

2023 Women's College World Series

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Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Florida State Seminoles
Coach Lonni Alameda
Kathryn Sandercock
Jahni Kerr
Michaela Edenfield
Mack Leonard

Press Conference



Really excited to face them, and I think it's really cool to have some experience playing them before.

They know me a little bit. I know them a little bit. Yeah, it should be just really fun softball this week.

Q. Coach, obviously the off day is something new within the schedule, fairly new within the schedule. Step us through a little bit about what your day looks like today, as far as with the squad. You guys are working out. Are you working out within the complex? Just kind of step us through the day a little bit.

LONNI ALAMEDA: Yeah, we've been fortunate to benefit from how the tournament's been set up, something we've been fighting for. Obviously winning gives you the off days, so it's been really nice to have the day to get up in the morning, get a little regen. We take a little walk as a team. Everyone's in a little different spot in what they need for their bodies.

Some family time. Then we have some team time, dinner, then some scouting, and we prep for the next day.

It's a very good schedule, put ourselves in a good spot, where a couple of years ago, it's midnight and you get home and you have a game the next day and you're figuring out how to scout, how to get ready. It was also hot.

The weather's been incredible too. So we've been in a really good position on the other side of it.

It's something that practice-wise, we put our time in in the fall, we put our time in in the season. So to us it's more about mentally being prepared than it is in the physical part. So we take the off days as a complete off day.

Q. Lonni, if you've been able to watch, what kind of things did you see Stanford do that they were able to keep their games against Oklahoma so close? Are there any parts of that that you guys could maybe mimic?

LONNI ALAMEDA: Well, NiJa's 75-mile-an-hour rise ball.

THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get started.

Q. Wanted to ask you a little bit about Jayda Coleman. They've switched their lineup around a lot, but she's consistently been that leadoff spot for them. What's the biggest challenge when you face her in specific? I know they've got a lot of good hitters, but her in specific.

LONNI ALAMEDA: Go right into it, first question, that's good, yes. Scouting report. Jayda's an athlete. I remember her playing shortstop in the recruiting days. She is extremely passionate, and you can see that in her at-bats.

Again, this will go back to our studying tonight, but facing her, mixing spots, and all that kind of thing can be big. Her speed plays for her, athleticism plays for her, let alone her skill sets. She stays in the zone for a good amount of time with her barrel. Just a really good hitter, and we're excited to compete against her and the rest of the lineup.

Q. Kathryn, you've faced OU a couple times in your career. What have you taken away from those experiences, and what makes this current roster just so tough to face?

KATHRYN SANDERCOCK: Yeah, every time I've faced them, they've had an extremely difficult roster, definitely keeps you on your toes.

But I think it's just the coolest challenge as a pitcher to put yourself up against the best and see what you've got.



We'll try to mimic as best we can.

(Laughter.)

They do an incredible job. It's super cool I was able to Coach Tori and Jess Allister. To watch what they've done for that program is super special. I think there's some heart and passion in the circle and the team getting to play them.

Did see them sell out for Jordy. They got a game plan, and they really stuck to it. That was awesome to see. I know in my time coaching at Stanford, we may not get the top athletes, but they were all in. The athletes were all in. They are going to make adjustments and get after it.

We try to keep that with us too. We get some special athletes here, but this is an all-in team too. So when we go to a game plan and get after it, they are selling out left and right. We're going to take some lessons they learned and implement it into our style too.

Q. For any of the players, a lot of people have talked about the margin of error against Oklahoma is so small. If you think back to when you played them earlier in the season, they jumped ahead pretty quickly early in the fourth inning. How do you avoid those moments and avoid them capitalizing really quickly and not being able to catch up?

MICHAELA EDENFIELD: Definitely there's a game plan going into any game. It's just another team. They put on their pants the same way as we do, and I think, just sticking to us and understanding effectively what our pitching staff is doing, I mean, just being able to minimize the damage that they do for sure.

