

2024 Women's College World Series

Thursday, May 30, 2024

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Oklahoma State Cowgirls
Coach Kenny Gajewski

Lexi Kilfoyl

Caroline Wang

Lexi McDonald

Postgame Press Conference



Florida 1, Oklahoma State 0

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Oklahoma State.

We'll start with an opening statement by Coach.

KENNY GAJEWSKI: I really think it was a good softball game. We just came up on the wrong end. They had the one big blow. It felt like a dogfight right from the start. I thought both pitchers were extremely sharp. We just couldn't adjust to the balls in very well. They felt very in, according to our kids.

Credit them. They just kept pounding that. They got the one big blow. A shame we had to waste a pitching gem by Lexi, as well.

Tough ballgame. Got our work cut out for us here. But I like what this team has always done, and that's respond. That's all we can do at this point.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for players.

Q. Lexi, let's start with you. What did you feel like was going well and take us through what happened on the full-count pitch?

LEXI KILFOYL: Honestly from the jump I felt really good. The whole day felt honestly amazing. Bullpen before still looking good. There was no doubt in my mind. I felt like it was still even a good pitch that she got ahold of. I think she may have been sitting that pitch. Obviously she was the one that came through with the hit. I honestly don't look at this as a bad thing. I still feel good. They just had the one hit.

Q. Caroline, felt like you maybe started to see the ball a little bit better later. How did that go for you? Lexi McDonald, what were you seeing at the plate?

CAROLINE WANG: I mean, she obviously threw a great game, like they said. But, yeah, seeing a little better, like you said. She's pounding the same thing over and over again. You got to adjust. I wouldn't say like we did that successfully.

Three at-bats you do a little better.

LEXI McDONALD: Just seeing the ball well, just trying to see the ball deep. She pitched a great game. She really did. She layed some pitches for me to hit hard, so that's what I did.

Q. Lexi, found yourself in a similar position last year. What do you remember from that experience, having your back against the wall? How valuable is that?

LEXI KILFOYL: Yeah, I think we play our best ball when it's on the line. I'm super excited to see how we're going to do down the road, whoever comes at us. We're just going to pound the ball, hit the crap out of the ball, throw the ball as hard as we can. I know we'll come through. It just wasn't our day today.

Q. Lexi McDonald, could you take us through what you saw on the long fly to centerfield?

LEXI McDONALD: I'm just really just thankful to get an opportunity to do what I did tonight. I mean, I hit a ball hard. All I could ask is to have a good at-bat. She caught it. That's what happens. It is what it is.

THE MODERATOR: That will wrap things up for the players. Thank you. We'll continue with questions for Coach.

Q. You faced Keagan earlier this year. Anything she did that showed some of her growth from her freshman year that made it harder?

KENNY GAJEWSKI: Yeah, I mean, she's been through the gauntlet in the SEC. I vote on the All-American committee. When you look at her numbers, she threw over 150 innings against the top 25. When you throw that type of load, she's not fazed.

We got her early. We really didn't hit her great the first time around. We just had a big home run by Karli that was the difference, kind of like them tonight. Just credit them.

I mean, I credit Chelsey, too, the great game plan against us. They just kept pounding. I thought it was really interesting. They never actually threw away very often. If they did, it was very few times, which tells me they were loving what they were getting on the inner half.

We kept moving back off the plate. We kept getting blown up. I'm kind of curious to go home and watch this. Probably keep me up all night, but it is what it is. It's part of the growth, part of being here. It's the highest of highs and the lowest of lows.

Q. Sounded like you were frustrated you had what you wanted out of Lexi in the circle and not able to take advantage. Your offense, both inside and her rise ball, is that what led to a lot of pop-ups today?

KENNY GAJEWSKI: Yeah, I mean, first off, I think you asked me two different things.

I just feel really poorly for Lexi. She was dominant. That's a really good offense. I mean, they're one of the best offenses in the country. We faced that last week with Arizona, as well. We were able to score runs.

