

2024 Women's College World Series

Wednesday, May 29, 2024
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Alabama Crimson Tide
Coach Patrick Murphy
Kayla Beaver
Jocelyn Briski
Press Conference



We persevered. We got through it. Nobody quit. It was one of the most enjoyable teams to coach because they didn't quit. Now we're here. We're going to relish every second because there's no bad day at the College World Series.

THE MODERATOR: We'll open it up for questions.

Q. You've talked about this being a gratifying year for you. How gratifying is it for Kayla to come here in her last year? Kayla, was that part of the reason you wanted to come to Alabama, for the opportunity to play in OKC?

PATRICK MURPHY: How is everybody doing? Great to see you again. How many of you expected me to be here (laughter)?

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

We are joined by Alabama. We'll start with an opening statement from Coach Murphy.

PATRICK MURPHY: Thank you so much. Thanks for being here.

The name of the game is fastpitch softball. Not fast run, not fast hit, not fast defense. The reason we're here is because of these two young ladies, fastpitch. They're two pitchers. They have done a tremendous job all year.

We preach the defense and the pitching stays constant. If we can scratch a run, we're going to win. They've basically done that all year. Both of them, they're brand-new to the program. Miss Beaver is a grad student, a transfer from Central Arkansas, and Jocelyn is a freshman from Phoenix, Arizona.

You guys can get to know them. But this was a difficult year. I said this to our parents at a banquet, the senior banquet in April. We played Tennessee that day. Before we played Tennessee, we had this senior brunch. If you ask every parent in the world, What do you want for your kid? The number one answer is, I want them to be happy. Right? 100%.

But you know what? Not everybody's happy every single day. You go through trials and tribulations. That was our year. We went through the stuff. Now we see the light at the end of the tunnel, and that's Oklahoma City.

PATRICK MURPHY: I said it at Tennessee in the locker room after we won that 14-inning game. Almost every kid on this roster said, I want a chance to play at the College World Series. I want a chance to play at the Women's College World Series. We were in super regionals. That means you're two wins away. We have a chance. Now we got to take it.

She said the exact same thing to us on her visit. I want an opportunity to play at the highest level, I want to play at the College World Series.

Sometimes it doesn't work, right? We never take this for granted. I remember the first time. I said to my SID, John, I don't want to be a one-hit wonder. You never know. I'm so glad that she gets to experience this because she has been terrific. You guys get to experience what she brings to the table.

KAYLA BEAVER: Yeah, bouncing off that, getting to come here, it was special just to wear the A. That was something that I really wanted to do this entire time.

Getting to play and finish my season here, I mean, honestly, it still doesn't even seem real. I feel like I'm in a dream every second that I've been here already.

Getting to pitch beside Briski, have the team that I have behind me, it's something special. Getting to do it here, it's incredible.

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Q. Patrick, I know you're focused on UCLA. Obviously them being in that Pac-12 tradition that is coming to an end, can you offer any perspective on what the Pac-12 has meant to the sport?

PATRICK MURPHY: Shoot, everything. I mean, the first time I came here, I might have even talked to you and said, I want to be like Mike Candrea. That was the goal of every male coach. That was the role model, was Mike Candrea. Obviously we all know UCLA. It's the gold standard. UCLA, Arizona.

It is a sad day. It really is. I think whoever made the decisions did not do them for the right reasons. There's no way in hell that Cal and Stanford should be going to Virginia Tech, Florida State, Syracuse. Are you kidding me? Those are two great academic institutions. Somebody made that decision?

All of us in this room could have said, No, that's not a good decision. That's my opinion on that.

But the Pac-12, that was what you played for. We want to beat the Pac-12. First time we came, we had to go to Arizona State. We had never beaten a Pac-12 school. It was the year 2000. We got sent to Arizona State, Hall of Fame Coach Linda Wells. Gosh, here we go again. We broke through that door and it was the biggest thing in the world for little Alabama to go to a Pac-12 school and beat them twice on their field. That was a huge deal.

It's a sad day to see that end. Honestly, they've been great in a ton of sports. To me, softball, synonymous with the Pac-12 up and down. Arizona State, Washington, Cal, look how many national champions are in this league. A ton. Stanford is here now.

