

2024 Women's College World Series

Thursday, May 30, 2024

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Oklahoma Sooners
Coach Patty Gasso
Kinzie Hansen
Cyndney Sanders
Alynah Torres

Postgame Press Conference

Oklahoma 9, Duke 1

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Oklahoma.

We'll start with an opening statement from Coach.

PATTY GASSO: Yeah, what a great game for the Sooners. It's really something important to try to get that first win. We really prepared for Duke because they're a really good team. I have immense respect for them, their coaching staff, and what they've done to get here. They've always been on the cusp.

We knew we were going to get a feisty team with a very good pitching staff and just an array of good hitters, bunters, speed. They kind of embrace it all.

It was something we were really working hard to prepare for, and really proud of this entire team, timely hitting, big-time runs, getting us off the field a little bit early. Getting first win in our pocket is what we talk about. We're in a good place right now.

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

Q. You really brought out the sticks today. Talk about that, if all three of you could comment.

KINZIE HANSEN: Absolutely. We've been working really hard all week before coming in. We knew exactly what their game plan would be against us. We've been going on grind mode this past week. I know it was pretty grueling at times. In the beginning of the week, we weren't hitting that machine very well. At the end of the week it paid off.



Duke's pitching staff is very, very good. They have one of the best pitching staffs here in OKC, in my opinion. But Curd was throwing gas up in the zone, and then Jala was throwing gas down in the zone. We had to be quick with our adjustments, and I think our hard work definitely paid off.

CYDNEY SANDERS: The ball finally dropped today, so... That's very exciting for me. I've been working very hard with my teammates. Like Hansen said, the machine was brutal, with you we all made adjustments in the game and it worked out for us.

ALYNAH TORRES: To piggyback off of Kinzie, Duke is a really good pitching staff. Props to them. They're going to be hard to beat.

I want to say, as well, we're playing loose, having fun, knowing this is our last wreck together as a team, taking it in, playing free, passing the bat and having fun.

Q. Cydney, you've talked about not being worried about stuff, but the ball finally falling, how big was that?

CYDNEY SANDERS: I think it's a big thing because it's coming in the post-season. Like everything before for me doesn't really matter. It's what's going on right now.

I feel like I've been hitting the ball to everybody, but it finally fell today. I'm just happy as can be, honestly.

Q. Kinzie, as the captain of this team, can you illustrate what it means to have these two hit home runs.

KINZIE HANSEN: Yeah, absolutely. I think the depth of our lineup is something that is so impressive to me. One through nine, I think everybody got on base today, whether it was a hit or a walk. Every single person in the starting lineup was on base today.

I think that just goes to show that our work ethic pays off day in and day out. We challenge ourselves every single day. When we face a challenge like Duke's pitching staff, it



doesn't really feel like anything too crazy for us.

I'm proud of these two. They've been working hard. Like Cydney said, that machine was brutal. Alynah has been putting in a lot of extra work. I'm proud and happy for them.

Nobody can do this by themselves. Not one person can step in that box and win the World Series by themselves. It's going to take all 21 of us to get the job done and to keep working hard and pressing forward.

Really happy and really proud for them. Excited to see what it looks like going forward.

Q. Kinzie, Kierston, how important was it to see her come out and have some success?

KINZIE HANSEN: Yeah, for sure. Like I said, not one person can win it in the box, but not one person can win it on the mound either.

Kelly would say she didn't have her best day. Her drop ball was moving pretty nice from behind the plate.

It's good to be able to bounce pitchers off of each other. So KD came in in that clutch situation with the bases loaded and got us out of there. I think she was spinning the ball really well.

I have a lot of fun when both of them are on the mound. I thought it was really fun. Jayda made that great driving catch. Our defense was on fire. Just to be able to see all three pieces of our game together, kind of weave together, especially in the post-season at the World Series, it's beautiful. Excited for the next few games.

Q. Cydney and Alynah, you guys hit your three home runs in a six-batter stretch. Is there such a thing as momentum in this kind of stuff? If there is, can you explain how that works?

ALYNAH TORRES: Yeah, I would say momentum is a really big thing. I think when you nailed the next person or the person in front of you when you're on deck, seeing the way they're taking their hacks, it kind of gives you confidence and gives everybody in the dugout confidence.

It's cool how we talk to each other in between every pitch, trusting what we're doing. We're all in it, all 21 of us are in every single pitch. Knowing we can pass the bat and not putting too much pressure on ourselves is probably key to why our team is so good. We know one at-bat is not going to change the whole game.

CYDNEY SANDERS: I feel like momentum is like anything. A pitch that gets called for a strike, a hard swing, anything that Alynah said, passing the bat, everything we can create momentum off of any little thing. It's not like hitting or fielding. It's kind of both, everything.

Q. Kinzie, you talked about adjusting to Jala. What was that adjustment process like? Cydney and Alynah, how important was that to lift the cap off that offense?

KINZIE HANSEN: Yeah, definitely. I think it's important to acknowledge, like I said, their staff is one of the best staffs here. Curd was coming in. She was throwing high 60, 70 at the top of the zone. We were all trying to work that rise ball, trying to get into that low line drive.

Jala came in with that drop change kind of tunnel, which is very impressive, in my opinion. She does a great job with her pitches. The coaches do a great job pitch calling.

I noticed the at-bats before me, she was kind of trying to pound the zone early with really what's just a good strike. We were taking it the first couple at-bats. I'm pretty sure Ella got walked before me, or somebody was on first base.

In my mind I just went up thinking 70, she's got to come early for a strike at-bat. I loaded early and saw the ball kind of middle, just went for it. That's really the adjustment.

