

2023 Women's College World Series

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Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Oklahoma Sooners

Patty Gasso

Jordy Bahl

Grace Lyons

Jayda Coleman

Tiare Jennings

Postgame Press Conference



softball wanting to leave a more different impact than what players usually want to leave on their programs. She's done just that.

When she hit that home run in the fifth, just seeing her round the base, seeing the look on her face, it was just emotional. Like I said, that was still middle of the game. You're trying not to be emotional at that point, but it was just hard.

It's just been a complete honor to be on the field with her.

Q. Grace, describe that moment in the fifth inning.

GRACE LYONS: Yeah, it's surreal. Today I definitely was thinking of the possibility that it was my last game, playing in this uniform. Just the emotions that come with that.

It's so cool to know that these players saw that my legacy, my intention and my legacy was going to be different. That means so much to me, more than any softball hit, home run, play, like that speaks volumes.

Man, the Lord is good. I mean, the home run was awesome, but just the feelings of coming home to my team and just the joy that a home run can't bring. It's all from the Lord. I think it was just a genuine joy as I rounded just knowing that it was a total team effort, and that team is something special.

Q. Jayda, the catch in the third inning. What is going through your head?

JAYDA COLEMAN: Yeah, immediately I was like, Go get it. Immediately run to the fence.

But, yeah, it's really exciting to make those plays. I practice them all the time. But like I say every single time, the best thing out of those plays is watching your teammates react and watching them just be so happy for you.

They know how hard we work. I know how hard they work. So when things like those plays come into play on this big stage, I mean, it's so joyful to watch.

Oklahoma 3, Florida State 1

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Oklahoma. We'll start with questions for the players.

Q. I wanted to ask you about the Grace Lyons moment. Nearly missed one, just a couple innings earlier, then the big home run in the fifth. What are y'all's reactions to that?

TIARE JENNINGS: I was screaming my head off for her just to be present in that moment, taking it all in, knowing that this could be my last game with Grace Lyons.

Just being on the field, I smiled and looked at her because there's nobody better than Grace Lyons. Just her personality, who she is, how she carries herself. She's taught me everything in life.

But she's been my go-to and my rock here. To see her do that, it was the best thing ever.

JAYDA COLEMAN: No, it was amazing watching that. Grace Lyons is one of the best people I've ever met in my life. She helped me in my faith and on the field she's helped me in every aspect of life. Man, when she hit that home run, I think my eyes started seeing black dots almost. I almost passed out.

Just so happy for her. Just really owned that moment. Really helped us in that time.

JORDY BAHL: Yeah, I think Grace Lyons came to college



Q. Tiare and Jordy, it's been a long season, you have had so much success, how does it feel to end it like this? Is it hard to put into words?

TIARE JENNINGS: Yeah, just super exciting. The grind of the season, the competition we faced, just shows that we were tested in the best way.

Everything happens for a reason. We were led to be on this journey together, and this team, to keep our eyes up. But just to see the joy of the transfers and the freshmen, for them, that's what I love. I experienced this, and this year has been the most fun with that. Just seeing them and being genuinely truly happy for each other, you can't ask for anything better.

To see them experience this with us, but our hard work has paid off. It's just been such a fun season.

JORDY BAHL: Yeah, I would say all those same things. What I would add is that I'm really just proud of this team for how we have stuck together this year. I think not a lot of other people would fully understand what it's like to go through just the day to day from off-season during the summer to August, everything up until now. Everyone just sees what's put on the field on game day.

There's a lot. I'm just proud of how we've stuck together through pressure, adversity, and just have ultimately been one strong, cohesive unit that has at the end of the day taken that pressure and giving the glory to the Lord and been able to still play free and play together and find joy in things outside of the playing field.

Q. Jordy, what was your mindset as you're coming in to pitch in the fifth? Could you reflect on your World Series as a whole?

JORDY BAHL: I would say the mindset this week is just consistent with what the mindset has been. I mean, it just ended up that no runs were given up. I mean, softball is a game where you can do everything right and it still doesn't go your way, so...

But the mindset was consistent. It's just when you go in there, be simple, don't give the other team anything, and just let your defense work.