They have a great lineup, and I think it goes into our field of knowing what we're trying to accomplish on the field in between me and the pitchers and knowing that we want to limit back to backs and the amount of people that we allow on the base. So if they do hit a home run, it's bound to happen, but we want to minimize how many runs they get in that.

I think it's been pretty cool. I enjoy playing against OU. They're a very passionate squad, and you want to play the best.

JAHNI KERR: I would just say as a team, just staying in our circle, staying within ourselves. There's a lot of outside noise right now. Obviously we're in the World Series, one of the final two teams. So I think just staying in ourselves and carrying the left and the right. I don't know, just staying external and within your left and your right. Just

competing honestly.

MACK LEONARD: I agree with that. Coach had mentioned earlier today pressure's a privilege. So obviously they're a very great team, and I think that we are as well. We're more than capable of competing with them.

As long as we stay with our left and our right and staying present externally, like J.J. said. We can remember that the moments we're in are very much a privilege and we're grateful to be here. As long as we can remember that and stay within that and stay in our circle and play Seminoles softball, I think we're going to be in a really good spot.

KATHRYN SANDERCOCK: Same, I agree. Margin of error super small when you're playing Oklahoma. I would say the same for any team that made it to the World Series. It's the best playing the best here. I think margin of error is really small when you're playing us. Give us an inch, we'll take a mile. That's our mindset. I think it's the same for all the teams that are here.

Q. Michaela, you have as good a view as anyone, maybe better, when it comes to Kat being on the mound. What's it like when she's out there? What's that relationship like? Just in general, what does she bring to the team, maybe the confidence when she's on the mound?

MICHAELA EDENFIELD: Kat brings a lot of things to the table. She's done a great job being head of the pitching staff, taking Kenny under her wing, just teaching everyone that it takes a team. We've been doing this pitching with the roster -- my gosh, it will come to me. Pitching by committee, there we go.

(Laughter.)

It's interesting sometimes when we're in a really good zone, it's like there is no ball in between us. It's complete. Eye and body language, and it's really, really cool to be in that moment with her. I'm just really grateful that she's opened up to me and allowed me to be a part of that experience.

Q. Lonni, just talk about pitching by committee. You talk about last night, the strategy of using Kat a little bit less. You're using a lot more arms this year. Can you talk to me more broadly about the strategy of that and whether there's any kind of evolution to the thinking there.

LONNI ALAMEDA: I think that we've seen the trends in softball right now of not riding the one-arm pitcher the whole season, and kudos to our game for getting better

offensively and strategically. I give a lot of credit to Hack Attack for having these machines that can replicate.

I think analytics have gone into it. Everyone knows numbers now, and they know what they're trying to hit. And then TV. It's been incredible we're on TV. The more you get the opportunity to see pitchers and their tendencies, the more adjustments you can make with the great hitting coaches we have in our game.

We on the pitching side and the defensive side have to figure out ways to minimize the momentum of teams, and you have to really figure out the different looks that you can do that and try to find different ways to beat certain hitters.

Jayda is a great hitter. So is Haley Lee. So it -- so you have to figure out how do we get these hitters out? Do we have that arsenal in our bullpen to be able to do that? I think strategy becomes a play. You've seen it more and more in our game and not overexposing people like Kat in certain situations so we can bring in a rise ball, drop ball, and change-up, which she has the ability to beat people, but maybe I can get less seeing that one hitter at that time.

Just really going out on a limb of -- again, Michaela talked about being the leader of the pitching staff. Kat wanted that, wanted to be leader of the pitching staff, but we wanted to talk about how to be a staff. When Michaela says pitching by committee, it's been more of a planned-out situation to get more comfortable with what committee actually means and how to utilize it.

Q. Mack, what was it like when you first entered the pitching group and first started working with Kat? How have you seen her take ownership of everything that Coach Alameda is talking about?

MACK LEONARD: At first it was a lot, just knowing the smarts behind pitching, the smarts behind playing to their best pitch, my best pitch. The defense will sell out to what I have, and what I have is a drop ball and change-up.