Obviously Arizona didn't have a Rothrock.

I don't know. I just felt like our lefties had way more success. They're the ones. Jil hit the ball hard. Topspin, but hit the ball hard. Lexi had a couple balls hit hard. Claire had one. The lefties had a little bit more success. The right-handers were not very good tonight. Just part of it.

Credit them. They just kept going at where we were. We just couldn't make the adjustment.

It's tough. I mean, I'm kind of curious to go back and watch. I think that will tell me more on kind of where these balls were and all that.

Q. I think it was just five days ago you talked about how Lexi McDonald is overlooked. What did you think of her at-bats tonight?

KENNY GAJEWSKI: I thought they were awesome. It's kind of cool, little girl from Silo, just sitting here in this moment. It's really neat. It's one of the coolest things.

I kind of at first, when that ball first came off her bat, I was like, uhm, I thought it had a chance. The air felt weird tonight, felt real heavy. It just didn't have enough. Got the base hit. I thought she was really good all night, I really did. I think it shows her growth. Last year she wasn't ready for this moment. She wasn't ready for the competition.

She's a worker. It wasn't like she was shying away. It takes a little time. It's really cool. Her future's bright here. It's kind of nice to have her in the eight hole, too. The way we're swinging it tonight, we may need to try to move her up, depending on what we're going to face tomorrow. We'll look at that.

Very proud of her.

Q. You mentioned last year having been in a similar position. How challenging is that, overcoming, shaking something like this off in such a short window? What makes you think this team is capable of doing that?

KENNY GAJEWSKI: I mean, last year is a whole different deal. I think we got run ruled by Florida State. It was kind of a weird game. We came back and played a really nice game against Utah is who I think it was.

Same situation. It's a Florida team. Now we're going to play a Pac-12 team. Maybe we can keep it rolling like that.

I'm excited to see how we respond. That's part of what every coach wants to see. Okay, this didn't go the way we wanted it to. We wasted an opportunity. We let an opportunity slip. Maybe we didn't waste it. That's a harsh term for us. Not like we didn't give effort. One slipped away here.

Credit them. They made that happen. I'm excited. The nice thing is we get a full day, so we'll come back and it will be nice and cool again. That will be kind of cool. Hopefully the weather holds and all that.

We'll just go about it the same way. We'll do our same work.

Q. You have a full day. Give us a glimpse as to how much you'll review this versus moving on to Stanford?

KENNY GAJEWSKI: Yeah, I'm going to go home here, go to the hotel, turn the game on immediately. I'll be able to

watch it very fast. Probably only take me about 30 minutes to watch it. May watch it twice just to see things, see what we want to see.

We'll get up in the morning and prepare. I would imagine we're going to face NiJa. Their season is on the line. I feel like at this point we'll go to Lexi. I'll let Carrie and I will talk about that. Our backs are against a wall. We'll start preparing NiJa and all that. That's who I think we would see. Again, we'll see.

Q. You've used Lexi to prepare her for maybe situations where she does throw multiple days. What have you liked about the way she's handled that? What makes you think this setup is something she can do?

KENNY GAJEWSKI: I mean, she's done it a couple times. She did it in the regional. I feel pretty good about that. Yeah, the regional, she did it there. Three different teams, three straight days. It was cool out.

I heard her tell Carrie the other day that she only needed to pitch 35 innings to get us the trophy. Carrie asked her could she do it. She said, I got it. I don't think she's going to shy away from the workload. We've taken care of her.

She wants to put the team on her back and go. We'll get her up in the morning. Chance will take care of her. Mike will take care of her tonight, give her what she needs there, prepare.

We'll talk as a staff, go through all that. She's ready. I'm not worried about it at all. Again, it's another night game. Probably going to be cool again. Should be good.

When you're in this moment, in this setting, I mean, you just got to go. If she doesn't look good, we've got some good options. I'm not worried about that. We got to ride our horse.

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