

2025 Women's College World Series

Wednesday, May 28, 2025
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Florida Gators

Coach Tim Walton

Kendra Falby

Taylor Shumaker

Press Conference



The co-champions at the SEC tournament, the league itself, seven losses by Oklahoma. I don't even remember how many -- I think we had 11 losses. It was just a battle every single weekend. The 13 team that made it to the regional finals on that Sunday, our league of 14 teams making it just says a ton about the preparation of each one of our coaching staffs and staffs and players.

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with Florida. Coach, if you have an opening statement, you can. If not, we'll go straight to questions.

TIM WALTON: Yeah, just first of all, congratulations to the seven other teams that made it to the College World Series. Told my team as we began our journey that this is the greatest show on dirt and the greatest opportunity for student-athletes in our sport to play.

A great opportunity to be here, great atmosphere and just a great process to celebrate the final eight teams in the College World Series in Oklahoma City. Thanks to USA Softball, Oklahoma City, and the University of Oklahoma for hosting the event. Really looking forward to a great... I don't even know how many days we have played now, but a great series of softball. Pleased to be here, and thanks.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. Coach, SEC has always been crazy. You have had a couple of teams. Just how insane was the conference this year, and how prepared does that help you be in this situation?

TIM WALTON: On Saturday of the final SEC home game, I congratulated Coach Gasso at home plate for winning the SEC. I believe they won it the night before. We beat them, but another team lost a game, so they won the conference outright.

So I congratulated her at home plate. And she gave me a look, and she said, "Did we? Because it certainly didn't feel like it." I think that's a pretty good quote. It's her quote to me, but I think that sums up just how tough this league was this year.

But the most important thing is just the support system we have at home at the University of Florida and what they provide our coaches, staff, fans, players. The support we have is endless, and you see that in the finished product on the field. It's just how our players take all the resources that they have, and that to me is just something that's really evolved in my time in this game. And I'm very, very happy to be where I'm at.

Q. Tim, Kendra has had her two longest outings since being out. What's that ramp-up been like in terms of the velocity coming into this week?

TIM WALTON: The velocity piece never really vanished, per se. She still was throwing pitches. I think the one thing you can see, the spin rate piece. Georgia, Friday afternoon when we played, she had more swing-and-misses in that Friday game than she had probably in her previous 15. Just a ton of swing-and-misses.

So the spin rate is up. Things are starting to break a lot better. She's getting the ball in and out of the zone like she's accustomed to doing. We didn't have our data in stadium. We didn't have what was going on in the stadium, but things weren't the same as in practices, and she's repeating that.

But the injury was just an odd injury, and she never really lost any velocity. She took a couple weeks off from pitching. And I think the one thing that probably impacted the most, just the sharpness in game, getting her pitches in the right locations.

But I think she's... this weekend she pitched really well. She's had some really good three- or four-inning stints from

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a lot of good teams, including the Oklahoma series and Ole Miss in the SEC tournament.

Q. Since you mentioned Coach Gasso and Oklahoma, I wanted to ask you for your thoughts on the coaching job that she's done this year, after losing as many players as she did last year, to get this team back to OKC.

TIM WALTON: Yeah, I don't think it's fair to my players to answer that question. We're here to talk about the Gators and what we're doing. They're obviously doing a fantastic job. Nothing against that question; to me, I'm here to talk about my team.

Q. Kendra, you guys were obvious here last year. I'm just curious what part did last year play in this season, whether motivation or learning? How did '24 play into '25?

KENDRA FALBY: Yeah, the first thing we talked about when we got back together in the fall was literally like we want to get back to OKC and we have an unfinished job to finish and that sour taste in the mouth.

And this is Taylor's first year, and letting her know this is going to be a lot of fun and our story's not over yet and we're all on the same page and ready to come here and win.

It's also nice, too, that we have a lot of people that have already been here before. So we have a lot of young players that were here last year who have experience. We have older players that have been here who have experience. And we also have transfers that have been here. We have a lot of experience, a lot of people who have been here before, and just making it comfortable for the people who haven't.

Q. Tim, I have a whole other question to ask you. Since you guys were here last, Oklahoma City was awarded the Olympics in '28. I know you're focused on your team, but everybody has an eye on international competition. What are just your thoughts about this being an Olympic venue in a few years and Team USA budding out of this place?

TIM WALTON: Yeah, it's a great training opportunity. And naming Coach Gasso as the head coach is good for Team USA and the location of Norman, Oklahoma, to having technology that USA Softball players haven't had, quite frankly, and training opportunities.

So we got a lot of catching up to do to get on the same level where Japan's at right now currently in international

play. They're really good and know how to win the last game. And we have a lot of work to do.

But I think the cool thing is there's a lot of really good players to select from. There's a lot of young players that are capable and a lot of veteran players who have carried that torch and continued that march.

The sport's in good hands. There's a lot of good softball all the way across the world. And I spent a long time with Team USA, and just the players in it, they're hungry and passionate and want to win. It's a great place for them to play on home soil. It's the LA Olympics in Oklahoma City, but this is the best facility to house this many good softball players. So makes sense.