I think that having Kat as a leader, last year stepping in, I didn't really know who she was, but immediately she took my hand and guided me, and I couldn't be more grateful for that. This year I've seen her step up even more than last year. We've got a really big staff, and she's managed to lead each and every one of us in different ways. It's a testament to her leadership for sure, and just the ability to know each one of us and lead us in this way, and Coach has also done a great job with it.

I certainly wouldn't be where I am at with the confidence level I have or the capabilities I have without either of these two behind me.

Q. For Lonni, how do you go about preparing for a defense that doesn't make very many mistakes? I know you guys have played a lot of good teams in the past, but as far as psychologically, how do you go about kind of preparing your team for that situation?

LONNI ALAMEDA: A lot of it just comes down to the pitching. I think your defense is going to be as good as your pitching is consistently. They have some great pitchers in the circle, and they know what to play for.

Again, pretty athletic, so they can cover some ground. We've got to do what we do. We like to run the bases, and we need to get on the bases, and we want to push some situations. So if we can push the defense, that can put us in a really good situation to be able to extend some innings and get after some things.

It's one thing to tip your hat to what they have, it's another to really get after what we do. And I think that's what we're going to be about.

Q. For any of the players, the golden socks you all have for mental toughness, can you describe how that got started, what that focus has meant to the team this year, and who's been getting the golden socks lately?

MICHAELA EDENFIELD: Ellie Cooper, our mental performance coach, decided randomly. I think she found those socks at some shop, and just talking about our mantra, like let's ride and being rugged, I think that's kind of where it all started. And just being able to give some highlight on the player that really was going, staying through it, staying to her plan regardless of what the outcome was.

And I think that's the bigger part is that you don't have to be performing 10 out of 10 to get those socks. It's all about being there for your team and definitely being a part of the circle and sticking to your left and your right.

I think it's been super cool just because we're acknowledging the little things, and at this point of the year, that's where the little things are the big things and into this big picture. So it's really cool.

Q. Who got the socks last night?

MICHAELA EDENFIELD: We have no idea. I don't even know if we have the socks here, but we're still acknowledging it.

KATHRYN SANDERCOCK: We've been so tough lately that the team is getting the socks. Everyone is. We need

22 pairs now.

Q. Coach, you talked about your base running. So much offensively, you're talking about power exerting pressure on opposing pitching staffs. What is your aggression and how excellent you guys are at running the bases, how does that exert pressure on opposing pitching staffs?

LONNI ALAMEDA: Yeah, I think one is when you look at teams that can run, you put away certain pitches. You're looking at the opportunity for maybe a ball in the air versus a ball on the ground or a strikeout pitch. I wouldn't say just that's our sole thing, it's just something we really make sure we take pride in every day at practice.

This isn't like, hey, this week let's work on base running. It is an every week thing for us because, again, you can have power. Last night we had power. So as long as we're training all facets in our offensive strategies, then we have things to go to.

I think, when you force the defense to shut us down, when we force defense every day, it makes us better on the defensive side. You realize how the margin of error, a ball here versus a ball here can be safe or out. We really take pride in that piece of pushing that.

Q. Coach, just what is it like being around this team on a daily basis? How much time is spent off the field to build the culture that you've built in this program?

LONNI ALAMEDA: It's been incredible this year. Probably one of my, I guess as a staff and as a coach, a challenge this year. I feel like we had a little bit of still the COVID overhang. I feel like the Gen Z mindset and then the expectation.

We had a lot of feelings from last year, the end of last year. So really trying to manage different people from where they're at. I think some people were upset about the season. Some were still trying to figure themselves out. Some were still trying to gain confidence. And we were still trying to figure out how to be a team.

We kept pushing the buttons and pushing the buttons. Fortunately, every single player stayed in it from where they were and keep rising up. It's just so cool to see them right now earn this moment.