Q. Jayda, not quite as big picture, but I imagine we're going to see your catch all over TV, Twitter, everything. I'm curious to know what getting there takes, the first steps to track a ball like that?

JAYDA COLEMAN: Yeah, I don't think a lot of people

know, but I'm really relying on my left fielder, Rylie Boone, whoever is in right, to really communicate with me where the wall is. They're telling me, You got room, three, two, one, jump! Right now jump and go get the ball (smiling).

Especially Boone, because Boone has been there for so long with me. I just completely trust that she's not going to let me run into the wall head first.

Yeah, just taking a straight angle straight to the fence. You know it's up. You're going straight there to find it first. Then just trusting your teammates to tell you that the fence is right there. Everything else is the Lord watching over me 'cause I didn't even know it was going to be in my glove until I looked. Oh, it's in there. But yeah...

Q. A lot of people are going to see the headlines three straight national championships, 53 straight wins, think this was easy. In what ways was it hard?

GRACE LYONS: Yeah, I think something that way talked about early on in the fall is the expectations from the outside, of what people expect of us, what fans, even like opposition, what they make us see or think on social media.

The message off the bat was, Eyes are on our circle. We're going to keep focusing on what we do every single day. Doesn't matter what the outside has to say. We're going to do the little things. We're going to keep grinding, as these players are saying. It's a grind.

We work so hard to create a cohesive circle, to where the outside wasn't that big of an impact on us and our mindset. I think from day one, we had to do that. We had to continue that until now.

Even hearing some things now of people trying to get in our circle, the focus is eyes on each other and eyes up to keep it as simple as possible. I think that allowed us to have so much fun just celebrating each other's wins, little things, because just this team is so unique but so awesome and so great to be a part of.

TIARE JENNINGS: Yeah, she said it best.

JAYDA COLEMAN: I mean, the hardest thing is just the chaos I guess. There's always something to do next. We just got done celebrating. All right, come here and talk. There's always something that we got to go to next.

Like she said, we hold onto 20 versus everybody. These 19 girls that are by my side, they're the only ones out of everyone that know what I go through, my struggles that I've been through. Just holding onto that, really just



leaning on them because it does get hard, it does get challenging.

My heart is so full knowing that the 19 girls around me know my struggles and what I'm challenged with. All they do is lift me up from that.

JORDY BAHL: Yeah, they said it all. I don't have anything to add (smiling).

Q. How has Coach Gasso maybe instilled that in this program and helped you? Six national championships now in the last decade. Three straight. How has she instilled that successfulness in your guys?

JORDY BAHL: I would say two things: One is that she does a good job of talking to us about the things that the girls just talked about, just that our circle is our circle, we're going to worry about ourselves and not what anyone else thinks.

Also she just holds us accountable. She holds us to a high standard. That is because she knows what we're capable of and she wants to see that from us.

When all of us were being recruited at one point or another, we told her we wanted to be great. She's doing her job of helping us get there.

JAYDA COLEMAN: Jo said it right on. I think Coach has really opened the door for mental health. I've had multiple conversations with her about that. She's just so open about it and so supportive.

I don't know if there's a lot of coaches doing that, giving room in that space to have those tough conversations, get those resources that you need. But she's most definitely an open communicator.

If I needed to talk to her about everything, I feel comfortable enough to go to her and talk to her about it.

TIARE JENNINGS: Yeah, again, the standard that she holds. There's not a practice where we just take a rest or get some reps in. It's always preparing for a national championship, preparing for those moments.

For her to keep us accountable every single day at practice, not letting us slack off, I think prepares us for this moment, and the reasons why we don't let pressure get to us, because we feel we've been there already, we practiced it, we trust each other, we go through that. She's been there every step of the way.

GRACE LYONS: I would just say greatness elevates

greatness. We know she's great and successful, like you said. That elevates us. It goes vice versa.

In life and in softball. Full circle. It's just so cool to see just success but so much more than that that she appreciates.

Q. Jayda, I think you mentioned the other day anybody in this lineup can spark a run for you guys. How big of a spark was Cydney's home run?