Q. On the flipside of that, do you see the SEC becoming that power if it's not already, especially with the additions of Oklahoma and Texas?

PATRICK MURPHY: You had to bring that up, didn't you (smiling)? Geez.

Yeah, I don't even want to think about it. When the seeding came out, 1-2, then I think eight SEC. So 10 of the 16 seeds were eventually going to be SEC. I mean, it's going to be amazing, to begin with.

Again, I sat here and said when A&M and Missouri joined, the two best sports at those two schools was softball. Already been here three years in a row and Texas A&M played for the national championship. Not baseball, football, basketball, the best two sports in those schools

was softball.

I can make the case for the same thing with OU and Texas. Both here, 1-2. No other sports are their schools 1-2. I think it's going to be tremendous. We already sell out. When OU comes to us, they're coming to us next year, everybody can come, you're all invited, middle of April. It is going to be a premium game just like when LSU comes to play football at Alabama or Auburn or OU or Texas. It will be a premium game and a big deal, because it should be.

Q. Mike White said in the last couple of days that this is a huge advantage for the World Series to be here for Oklahoma and would like to see it be rotated. Wanted to get your thoughts on that.

PATRICK MURPHY: There's not a comparable space. We don't have Dodger Stadium and Wrigley Field and Fenway Park. We have this place. I don't see anybody else going to pony up now probably 60 million, 70 million to build a facility like this, press room like this, locker rooms we have, the field behind where we practice. You're not going to do it overnight. It's going to take at least three or four years, right?

I don't know. I feel like this is becoming Omaha. Creighton was good in baseball. Nebraska was good this year in baseball. If they go to the World Series, it adds another spice to the tournament.

Us, we're like deal with it. Norman is, what, 29 miles away, 29 minutes?

Q. Jocelyn and Kayla, to come off the super regional against Tennessee, after going through just the gauntlet of what the SEC is all season long, how does that competition prepare you for this stage?

KAYLA BEAVER: I think it prepares us for everything. Tennessee was selected to be a national championship team. They were a contender for it. They were an amazing competition. The SEC, like Murph said, the competition is insane. I think we're more prepared than we could have been. Getting to play somebody familiar, I think it made it way more fun.

We did what we did. Now we're here to do it some more.

JOCELYN BRISKI: Also along with what happened at super regionals, the 14-inning game, we've done it all, seen it all. We had two of those this year. I just think this team is very well-prepared for what's to come. Anything can happen. We all believe in ourselves, too. So I'm really excited.

PATRICK MURPHY: Can I add to that?

We're the ninth place team in the SEC and we're at the World Series (smiling).

Q. Kayla and Jocelyn, can you describe what it was like for the two of you to step on that field for the first time. Obviously something you dreamt about since you were a young softball.

JOCELYN BRISKI: It was so cool. Just walking across. I mean, we've obviously played at Rhoads. In the SEC, Rhoads is a hostile environment itself. But it doesn't compare to this.

I'm just really excited to soak it all in, the adrenaline and everything taking the mound. I'm really excited for it.

KAYLA BEAVER: For me, the past four years, I was watching it from home. Getting to be a part of it again, it doesn't feel real. It feels like it still hasn't hit me yet.

I don't know. The adrenaline, the environment, it's something so crazy to be a part of. I'm just truly blessed that I get to be a part of it with this team. There's nobody else I'd rather do it with.

I don't know. Going back to everything we've done this year, I'm so proud that we're here and get to play in this environment. Again, being here, it's absolutely incredible.

Q. Can you talk a little bit about the second half of the season utilizing small ball and how you seemed to utilize that to your advantage.

PATRICK MURPHY: I think all the assistant had to kick me in the butt and say, We need to do something, okay? Whatever we're doing is not working.

We really started working on hit-and-run, slap-and-run, bunt-and-run, delayed steal, steal, all of it. A little bit at a time. I think the second game against Southeastern in regionals where it's 1-1 in the ninth, a pinch hit for two runs, we pile on three more, I think that kind of started -- everybody took a deep breathe, We can do this.