You talk as a coach all along, I kind of want you to experience the World Series. They're going to have that for a lifetime. They'll have these moments for a lifetime. Like I said last night, I chose this career, and I have a passion for it so then they can have these moments of

elation that they each earned. Jahni is earning it, Kat's earning it, Michaela's earning it, and they're going to have that forever.

I'm so proud of us as a staff to let them keep their arms around the circle and let them have their moments.

Q. Lonni, I know your last three trips now to OKC, you made the Championship Series. I'm sure it's not one thing you point out. What do you look at as the reasons why, when you have made it to OKC lately, it's been long stays?

LONNI ALAMEDA: I always fall back on how we do things. We have a saying, how you do things is how you do everything. What we're doing now is no different than what we did in February or March.

We really take pride as a program for building this time of year. As a team, you're going to go up and down in successes throughout the season, but our mindset is always like I want Kat to be the strongest at the end of the season. I want Jahni to learn these moments so at the end of the season she's super comfortable in them. Just all facets of it.

I think we have this vision and it's mapped out and we check the boxes as we go along. I feel like, when you're building that process piece, then they can always rely on this is how we do things, and it's not something new at this point in the year.

I truly believe that's a big part of it is just our culture and how we live daily. Yes, there is an expectation of how to play the game of softball, but it's off the field too and how you deal with each other on and off the field. I see that show up for them a ton, and they can rely on each other.

Q. Last night on social media, Lonni in the locker room with the players. What does she mean to you and all the coaching staff?

MACK LEONARD: To me Coach gave me a start. She gave me a new chapter in life that I really didn't think I'd get. I say to myself a lot I'm living a dream that I didn't know I had, and it's a lot because of Coach and these girls.

To just constantly remind myself that I'm so, so grateful. This is beyond what I believed I was capable of as a player or even as just like from where I grew up or where I was at. This wasn't something that where I came from in Normal, Illinois, you don't go to the World Series. You just go and play softball and then you go get a career after college. This is next level, and this is just a dream. So I'm just grateful.

THE MODERATOR: That will wrap things up for Florida State. Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

JAHNI KERR: I was just going to say like I guess from my freshman year till now, I've kind of gone through a lot of things. My freshman year was a little tough for me, I guess you could say. So just having Coach allowing me and Haley, who at the time had torn ACLs in 2021, when we did come to the World Series, we got to experience it in a totally different way than just playing the game.

So I feel like just from the scouting aspect of it, we got to learn a lot so that, when we were on the field, I guess you could say this year, at the World Series, actually getting to play it and live the game life of it, we know where to be. We know how to help our pitchers. We know how to back them up for their best stuff.

I just feel like the family part of it is so huge that just like the way that she teaches things is so different than anything that I've experienced from coaches, which I very much appreciate.

MICHAELA EDENFIELD: Coach and the staff gave the girl in the backyard of Tallahassee a shot. I talk about it all the time. I chose to come to Florida State to grow not only as a player but as a person. Just thinking of how nurturing of an environment it is. Like we say it takes a village, we do have a village behind us, and it's amazing that I've been able to experience my time here at Florida State.

Coach has just allowed me to grow and be myself both on and off the field. I get a lot of comments about my makeup, about I don't know why they let her do that. It's a little much for me. To be able to do something and allow a coaching staff and a community be behind it has been really, really amazing, and just allowing me to grow into the person I am today.

KATHRYN SANDERCOCK: I love Coach. Just from where I was at my freshman year and who I was, I've just completely changed not only as an athlete. I mean, she has transformed me into the pitcher that I am today.

I mean, I've always loved softball. I've dreamed of playing on this stage as a little kid. I would not be here at all without Coach A and just what she's allowed me to do, but just as a person too. A lot of tough conversations, growing moments.

It hasn't been perfect, but it's been one of the most important and amazing relationships of my life, and I'm so unbelievably grateful for Coach A and the whole coaching staff, support staff, just everybody. I just wouldn't be who I am if I hadn't chose Florida State. I'm just so unbelievably grateful.

