

2024 Women's College World Series

Monday, June 3, 2024

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Florida Gators

Coach Tim Walton

Skylar Wallace

Kendra Falby

Postgame Press Conference



Florida 9, Oklahoma 3

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Florida.

We will start with an opening statement by coach.

TIM WALTON: Yeah, just super proud of our team, the way we came out today. Fourth straight day with some delays. Did a good job of staying resilient, focusing on us, things we can control.

Really proud. Obviously Keagan Rothrock, just her ability to bear the load, but more importantly the way she competes. There's an opportunity in those games that most average freshmen are going to get nervous. She found a way to get another gear and get better.

The offense did a really good job. Really good at-bats, two outs, two strikes. RBIs were huge. Super proud, obviously.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the players.

Q. Kendra, must have been a lot of relief coming from you. From your standpoint, what was it like getting that monkey off your back? Skylar, you were happy for her.

KENDRA FALBY: I knew a hit was coming. I didn't think it was going to be that one. I mean, it was like pure joy. Today I just made sure that, like, once you start getting in that hole, you start thinking things, you get in your own head. I made sure I stuck with my plan.

I've had really good at-bats at weekend. I was just hitting them right to people. Coach Thomas made jokes, Don't hit it right to them. Today I stuck with my plan, trusted myself.

That hit was like, yes, finally. Obviously Skylar at home was just like what we always do.

SKYLAR WALLACE: Yeah, I mean, I've been there. It's a struggle. You get in your own head, get away from who you are. It can be tough.

She was having really good at-bats, really good BP, just grinding it out. For her to get a little hole and run the bases. I think that's the quickest I've ever seen her run, honestly. It's just electric.

It was bound to happen. We've trusted her. We always will trust her and her ability. She has so many tools, options she can go with. We're super excited. She's not done yet. She's not done yet.

Q. Watching Keagan, what she does as a freshman, how big is that for your group?

KENDRA FALBY: I mean, we look back at, like, August from where Keagan was and where she is now has been incredible to watch. Being an upperclassman, patting her on the back, she's a gamer, she wants the ball, she's a competitor. As defense, we grind for her because we know how hard she's working up there. It's so cool that we're not done yet.

SKYLAR WALLACE: Yeah, I just love playing behind her. She puts so much trust in us. We put so much trust into her. I think she knows that. She knows that she's good. She knows she knows how to work the zone, get hitters out.

It allows us to play freely behind her. We know we're going to get our job done. She's been a lot of fun. The toughness and adversity she's gone through, from seeing her grow from August till now has just been amazing. So really proud of her.

Q. Three hits in the first two games, 20 in the last two games. Does this feel more like Florida softball?

SKYLAR WALLACE: I mean, this offense is unreal. We



take a lot of pride in our swings, all of our work. So we're never doubting who we are as hitters. We stick to our approaches. We make the pitchers work a lot.

You could tell today, I mean, we were firing. We had nothing to lose, playing free. Making the pitchers work in the zone. When they got it, we went.

Just been a lot of fun playing with this offense. We're super electric. I think that shows with the passion and trust we put into everything. I mean, it's just a lot of fun hitting with this team. A lot of, lot of fun.

Q. Can you talk to the mindset of the team coming into this game against Oklahoma. You have a forced elimination game tomorrow. How do you recover and get back out there?

KENDRA FALBY: We were really free. I think we were more mad at the fact that it kept raining. We just wanted to get the game going. I think the rain frustrated us more than fact we were playing Oklahoma.

This was the calmest I've seen the team today. Everyone was free, having fun with it. Going out there and being fearless. We're just going to keep doing that.

SKYLAR WALLACE: We're competitors. We love to play, get after it. We know we have 21 outs we get to play with. We're going to put all of it on the line and play Gator softball.

The fact we get to wake up one more day and put this uniform on, we have a lot of pride with that. We ran with that and have it to our advantage.

Q. Kendra, getting that catch that you had, obviously the home run, is that something where the catch leads to confidence at the plate, or are they two unrelated things?

KENDRA FALBY: I think the big catch kind of took me out of that little whatever was going on up in my head. It kind of made me calm.

Yeah, I feel like they're two different things. My main focus on defense has been I can't put any at-bats in defense. If I'm not going to be me up to bat, not get my job done, I'm going to make sure I work for my defense and Keagan. So yeah...

THE MODERATOR: That will do it for questions for players. Thank you. We'll continue with questions for coach.

Q. Talk about the job you did out there, and Rothrock.

TIM WALTON: Obviously the one knock on Keagan today would probably be the walks. But I think both pitching staffs were obviously feeling that they had to throw strikes to get strikes called. I thought that was very pivotal. Skylar mentioned it, making them get the ball over the plate. Keagan didn't throw the ball over the middle of the plate. Watching back, she missed a spot on Tiare that went over the fence.

