

# 2024 Women's College World Series

Saturday, June 1, 2024

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

**Oklahoma Sooners**  
**Coach Patty Gasso**

**Tiare Jennings**

**Kelly Maxwell**

**Rylie Boone**

Postgame Press Conference



Oklahoma 1, UCLA 0

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Oklahoma.

We'll start with an opening statement from coach.

PATTY GASSO: Memorable game. It was very exciting. Great pitching on both sides. We respect UCLA like nobody's business. They're such a good all-around team. Hitters, great hitters. They're an all-around great team.

This was an important game for both of us. Kelly decided to throw one of the best games of her life today. There was no way we would be pulling her after the job she was doing.

Tiare, what was really cool, when Alynah got hit in the eye and we knew she was going to be out, Tiare comes up right after that happened, hits the ball out. Those are memories. Now this become life, right? When you gather up together in 10 years, you're going to talk about those things. That's what it's cool, it's more than just winning and losing.

UCLA played toe to toe. We played toe to toe together. There are just a few moments you'll never forget.

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

**Q. Kelly, what was working so well for you today?**

KELLY MAXWELL: God is good. I just want to say that I had an eye-opening conversation with coach this morning. I just put it all out there today.

**Q. Tiare, talk about your at-bat and your home run, what coach talked about there. Did that give you an emotional charge?**

TIARE JENNINGS: Yeah, I knew I was just going to be confident in myself. Alynah went down. No, I just got to get this party started. Just hit the ball hard. Don't try to hit it out or nothing.

Kelly was dealing, our team was fighting on defense. Today was just a dogfight. Continuing to hit the ball hard was the only thing I was thinking of.

**Q. Tiare, do you ever think about your place in OU history? Is that something for later?**

TIARE JENNINGS: Yeah, I don't think about it. Something for later, for sure (smiling). Definitely an honor when I see it up on social media. When I'm in the moment, I don't think about anything except just fighting for this team.

**Q. Kelly, you can't say you had an eye-opening conversation with coach and not tell us more. What were the topics?**

KELLY MAXWELL: I mean, it was definitely a faith-oriented, giving Him the -- like all the power in Him, to go out there and be free, play free.

I think we had a good game plan, Coach Rocha, just being able to mix speeds, trusting my team behind my back.

**Q. Kelly, a lot of your swing and misses were on off speeds. Was that kind of the plan of attack today?**

KELLY MAXWELL: Yeah, I think it's a really important whenever you're playing a team like UCLA, I mean, they have really good hitters top to bottom. You always got to keep them off balance and change your timing.

Just being able to change speeds and just go for it.

**Q. Rylie, you have seen the evolution of Kelly. What was she like this afternoon?**



RYLIE BOONE: I think she was super calm. I think she knew who she was playing for. She looked like there was nothing that could happen to rattle her. I felt her confidence. I felt so much trust that she trusted us knowing she can leave everything on the field, and at the end of the day the defense is going to have her back.

We knew that every pitch that she gave, there was no questioning it. She looked all in. It looked like she was playing for God. Like no one else was in the stadium except for her and God.

**Q. Rylie, I don't think there's anyone in the country who celebrates a bunt as well as you do. What do you hope for in those moments to fire your team up?**

RYLIE BOONE: Honestly, just giving them the bat, passing them the bat. I'm not worried about trying to be a hero, getting the big hit.

I trusted Avery. Whatever the outcome was, I trusted that she was going to get the job done, whatever it looked like.

I kind of just like gave my energy to the team of just, like, take this and run with it and let's see what happens.

**Q. Tiare, how special was it to get to play against Maya again for potentially the last time?**

TIARE JENNINGS: Yeah, super special. Me and her go way back. Celebrating her birthday today. We know, no matter what, the love runs deep, way more than softball. I texted her this morning, No matter the outcome, I love you, I'm rooting for you. We have that sisterhood like no other. You just move on and wish them the best.

**Q. Tiare, can you describe the relationship with her. What was it like seeing her today?**

TIARE JENNINGS: Yeah, just going through travel ball together. I mean, we've grew up together. Playing for Batbusters, specifically for Mike Stith, Mark Campbell, a coach near and dear to us who passed away. We know the Batbusters run deep for each other.

Super competitive. We're super, super competitive. We see her, I'm like, Hey, you're too slow to go catch that little flyer, and she looks at me and laughs. No matter how competitive we are, the love runs deep for the Batbusters. For me and her, it's a full-circle moment on the field.

THE MODERATOR: That will wrap-up questions for players. Thank you. We'll continue with questions for coach.

**Q. Can you talk to us a little bit about that conversation this morning with Kelly, what that was like. What made this performance stand out the way it did?**

PATTY GASSO: What stood out is her response, without question. She has been going through a lot. She's been through a lot. This was a big game for her. It was really getting it off of her. It's been hanging on her since she got her. It's been hard to watch her not be able to break through.

There's so many negatives coming. It just is. It's everywhere. The conversation was really faith-based, just hand it over to the Lord and let Him guide you, just be free.

