't allow a hit but a couple of walks. Can you talk about stepping in that moment for Kelly tonight?

LEXI KILFOYL: I feel like my job in that moment is just to get out of the inning and try and go back with and stop runs from happening. In that moment, I was just trusting my defense because they're everywhere. They're always going to be everywhere.

Just going in there, I knew that they were going to have my back, and they did.

Q. Lexi, I believe you have another year of eligibility. Do you know if you're going to be using that?

LEXI KILFOYL: Yes, I will be. I'll be coming back for sure.

Q. And for the other two, can you just kind of summarize what your time in Stillwater has meant to you? We'll start with you, Kiley.

KILEY NAOMI: It became my home. The first second I stepped into Stillwater, everybody was open arms. I was 9 1/2 hours away, 18-year-old. I just felt really comfortable, especially with Coach G, having a coach like him. Just being able to lean on anybody within our faculty. They were just being open arms.

My time has been great there. I made so many memories, and I'll always have that to hold on to.

Q. Morgyn?

MORGYN WYNNE: (Crying). I'm sorry. Stillwater has been life changing. I came in here a completely different person. I'm leaving the person I wanted to become. I told Coach G the second I got here, I was Morgyn the softball player when I got here. That's all I was when I was at my previous institution.

I came here, and I turned into a woman who's ready for her career. They just, they mean the world to me. It's really hard for me to explain. I'm very grateful.

Q. Lexi, based on what you said about next year, can you kind of give us a little bit of a glimpse, kind of your thoughts about what this program -- obviously you're losing some really important pieces, but some other important pieces still going to be around next year with you.

LEXI KILFOYL: Definitely. I think Coach G said we had 12 newcomers next year. We're a younger team. We have so much potential. These seniors have just been everything we've could ask for. They've taught everyone so much, and they've led like no other. They've left this place better than they found it.

So I think we have so much room for growth and potential with our team next year. We'll be in forever debt to these seniors because they've just made this place so amazing.

Q. Morgyn and Kiley, I know it's obviously hard right now, but if you can take a step back and think about this season, like Kenny was talking about, sort of what it could mean for the future. What's your sense or your hope of what this year means for the future?

KILEY NAOMI: I would just say being able to come here for those younger girls, giving them this type of experience so young. Being able to bring that to the next girls coming in. Starting off in the fall with the program is going to be a big deal again, probably for the next team. Probably for however long they end up doing that, but I think it's going to be a big factor into building team chemistry.

That's kind of why we're here today from the fall, just being able to work together through the hardest of times. Yeah, I think they'll be okay.

MORGYN WYNNE: I think that with having 14 newcomers and most of them being young, that really allows for this team to grow together with all of them having many years of eligibility and growing from a young team to a veteran team with most of those girls learning how to play with each other and probably all playing with each other with that defense and lineup moving forward.

Just having multiple years of that and that chemistry and that camaraderie, I think is going to set us up for a great future and multiple returns back to this tournament.

Q. Lexi and Kiley, I know down the latter part of the stretch, the regular season, getting back here was a little bit in doubt for you guys. To reach this level and

gotten a win and done something with this tournament run. What does that say about this program?

KILEY NAOMI: I don't think we ever doubted it. Maybe some other people outside of the program, but within the program, we've never doubted the work that we put in. I think we deserve to get here.

Yeah, we just, we work through everything. I don't think we ever doubted each other.

LEXI KILFOYL: Just what Kiley said, it was mainly people on the outside who doubted us, and I think we stayed calm and the coaches helped us stay calm within each other. We needed to look at the past and see what we've done and kind of take that and look at all the good stuff and use that to our advantage.

Yeah, I think it was definitely the outsiders that doubted us more than ourselves.

Q. About a week ago, you talked about how tough this season was for you. As you think more long view about this season, what comes to mind to you? You had a talented team who wanted to win the last game, but how do you look at the entirety of this season?

KENNY GAJEWSKI: Right now it's hard. Obviously, but I think we'll look back on this and look back as a team with great success. They had great success. We're better, and we didn't get quite as far as last year, one day short, but we're better for it.

I'm better. I'm a better head coach here today than I was here last year at this time. My staff, just I love what we're doing and how they're working. It's been the hardest year, but I think honestly this may be the most rewarding year at this point, you know what I mean?

I hate taking that away from 2019 because that was the year that started taking us up, but we're just young and dumb, you know what I mean? We didn't think we could get beat, and this year we kind of had all that new stuff that kind of crept in and had to deal with. It's a privilege. That's the way I look at this.

We've been blessed with so much, and I just want our kids to appreciate that, and I want them to respect that. Like I told them in the locker room there, I just want them to now walk out of this room when you're ready with a smile on your faces and be proud. We got down to the final five, final four or six, whatever it is, out of 300-plus teams.

This game is getting hard. It's getting harder and harder every year to win. It's really hard to win here if you don't

just click on all cylinders. It's rough. We just didn't play clean enough in a couple of these games, and you get exposed. That's just the way it is. But I'm really proud.

I don't know, I just feel -- I'm just thankful, I guess.

Q. Kiley came in, big-time recruit, started at shortstop from day one. She had some downs, she had her ups. Just what has she meant to the program?

KENNY GAJEWSKI: She's meant a lot. I've been able to write her name in at shortstop for four or five years now, and it's going to be weird to not be able to do that. It's going to be weird to not hit her ground balls every day. It's like playing a video game, just trying to move her left, move her right, beat her, try to get her into some crazy spots.