Other than that, I think did a really good job of staying on the corners, being able to change speeds, changed eye levels a couple of times. Overall the defense behind her was good. I thought she stayed true to the plan, location and changing speeds.

Q. With the weather delay, the decision to push a game to tomorrow, how did that factor into decisions today? How might that play in with Keagan?

TIM WALTON: Yeah, if I told Keagan she's not pitching tomorrow, she's probably going to fight me. So I'll deal with that by myself at the hotel.

No, the weather didn't have anything to do with what we did today, how we did it. I think the only key was just spending a little bit more time together and just relaxing a little bit at the indoor.

Yeah, I mean, I say that jokingly. At the end of the day, Ava, she's a good pitcher. She's a different starter than she is coming in with runners on base. What happened the other day on Saturday, I'm very confident in Ava Brown, if Ava is the one tomorrow.

I think it would be an Ava, Keagan, Ava type of day like at Mississippi State, or a Keagan, Ava, Keagan day. That's what we were planning on with Texas the other day. Just didn't work out that way.

Q. I think Reagan is forgotten about in this lineup. How has she been this whole year?

TIM WALTON: 18 home runs. The RBIs. We have a lot of players with good RBIs.

To be honest with you, two things for Reagan. Number one, we had a tough conversation in the pre-season about positional stuff. What position are you? I told you the best chance to be an All-American is to be a utility player. Third, first, second, right field. She's a utility-type player, good softball player.

But she's in there for her at bat. Today I had to make a

tough decision with Avery Goelz and Reagan. Avery came in for Reagan. Reagan did a great job of being an unselfish teammate and allowed Avery to play defense and get that at-bat, but then Avery turns a double play, an unassisted double play. Not to say that Ava couldn't do that same thing, but it's a lot easier for a left-hander playing defense than it is a right-hander at times.

Give Reagan credit for being a good teammate and understanding the importance of what the defense meant at that point in time. It's not always been that way. What kid, when they call themselves an All-American, wants to give their at-bats away to somebody else or share their at-bats?

Gave her a really big nod after the game in the locker room just being an unselfish teammate. She works really hard. She's really found a lot more of a process now. She's not just a swinger. She has an understanding what she's trying to do.

The coolest thing for me is she doesn't show emotion. Coming around third base, she pointing to the stands, her family. Something she's dreamed about.

Q. Kendra and Skylar talked about playing free, loose. Did you get the feeling it was the opposite in the other dugout, they were tight?

TIM WALTON: I haven't seen 'em play a ton, unfortunately. Haven't played them a lot.

But, yeah, I don't know that. I think for us, I've always said this, when you get to the Women's College World Series, the coaches' jobs are to make the tough decisions, do things from a lineup perspective. For us right now, we're going to use some analytics, data points. Avery started yesterday, got a hit. Move back to Ava today, hit a double.

For me it's always about the players, the players that can handle the pressure, the players that can handle the process, the players that can handle the moment. It's really not about the coaches.

For those guys to say they felt free, comfortable, relaxed, they felt pressure-free, is a tip of the cap to them. We didn't really do anything different, to be honest with you. Every day here, the World Series, has been very similar. Just the results have been a little different, the hits have been a little bit different, but we've done about the same.

Q. Were you surprised at all that they started May today instead of Maxwell?

TIM WALTON: No. Not really. I mean, you say that, they

had a game to play. They had a game to give a little bit. I've never really thought of it that way when I coach. They had an opportunity for that, I think.

Again, they didn't throw Nicole May out there and say we're going to lose this game, we're going to throw it. She's obviously had a fantastic career.

I think they felt like it was a better matchup potentially for us. But, like I said before, I think our hitters did a really good job of laying off some stuff and getting pitches over the plate.

Q. Last night you got to talk about Kendra, the selfless competitor. Were you really happy for her to get that monkey off her back?

TIM WALTON: Yeah, Holly asked me the same question on the field, the same exact question that was asked too Kendra. I actually responded the same way that Kendra responded.

She hasn't shown signs of getting out. She's been working great. Process has been great. Line drives. We always kind of track barrels, how many barrels can you get in BP, what are you looking like with inside/outside, low/high stuff. She gets a lot of barrels. She's done a really good job.

To see her struggle is more kind of a snowball effect of struggle. Hitting it right to people. Trying to get to first before you actually hit the ball, not being able to finish up some swings.

Happy for her. We all are. We talked about this at super regionals. I don't know what the statistic is, but when Skylar and Kendra score, we're like the 30-1, 31-1. We need those guys to go. They're electric, create havoc. When they are on base, we typically score a lot.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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