The next day we scored nine runs in the bottom of the first and had 10 hits the one inning. It's kind of like everybody took a deep breath. Obviously Tennessee has the best pitching staff probably in the country. You're not going to score nine runs.

But I think we put the ball in play well. We didn't strike out a lot. Made 'em make plays. That was the key. You put

the ball in play, good things are going to happen.

Q. You're aware the agreement with the NCAA and the conferences paving the way to pay athletes directly. Softball has obviously grown. This development could affect it. Big picture in the sport, do you worry this change could divert funds from softball towards things like paying football and basketball players, or do you feel there's a momentum in the sport that it could be beneficial?

PATRICK MURPHY: A couple years ago they did a story in the Tuscaloosa News, and the third-highest revenue producer in Alabama was softball. It football and then men's basketball and softball and we were all proud of that.

We've charged tickets from day one because we think it's a sport you need to pay to watch it. Our fans have showed up like crazy. We led the nation in attendance for 17 straight years.

I really don't think so. I think my boss, Greg Byrne, is great at what he does. He is going to figure it out along with a lot of other really good ADs and make this work.

We had the banquet last night. I talked to a couple of the other ADs. They almost said the same exact things that Greg has been telling the head coaches at Alabama. We're going to figure this out. It's the new normal. We've said that for how many years in a row now? You guys are probably sick of that. But it's true.

NIL, portal, now house versus NCAA. There's a lot of smart people, a lot smarter than me, that make those decisions. Hopefully they'll get us on the right path.

Q. The question about small ball. You don't see as much slapping in college softball any more. I'm wondering what the challenge is. How do you develop that at a time when it's just not as prevalent as it used to be?

PATRICK MURPHY: The first time we went to the NCAA tournament, we were shut out 1-0, 7-0. I was recruiting in the summer. I saw Mike Candrea. How did it go? We got shut out twice. He said, You know, in big-time soft, the pitching dominates. Every now and then you need to put a ball on the ground and something good might happen.

At the time they had probably four or five slappers. So the next year, I had three lefties in the lineup. We come to the World Series and win 66 games.

I think there's a balance between the two. Obviously our lead-off had a great super regional, great regional. She's



the fastest kid on the team. I still believe when we had Alexis Mack, Kayla Braud, Brittany Rogers, Jennifer Fenton. In the game of softball, if you can put a bunt where you want it, nobody throws you out. You can tell everybody in the crowd, I'm bunting, you're still safe. Alexis Mack could do it every single time.

Obviously you have to be fast. The defense is so much better, yes. Athletes all over the place. Great athletes everywhere. But I still think that at Tennessee we put the ball in play, and they have really, really good pitching.

I think there is a spot for it still. Got to have really good bat control.

Q. Kayla, you said you've been watching from home the last four years. When UCLA played in the World Series, Montana threw a perfect game. What do you remember from watching that?

KAYLA BEAVER: Oh, yeah, I do remember watching that. I was sitting on my couch (smiling). I was like, Holy crap, she really just did that. Anybody, I think Jocelyn can vouch, everybody wants that moment. Everybody wants to do that.

Coming in, that's a lot of shoes to fill. She's incredible. I knew that coming into it. It was one of those things that I could let it run all over me and take over, try so much to be like her. She's somebody that I look up to. She is.

I just knew that coming in I had to be me because if I tried to be somebody that I wasn't, then I wasn't going to be successful. I think working alongside people like Jocelyn and Jaala and Alex and Alea and Lauren, this entire bullpen staff, it's something special. We all have something different. Getting to come in and work with them has made me so much better.

Like I said, going back to that, it's incredible. I would love to do that. I'm not going to lie. We're just going to take it one pitch at a time and see what we can do.

JOCELYN BRISKI: This whole year we relied on using the staff. We talked about it before, all of us are different from each other. A lot of us complement each other very well. Whoever's turn it is to get the job done, we'll root for them. If it's our turn, we're going to take advantage of our opportunity. It's trying to not let the moment get too big, and have that person's back, whoever is out there on the mound.

THE MODERATOR: That will wrap things up for Alabama.

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