It's beauty. When you coach players like this, it's just like every day is a blast. You can't wait to get out there.

But I'm just proud of her. I turned her world upside down this last year over the summertime by the changes that we made, asking these kids to grow, asking them in a fifth year that these fifth years have been really hard. I've said that it's been difficult. A blessing but difficult. She just came to work. She just comes to work every day.

The way I can coach her and the way that she trains, we'll be talking about Kiley forever. I can remember the day that she said yes. It was an awesome day.

I don't think I ever thought we'd be going to four World Series in a row because you're thinking that in your head. Now that I've been able to coach her for five years, I'm not shocked. She's an amazing kid. Hard worker, talented. She's going to be very successful in life.

Q. What is it like for you to see the emotion out of your girls and to hear how much they're bonded with each other and with you and with the program you've built?

KENNY GAJEWSKI: That's what I signed up for when I decided I wanted to be a coach. You don't sign up for press conferences and all the nice stuff and tough stuff that comes your way. You sign up because you just, you love a game. You love being around young people. It keeps you young. And it's just like the satisfaction of watching them grow.

So I get to experience that every day. You guys just to hear about it at times, but I get to live this. I get to wake up each day and still have goose bumps when I walk into our front door. That's how I feel, and that's when we recruit kids, I tell them, hey, if the hair on your arms doesn't stand

up when you walk in or your heart doesn't skip a beat, then we're in the wrong place, and that's okay.

But the kids that we have here, that's how they felt, and so it makes it easy to step in and turn into the storm and go. That's why we should be coaching.

I'm just glad these guys got to experience this again. One day when we hoist the trophy, we'll be able to look back at all of them, and they'll be a major part of that. I still have all these girls from our first team that text me nonstop. We have a GroupMe that probably after they're done it gets a little nastier.

I just keep telling them, you guys started this, and look what you've done. You should be proud. It's just cool to hear that. It's cool to hear them regurgitate things that you say. That's one of those things I kind of take a lot of pride in when they are saying things that we talk about, it makes me feel good they're paying attention and they care. That's what it's all about.

Q. Kenny, can you talk about what Team Eight means to the fabric of this program moving forward, and what it was like to kind of share that embrace with all of the girls individually after the game?

KENNY GAJEWSKI: It's just another amazing group. I just look up and down. I just see kids like Rachel Becker who's been here for one year. I think about Chy factor, who's been here for five years. I think about Taylor Tuck, who it's been a bumpy road, you know what I mean? We just continue to bring -- try to recruit above her. She just continues to work and get better.

Like I said this in the past, most kids would have transferred a long time ago. She put her head down and works. That's a credit to her parents. I have a great group of parents on this team that are about the right things. When we recruit, it's a big deal.

I'm just -- I'm so thankful that we got to coach these guys just one more day. When you get here, it's just hang on, hold on, survive. These guys never batted an eye. They didn't bat an eye after the first game when we played so poorly. They were ready to play that next day and came out and answered.

That's just kind of what this program has to be about. I've said that from the first day. We've got to be tough. We're not quite tough enough yet. That's on me. I've got to get better at that. I'm getting better at creating that toughness because, when you're here, it's the tough of the tough. It's like an MMA fight.

We'll do a better job at that and keep growing this, but we'll start looking forward to team nine here in a couple of days.

Q. Kenny, one question about the game: The play with Micaela at home plate, looked like you maybe changed your mind late as she was coming around. Also, were you a little bit surprised you didn't get the obstruction call on the review?

KENNY GAJEWSKI: The way we teach our base running at third is you have to run with your head up. I caught her eyes coming around short. I was like, okay, I got her eyes. She's not the fastest runner on our team, but it looked like we may have a chance.

So I kept sending her with the intention of I could shut her down if I had to, and I got my hands up. She had her head down. She kind of hesitated, I think. That's what I felt. So she saw me, but it is what it is. We didn't get it done.

I felt like it was obstruction from where I was. I was kind of halfway down. We have a great system the way this is being done. If that's the way they saw it, it's not, then I'm good. There's no reason to complain and cry about stuff like that.

Credit them; they had a nice play, and they made it happen.

Q. And you alluded to team nine a moment ago. I know you're probably not thinking about it too much yet, but you've got some important time on the field for some players here this week. What is that going to mean for those kids going forward?

KENNY GAJEWSKI: It's going to be big. We've got a lot of young kids here. I didn't get enough of them in, enough time. It's just kind of the way it works.

Obviously I think about Edwards and Wark and Aycock, the three that really stand out to me. Obviously Carwile back, Claire Timm and Katie Lott are two that got a lot of at-bats. We've already committed some kids out of the portal. We've got a really good class coming in. I'll stay active in the portal. I'll stay active in NIL.

If you're out there, don't hesitate because I'm coming at you. This is tough. This is getting tough. We're loaded and I'm ready to go. I'm just excited for the opportunities that are administration just continued to give us to take care of our staff at the positions. We're going to add that fourth coach. We're going to add a full-time video coordinator as well. It's going to be a full-time gig. We added the player development last year.

I'm lucky to have what I have and the resources, and I know that. I'm excited to just -- I'm excited to get back to the hotel and wind this thing down. But I'll be excited in a couple days once we go through the meetings and all of that and get going on that. I'm also looking forward to a couple days off before we hit the road and recruit. It's never ending.

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