She has not pitched free. That's what's been going on. So to see her do that today, something I'll never forget (tearing up).

**Q. Can you talk about UCLA's pitching. They really did a good job on you guys.**

PATTY GASSO: They did. Very challenging. Our game plan was a little off. They're tough. They move the ball really, really well. I respect the job that those guys have done.

They're young pitchers. They did not come in feeling intimidated by us or anything. You knew that right from the start. They just pounded the zone, were making us chase, making us look. They did a really good job.

When I'm looking at these numbers, they're almost identical with the exception of Tiare's home run. It was quite a matchup, quite a matchup.

**Q. On Thursday it was the offensive explosion against Duke. Today offense is hard to come by for both teams. How important is it to win a defensive battle?**

PATTY GASSO: We've been doing that throughout the season at times. When you're offense has been a little stale, our defense will come up and make big plays. Our pitchers will make big competitive pitches.

Today our defense did a really nice job. UCLA was also hitting the ball pretty hard both sides. They robbed one from Pickering with a great play. We were just kind of going back and forth.

Defense is important. If you have two of three, you're lucky if you're going to beat UCLA with two of three. Fortunately we got that big hit.

But there were moments when I felt like we were putting good swings on, and they were making good plays early in the game. I don't know. Felt like two heavyweights going back and forth. I don't know what it felt like from the crowd, 'cause at times it could feel like it could be a boring game. We want offense. We want offense.

This is one of those good old-fashioned pitching duels. It's fun but it's, like, gut-wrenching.

**Q. Is there any update on Alynah?**

PATTY GASSO: Yeah, she got it pretty good. Definitely could not go back in the game. She's getting medical attention from our great doctors. We'll see if she'll be available. Fortunately we have the day off tomorrow, right? I don't even know (laughter). Yes, we have the day off. That's very needed for her. It's very needed for us, as well. Hopefully she can get back in, but I'm not sure yet.

**Q. Avery coming in at a moment's notice. Talk about her coming in and playing. Having the day off. How nice is it? When you're playing as well as you are, is it good to have the day off?**

PATTY GASSO: I will speak on behalf of them. It is great to have a day off. For me, I want to just keep playing and be done. Just the waiting around is not my favorite thing. But they need the rest.

I think any coach will tell you it's a different world now, it really is. It's a different world of softball. It is intense. The stakes are different. Everything feels different. It's hard to breathe sometimes. I know the athletes feel that. That student welfare is what I care about. I want them to be healthy, rested and I want them to feel safe, that we're not just get out there and keep going. You got to pay closer attention to this generation because they have a lot of needs, and rightly so.

Then you asked me something else.

**Q. Avery.**

PATTY GASSO: Avery, yeah. I did it backwards.

People are asking why do you keep doing that. Well, this is a great reason why, is you have someone that can come in and not miss a beat on defense. I think Avery was a little over-matched offensively. We were trying to work the dirt. We didn't get a pitch to allow us to really do that.

Having her there made us feel really good.

**Q. What was the decision for going back to Kelly?**

PATTY GASSO: We always look at matchups. I'm going to tell you our other pitchers are doing such a great job of sticking with us. They all want it.

I think it's very important after the conversation that I had with Kelly that we see how this plays out because we need her at another level with the rest of our pitchers.

Maybe it was a little bit selfish, but I know now that she knows what she can do, and that will open up the door for everybody else here, as well.

That was a lot to do with it.

**Q. You've had so many great hitters. Tiare is one of them. She's meant so much to you. What is it like to have that bat in the lineup?**

PATTY GASSO: Well, it kind of feels like Jocelyn Alo at times. When she comes up, you know something good is going to happen, especially on these big stages.

I think the softball world, whether you like us or not, we've got some really unbelievable athletes that you should enjoy watching. Maybe you don't like their style, but if you love good softball, then you should really appreciate what this group has been doing for a long time, living at a level that is very difficult.

The saying of heavy is the head that wears the crown is really true. It really is true. So right now, we aren't the No. 1 seed. We're just kind of rolling the way we need to, how we know how.

This team, I don't even know how to explain it. They are so comfortable and confident in this setting. I leave 'em alone. Let them do their thing.

**Q. Offense has been down throughout this tournament. Is it just a matter of dominant pitching or any other ways to explain? Almost like a throwback.**

PATTY GASSO: That's a good analogy because that's what softball was like back in the day. When you have Lisa Fernandez on the mound, you're not scoring more than one run.

I think the pitching staffs out there are very, very good. The way you can interchange some, if needed. It's a young group of pitchers that are really doing an outstanding job.

Gone are the days. This is Kelly throwing a full game. It's

almost gone are those days. But because she was in a place, we wanted to keep going.

Everyone has a good pitching staff. That's the difference. If you can call on two or three or four that you know can get the job done, that's what I'm seeing happening across the country.

THE MODERATOR: That will wrap things up for Oklahoma.

PATTY GASSO: Thank you.

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