JAYDA COLEMAN: That is what is so great about our team, is that there can be an MVP, anyone in the lineup. Someone could come off the bench and hit a home run to give us a lead.

The trust that we have in each other. Seeing Cyd finally break through it is one of the happiest moments. We know how hard she works. Like I've said a million times, we see each other day in, day out, struggle, go through a slump, go through a really good high, and go back through a slump again. Seeing her break through on a stage she hasn't been here before is awesome.

Q. Jordy, you get all the way to the end of the game, one pitch away, what is going through your mind at that point and how are you handling your emotions then?

JORDY BAHL: Yeah, I would say whenever there's pressure and there's something on the line, I do a couple things. One is just tell myself "70%, 70%" so I don't get too sped up and start overthrowing.

Also I have Grace Lyons in my another, Alyssa Brito in my ear and they're saying, Eyes up, eyes up. Give it over to God in that situation. Just trust that the end is already written. Just firmly believing in those things, setting my eyes on that just allows me to be free. It just lifts it and you just play your game.

Q. Jayda and Tiare, you came in together as freshmen, three years of college softball, three national championships. Have you talked about this before tonight, how cool it would be, quiet moments? Does it kind of sink in yet?

TIARE JENNINGS: It hasn't hit me yet. We knew our class though was something special. Especially just me and Jayda in the 1-2 spot together. We've always known if she's not going to do it, I'm going to do it. If I'm not going to do it, she's going to do it. It's going to be one of us.

We kind of know each other already and I could look in her mind and know what's going on, she can look through mine.

It hasn't sunk in yet, but it's a heck of a way to spend three years together, I would say. Being in the present, enjoying this moment with everyone. Next year it's back to work. Just enjoying this three-peat. It is insane.

JAYDA COLEMAN: She's my dog. I'll tell you straight up, she is my dog. Yeah, three-peat, all this kind of stuff. We have been so close since the get-go. I feel like sometimes we've kind of been put together to compete against each other, like Freshman Player of the Year, Player of the Year, that kind of thing. We've never let it get between us. We always knew we were on the same team regardless.

She's my dog. I love doing this career with her. Hopefully we finish it out with a bang.

Q. Jordy, you mentioned when you guys were being recruited telling coach you want to be great. If you can think back to that time, did you expect the level of success you have so quickly?

JORDY BAHL: Man, I don't know what junior-in-high-school Jordy was thinking (smiling). I knew that at Oklahoma I was going to be challenged day in and day out. There were going to be amazing players around you, pushing you every single day. Iron sharpens iron. I was going to have the opportunity to throw to the best lineup in the country at practice every day.

As a pitcher, that made me really excited. Yeah, I can't say I knew what was in store, but I had a lot of fun watching them play before I got here. I knew it was going to be fun.

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

Q. You're only the second team to win three straight national titles. Tell everybody how hard this is.

PATTY GASSO: It is incredibly hard. I don't know how to explain it. I just can tell you the way I feel right now is free because the expectation is overwhelming, the pressure is overwhelming. They all have each other to laugh with. I'm standing here by myself, so that's why you're hearing my voice do this.

I know what they're feeling. I know what I'm feeling. It's very difficult. It's extremely rewarding. Like, I just want to go to Costco and shop and no one care that I'm there. They feel the same.

It's so crazy to see how our lives have changed. The fans in Oklahoma are absolutely fantastic. Fans are fantastic. It starts to feel like you're getting smothered a little bit

because everybody wants something. I heard them talking about it. For all of us it's different.

I just want to coach. I want to just be a regular... All of a sudden your life isn't regular any more. So that's really where they talk a little bit about mental health. It's so different being a student-athlete now. I mean, it's completely different. The expectations of everything.

NIL, as well. They get opportunities to be entrepreneurs while they're student-athletes. It's unreal. I'm still learning how to manage it the best I can for them.

So the fact that we got here and we won this is just mind-boggling with all of the wave of pressure and so forth, I could not be more proud of this group. This coaching staff that I have is just absolutely unbelievable. I'm sitting here talking about our team, but they're the ones that are grinding every day, looking at numbers, looking at their iPads, really creating phenomenal plans. They're great coaches, they have great knowledge. I've got a great support staff. I'm just blessed with wonderful people around me.