Q. For Taylor, you said before the season you mentioned how Kendra had kind of taken you under her wing and walked you into the season, and here you are sitting next to her in Oklahoma City. Can you put into context what the last year's been like? You said you used to watch the Gators on your laptop computer and yell in class in high school, and here you are with Coach, and the award last night. Can you speak to the whole thing?

TAYLOR SHUMAKER: I think it's all really, really surreal. It's crazy to think I'm here after watching it for so many years, and to be here with some of my best friends on planet Earth is an unreal experience.

It's an unreal venue, so many amazing softball fans. We're growing the game we have been playing since we were five, six years old. And to be able to be a part of it and to be able to help grow the game that I love so much is really, really special, and especially to do it with the people I'm doing it with.

Q. Coach Walton, you mentioned Japan earlier, and I wanted to ask your thoughts after I think five years now of what your opinion is of Athletes Unlimited and what they've brought to the support and the possibilities now of them adding the team format to the individual format and what that can do for the game going forward.

TIM WALTON: I have always been an advocate of the game. I have coached professionally myself with the MPF. And I will be brief because, again, I want to talk about my athletes. I think it's an awesome opportunity that softball players have the opportunity to be called professionals.

I have a player on my program who plays on Athletes Unlimited group that trains with us and is one of our grad managers, and it's an awesome opportunity for her to be a



professional softball player, to bridge that gap, and hopefully try out for Team USA and get a chance to compete on that roster.

So, I think it's great. Anybody that can invest in female student-athletes to become female professionals, I'm a fan of theirs. I think it's a great game. It's a fun thing to watch for people of all ages and from all over this country. And a lot of people have probably never even been to a fast-pitch softball game and watched some really good competition.

So I think it's awesome that Athletes Unlimited is branching out and training and paying more athletes. And we've got a ton of former Gators playing, and really proud of them continuing their dreams.

Q. Tim, Taylor's season is remarkable regardless of the fact that she's a freshman. Why have those tools translated so quickly?

TIM WALTON: Yeah, I think we talked long and hard about how she's been able to simplify the process and continue from the beginning of August to when we got her to where we were now.

There were some speed bumps along the way and some thoughts in the process about it's gotten really hard, and made some adjustments and figured out we're making too many adjustments. And.

At the end of the day, it's all about building relationships -- number one, the relationship you have with yourself when things get hard. Kendra and Taylor can speak to that, I can speak to that.

But the ability to simplify things. It's not a very complicated process. It's a beautiful swing. Anybody that comes out and watches, they don't even know anything, wow, that's really, really, really, really pretty swing. It's good. She's competitive, strong. She can leverage balls.

But the ability to hit the ball from left field pole to right field pole is not something just anybody can do, especially with power. And now she's working hard, even from her junior year on, not just to hit the ball but to hit the ball with purpose and have some intent behind it and still hit for a high average.

And the one thing we added is now the discipline to when they're trying to walk you, take ball four. Don't put the ball in weakly just because you want to hit. That's something that takes time to do, and she's really, in my opinion, gelled really well with not just the process but the teammates, programs, the coaches. And ultimately we listen to her when she talks because she knows her swing better than

we do.

Q. For Tim and Kendra, you spoke to the strength of the SEC. Your half of the bracket looks like the top four seeds are there. Looks like an SEC championship, a national semifinal championship. Can you talk about how the bracket fell? Are you a "we need to re-seed this," or are you an "it is what it is" guy?

TIM WALTON: I know we're three seed. I don't even know what anybody else is seeded. If you're going to win a championship, you have to play good teams anyway, so what's it matter? To me it doesn't matter. We've beaten everybody in the country and we have lost to people, so I think it's just going to be who can handle the moment and who can make less excuses and figure out how to play softball. That's what we're here to do.

We're here to play. We play Texas to first game. It's going to be dang tough on them and it's going to be dang tough on us. I don't think it really matters. You can go through all the process of seeding and re-seeding and somebody is going to complain about something. To me it's... here we are. We're here to play ball, and we got an opportunity to march through June, which is something we set out as one of our goals.

KENDRA FALBY: I think it's exactly what Coach Walton said. That it is what it is, and we're happy to be here. This was our goal. Now we just focus on playing Texas and whatever after that. Our main goal is to come out tomorrow, be the Gators and if we're if Gators, everything is going to be fine.

Q. This one is for Taylor. Your 86 RBIs this season are tied for the most in program history with Jocelyn from last year. Just curious if you could talk a little bit about your relationship with her, if it's more competitive or mentorship and what that's like for you.

TAYLOR SHUMAKER: I have been playing with Joce for a long time. I got to be her teammate my sophomore year and we got to win in the Lion's Championship together and I think being able to have our paths cross again in college and make it here nonetheless is really, really, really cool.

And honestly I think Joce is somebody everybody team needs. She's very level-headed. She will keep you calm when the moment gets a little too big and she's always there to remind me that I'm meant to be where I am, that I belong here. So Joce has been really, really special to my process and I appreciate her.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you, Florida.



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