ALYNAH TORRES: Yeah, I think we prepped really well. Our coach did a really good job for us coming into this game. Once again, we want to say that Duke's pitching staff is legit. They are tough.

Us being able to practice the way we did, really put our game plan into it, was awesome. I think we were just playing free and knowing that, hey, we just need to pass the bat, hard hits, make the defense work, have a good time while you're doing it.

CYDNEY SANDERS: I'd say just believe in yourself, believe in each other was a big part of this game. Yeah, I hit the ball, but look at what everyone else did. I don't see it as just what I did. I see it as, like, a team process throughout the whole game.

Jada started off the game with a hard hit, and that kept building momentum throughout the game. I felt like we all made adjustments by the end of the game.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, players.

PATTY GASSO: You don't need me after that. I know I got to talk faster. Kinzie Hansen is just like a freight train.

Q. How big was that sequence of Kierston coming in and the diving catch by Jada?

PATTY GASSO: Yeah, it's important. But it's momentum building, it really creates rally around your team. But at the same time we need Kelly to know to keep going after it, keep fighting, that we've got you. We'll score runs, we'll back you up on the mound. That was really the message.

Q. What can you say about Marissa getting Duke to this level so quickly, especially with everything that she's had to deal with off the field?

PATTY GASSO: I've known her since she was a high school kid. I actually tried to recruit her. She didn't have any idea where Oklahoma was. She was living a good life out in California.

Watched her, followed her career. Phenomenal pitcher. Watched her coaching career. I knew she was going to be really special because she just was a real competitor.

When she got the Duke job, she really did a great job of recruiting and building it. She's gone through some really, really horrific times with the health of her husband. She's trying to balance being a mom, a wife, a coach, and so many things, in such a very difficult time.

To me, it's more than softball. She's just a great example of a woman battling for her family, battling for her team. So I respect what she's done through all that to still get her team here. I really hope they keep going.

Q. Strange question. You played a lot of games here. You've had a whole lot of home runs hit into the left field bleachers in the World Series. Before today, what comes to mind when you think of an OU home run?

PATTY GASSO: Jocelyn Alo. Lauren Chamberlain. They were monster, monster, big home runs, very meaningful, walk-off type swings.

Q. You talked about the offense. How important is it for Cydney and Alynah specifically to get going, find the power hits?

PATTY GASSO: Since they've been here, they've really been trying to be the hitters that they were at Arizona State before they got here. It really doesn't matter to me what you've done through the season. This is where everyone's going to remember it.

For here, they get another redo. I get to start over.

For Cyd Sanders, I am thrilled. Every time she takes a swing, everybody is like, Whoa, a swing and miss. Sometimes she'll cheat herself. She really was focused. You could feel that. She had good BP, good week of practice.

Alynah just loves big moments, too. I'm really excited for both of them going forward.

The catalyst today was Jayda Coleman. I don't think anyone is really talking much about her, but she was really doing a great job in a lead-off spot, as well.

Q. Obviously sets up OU versus UCLA. Historic matchup. Your thoughts on this year's Bruins squad and history?

PATTY GASSO: We have a big history here at the World Series, without question. Very respectful. A lot of our players know their players. They probably know more UCLA players than any other team. So there's that connection.

Absolute respect. I got to tell you, too, I just respect the Big 12. The Big 12 started softball really. That's kind of what I was watching when I would come here to the World Series. It was always UCLA and Arizona. They are the stepping stones that led to other teams. Michigan found their way. Texas A&M. Fresno State. Teams like that have found their way. It's always been those two that have been fighting.

The idea of them dissipating the Pac-12 is really hard for me to fathom because of the history of softball. With that, I don't know, I'm sentimental over that. This is going to be a great matchup. It's going to be great for television. It's going to be two teams really fighting for championships.

UCLA has been playing really, really well. Kelly did a great job of turning that program around 'cause they weren't starting very well. Their freshmen and sophomore have stepped up big-time for them. They have a really lethal lineup. This should be a really, really fun game to watch.

Q. You mentioned Jayda. How big is that to have another big moment, another big Jayda moment?

PATTY GASSO: It's game-winning, game-changing one way or the other. If she doesn't make the play, a rally is created. If she does make the play, momentum comes in our dugout.

She waits for those. Sometimes I think she doesn't run as fast so she can -- I'm kidding, no. She's incredible. She's an incredible athlete. I don't know how many runs she has

saved. It would be interesting to see that analytic of how many runs she has saved the Sooners over the course of a season.

What she's been doing, she loves these big moments. She's her best in these situations, in this venue, in this World Series. It's her favorite thing to do. We're going to rally behind her and let her lead us.

Q. Obviously Duke has the pitchers to roll a bunch of them out there. You have seen that philosophy before. What's the challenge there? How are you always able in most cases to be able to adjust when teams do go with that philosophy?

PATTY GASSO: Yeah, it's tough. It started with Texas Tech I think last year. I think they threw out a new pitcher every inning. It was tough.

I credit JT Gasso for this. He has everything in lockdown. He shows, they learn, they get up, they do movements with him to really understand what we could be seeing and who might start, who might be next, and why. Who might be next and why.

It's like being in a classroom setting. They're listening. They're very educated. They had notebooks. They're writing notes down. They're talking it over with each other. It's very astute, very diving in and trying to understand what could happen, then practicing it as much as we can.

That's why having a day off on Friday can really help us prepare for UCLA, that staff as well. It's really a quick turnover.

JT, Jen Rocha, they have been doing unbelievable work, preparation for this team.

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

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