It's really not as much me as you might think. But I'm lucky, lucky.

Q. We were led to believe that kind of softball had become an offensive game. Please explain Jordy Bahl.

PATTY GASSO: I knew you were going to come with something that was going to have to make me think.

Jordy Bahl is just an absolute complete athlete. Offense has been -- I mean, we faced a few in this tournament, without question, that really challenged us.

Jordy, my challenge for Jordy, is to try to make practice as competitive as I can constantly because she thrives. Jayda is the chaos girl. She's just constantly screaming. Jordy likes that kind of pressure at practice. So I'm always giving her, Okay, bases are loaded, one out, you're up by two. I'm always giving situations because I think she just really loves to simulate that.

When you're here, when she's here, this is her playground. This is her heaven right here, at the World Series where it's real and it's someone else that we're competing against.

Q. Alex transferred here for this kind of a moment. What went into the decision to give her the ball tonight? How proud are you of her?

PATTY GASSO: 100%. It was a matchup that was going

to be like Storako, May, maybe Kierston deal, lefty-lefty matchups. Try to score. If we can get a lead, bring in Jordy. That was the whole plan.

Alex has been waiting for this moment. Nicole helped us get here. They all have helped us get here. Alex was kind of the right matchup. We played them before. Alex had pretty good success.

So proud of her. She's worked hard. She's come through a lot. She's changed quite a bit. Has gotten a lot of confidence. There are a lot of dreams that came true tonight. Alex Storako is definitely one of them.

Q. The grind of handling the pressure all year long, when you look back, what are those moments that you're going to remember from this team?

PATTY GASSO: The first time we got together, we kind of clashed pretty immediately. They didn't like something that I was doing. I didn't like their response. We kind of had a powwow led by Brett Ledbetter, who is a phenomenal guy who understands the dynamic of sport. He was kind of navigating us through it.

I remember walking away and feeling really upset and really hurt. But I had to understand that they wanted to be heard and they wanted me to know them.

If I look like my clothes are fitting a little bit tight is because I took each one of them out to breakfast or lunch or dinner, each one of 'em, and sat with them and talked to them -- actually I didn't talk. I wanted them to talk. I needed to listen. They wanted me to know them.

I surrendered my ego to make sure I did that. I think that was a step maybe in the right direction. Then things just started to flow.

With this group I stepped back. I go to Grace Lyons and I say, What do you want to do here? Do you want to do this? Do you want to do that? Where normally as a coach, This is what we're doing, then we're doing this, going there, then we're doing this.

They are begging, without saying it out loud, for time. They need time. They need rest. They need time so that softball is not defining them. But I think you have very loudly heard, as you have been listening to them, they are defined not by softball. That is what is freeing for them.

If you're wondering, Wow, they don't look nervous. It's because they're not. They know it's written. They know they've just got to play their best. If they win, outstanding, wonderful. If not, it wasn't meant to be. But they never

play tight. They never play afraid. If someone is ahead, they're not afraid because I think they've really found their freedom away from the nerves. That's through their faith.

I know some people are, Oh, gosh, c'mon, girls. I can't tell you how proud I am that they are standing up and being vocal about where their hearts are, whether it's faith, whether it's stance for something, whatever it is. They're finding that they have this freedom and they're trying to share it. I love it. I'm proud of them for doing that.

Q. You mentioned how this feeling is freeing. A lot has changed from 2000 till now. How has this feeling of this moment evolved?

PATTY GASSO: Every one is quite different. 2000 it was almost the attitude of, Oh, we're so happy you're in the World Series. How did you guys do this year? Where did you play? You played over at Reaves Park? What? Who are you guys? It was kind of like that.

We got on the stage and we didn't know better. We just, like, I think we're good. All these Pac-12. Pac-12. It was Pac-10 back then. Oh, no, Arizona is here. What are we going to do?

They didn't feel that way because we didn't know any better. Kind of the same thing, just grind. They were bold, grinders back then.

'13 came from '12. '12 was just a tough loss. '13 was the tornado situation, feeling like we needed to play for more, as in the city of Moore, but for the state of Oklahoma. Everyone has a different story.

This one was just so many landmarks of, Okay, now they're only five away from this. It's more of the outside coming in and telling us what we are close to doing or what we need to do. It was really hard to kind of hunker down and say, Okay, we're not listening, it doesn't matter. We know what we're here for, we know what we're trying to do.

I think this really was the roughest one I've ever had to go through just because of with lots of fans and the growth of the sport comes a lot of pressure. I think I've felt that and they have felt that. I don't know if they shared that with you.

To be sitting up here and telling you this is still kind of amazing because everybody's out to get us. They want to bring down the Evil Empire, whatever it is. I don't know.

We just want to play ball. That's all. Jayda Coleman wants to rob home runs. Tiare Jennings wants to hit doubles and be clutch. That's how they're made.

I and our coaching staff was just trying to protect all of us from that. So to say that we're here right now is I think still setting in for me. I'm still in kind of -- I didn't even know how to react after because I just felt freedom and I wanted to just -- I don't even know. I still don't know. I guess I'll figure it out.

Q. Glad you won't hear us ask about a winning streak for another eight months?

PATTY GASSO: I'm sure somebody will have it planned out for us next year (laughter).

Q. We heard the players talk about Cydney Sanders' big hit. From your perspective, how cool was it to see her having the season she has had?

PATTY GASSO: Very, very cool. I'd say probably one of the worst curses on athletes at times is when they're young and they get big awards or notoriety. It's happened to a couple of our freshmen where their next season isn't quite as good.

Cyd came here, had to learn a whole new hitting system. That's not easy. She was trying to prove herself. There was a lot going on where she just wasn't really comfortable trying to learn so much, wasn't quite as free.

Then they started getting hot. Then it was fun. It was seeing the real Cyd. I'm really proud of how good her defense got. I'm really happy with how she improved in that way.

But she came into this tournament a little bit spooked, and you could see it on her face. We just talked about, like, not missing a moment, not letting those things happen to you.

You know when you're a kid from the outside, you come to Oklahoma, you dream about it, you're here. Oh, my gosh, look at all these lights. It's just trying to bring these guys down and keep their feet on the ground.

Haley Lee was there a little bit when we first started. But to see how they finished, I know they're having a great time and they're very satisfied.

Q. You're talking about how hard this has been, but also the joy you have in each individual team having its own identity. Tomorrow when you're going to do this all again with a new team, what drives you?

PATTY GASSO: Them. I want to be my best for them (tearing up). I was done doing this.

I want to be my best for them because they trust me. They make a commitment to my. So I need to give it back to them. I need to give it back to their parents.

What's really amazing, and there are coaches in here that know what I'm talking about, this is our family. I spend more time with them, and I see them more in one day than I see my husband in a week sometimes.

They're your family, and you promise their parents that you're going to take care of them, so you take care of them. But you push them. I push them like a coach, but also like a mother who is looking out for her kids.

If I have to discipline them, I discipline them. I raise them like they're my own. But ultimately I know what their goal is.

It's my job. That's our job as coaches, we're supposed to win. If we don't, we may not have a job. I take that very personally because I care about my assistant coaches very much and their families and their welfare, especially if J.D. got fired then I would have to pay his bills, too. I got to keep him employed. Jen Roach has been my rock this whole season as well. I can't tell you.

It's a really big family. They're family away from their family. I take that very seriously. I love competition. I love to compete. I love when it's hard. I love when people say you can't. I just love being around young people.

To see their growth and their heart, their expression, it's like a proud mom. When I know Grace Lyons, you have not heard the last of her. She is going to be changing lives. Grace Green, as well. To have that opportunity with Alex and Haley Lee, two of the coolest young women I have been around in such a long time. Then looking at all these guys coming back, the future.

I don't even want to think about it right now 'cause the grind will start again. But it's fun. It's not a job. I've been doing this here for 29 years. It's not a job. It's life. It's my life. It's my family's life as well, so... Keep going for a few more.

No, wait, because then you'll start asking questions. Don't ask questions, we're good (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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