

2025 Women's College World Series

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Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Oregon Ducks

Coach Melyssa Lombardi

Kai Luschar

Lyndsey Grein

Paige Sinicki

Press Conference



have? But that's my observation. Why was this the right team in your mind?

MELYSSA LOMBARDI: It was the right team. I think of all of our versions prior to version seven, and they have helped prepare us to get to this point. Our seniors, they left the torch for this group to take it and run with it.

But, again, just in the fall, you can just feel such a difference with this group. There was just so much more depth with this group in all areas, just with our culture.

And I think of Kai and Paige and what they have done for the culture this year and the leadership they have provided. You can see this team start out as a team where for us as coaches we had to help lead them along the way, but as we got going and the more experiences they got and the growth they got through the tough schedule we played, they started to become a player-led team.

And I just look at what this group has done on the field and more importantly what they're doing off the field, and it's the deep connection that they have. There's no surface here. They play hard for each other. They have tough conversations because they know it will make each other better. Those are things that are needed, also having a team that's very talented, to be able to do the things that we have been able to do all year.

Q. Coach, for you, you talked about the adversity this team had to overcome this season, but your journey here in Oregon has been one faced with adversity from 2019 to 2020 and COVID and losing half a season. Just what are some of the lessons you learned from your first two years that you were able to take in this season that allowed you to develop and grow these players and help get this squad to obviously where they are here today?

MELYSSA LOMBARDI: First off, every version I have been part of, every one of them has been so special. I think of version one, and it was a tough year for us. And you know what? We didn't feel sorry for ourselves. We stuck together, we battled through, and we had a great

THE MODERATOR: Coach Lombardi, if you want to have an opening statement, feel free. If not, we'll go to questions.

MELYSSA LOMBARDI: First of all, we're really excited to be here. I think about this group and the end of September and we met for the first time, and at that time I could feel that they had a lot of energy and something was different. Something was very special about them.

We spoke in the fall about winning a Big Ten. We spoke about hosting a regional, hosting a super regional, and then putting ourselves into position to compete in OKC for a national championship.

And to watch this team come together all year and have many moments of joy, many moments of adversity, and watch them handle both with such grace, with such determination, to play hard and fight for each other and then to watch them go into post-season and battle two very different teams and know that they were going to get what they want and push their way and get into Oklahoma City.

They are committed to each other. They cannot wait to get started, and we are really looking forward to playing in such an amazing atmosphere in OKC.

Q. Following with that, talking with Patty earlier, she volunteered that one of the things you mentioned earlier this year, you felt this was the right team. Why was this the right team when you were losing as much as you were from last year with a senior-laden team? Why was this the right team compared to last year or the '23 and '21 teams that had a lot pitching but maybe not the volume of depth of hitting and pitching that you



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year.

And I think the next year and having to go into COVID, and, again, dealing with some tough times, but as a group we always stuck together and pushed -- we could either push through or feel sorry for ourselves. We didn't want to do that; so we wanted to push through and compete.

Watching each version layer on to the next version and get them ready for what's next, sometimes you just want something and you want it right now, but you need to, I don't know, nurture it a little bit. Put it together. It just takes a little time.

And you can see as we were going through it, starting to see these athletes that were coming in, that were just understanding the vision completely and wanting in and wanting to compete.

And you could just see that with this group. They want in. They want our culture to be unbelievable, which is great. They want to be able to compete and love competing with each other, and they do. This group is such a hardworking team, and I don't think this group would be here without the foundation of version one.

So it was tough, but it was absolutely 100% worth this ride.

Q. To the players, to that point of just where this program has come in and built up from the ground up, what is it like watching a coach do that and just putting all your faith into her?

KAI LUSCHAR: It's just incredible. I think, like, we grow, but coaches also grow too. And it's super cool just to see our journey and everything that we've been through together and where we're at right now. It's just amazing. It's indescribable, honestly.

LYNDSEY GREIN: Yeah, I think watching the amount of work she's put in. Coming in as a transfer, I met Coach this past year. She really cultivates those relationships off the field just as she does on the field. So she's bought into you as a person before you as an athlete.

So I think the way she's gone about making us a family and inviting us all into hers has shown up for the success that you guys have witnessed this season. So I'm super excited to carry that on.

PAIGE SINICKI: She's told us to trust her from day one. And I know all of us, especially the senior class, has really bought into growing with her. And that's something she's been able to do for us these years. Just being able to trust someone that's helped us become great, young, and

strong women, it's so cool that it's bigger than softball at the end of the day. She's trying to grow us for something that's bigger in life. So that's been awesome to have from her.

Q. Kai, you mentioned that teams can grow, coaches can grow. When you think about the journey from September to now, whether it's the mile markers, the turning point, where did you see that growth to get here playing the last weekend of May?

KAI LUSCHAR: We did some things we had never done before in the fall, and I think we just really learned to dive in and just attack and let it loose. We had things in us that I didn't think we were allowing to get let out, if that makes sense.

So I think that has been one of the biggest things this year where we've grown, just to put it all on the table and let it be there, leave, come back the next day, do it all again.

Q. First for Kai and Paige, to go back to if you picked up the proverbial torch from the classes before, you each managed to spend time with the players of the various different versions before you. We can look at numbers and stats and say, well, that's Ariel or Bunk or Terra, or what have you, but we don't see all the other things that go on and all the trips that sort of thing. If you had to think of who are the shoulders you stand on to get here, I can rattle off all the names, but who comes to mind for you two as to who those players were?

KAI LUSCHAR: I think that's going to be different for every player, but for me personally, I think of Hanna Delgado... there's so many, I honestly can't even tell you individual people. All of them, but Hanna Delgado, Katelyn Howard, all kinds of people.

PAIGE SINICKI: For me, Allee Bunker. The moment I stepped on campus, she took me under her wing and taught me what it's like to be a leader on the field, and I was able to grow so much from her style of play.

And she taught me a lot of things physically, but she was just this person that was a role model to me. And I think she was able to grow so much from Coach Lombardi, and I think she was able to teach me her ways and just help get this program where it needs to be when she left.

Q. What do you attribute to the success of this season specifically? Because, again, you were already at VA Tech, obviously, but how did you go from being really good to being great and nearly untouchable against top teams?

LYNDSEY GREIN: I think it was just the ability to play free, and I think that this group allowed me to do that between my coaches, our support staff, and then obviously my teammates. I think when you're around the right people and you're working towards one mission, it's easy to just go compete and play. And I'm really thankful to have a group that's allowed me to do that.

Q. For each of the three players, each of you have had your own journeys, your own walks of life that you came from before you came to Oregon and you've dealt with in your time in Eugene. Can you describe what this moment being in the Women's College World Series means to you considering what each of you have gone through in your own individual lives and what you've gone through together as a team as well to get to this point?

KAI LUSCHAR: You know, it's a dream come true. I came here in 2016 as a spectator with my dad, sister, and a friend, and most people never get to experience it. So I'm just so grateful. And it's just astounding, coming here when you're little, and then being able to play. It's incredible.

LYNDSEY GREIN: Yeah, I would say on an individual level, it's just -- it takes an army to accomplish what we've accomplished here at Oregon, and I think of the investment of everybody who has come across my journey and these young ladies' journeys as well that's helped us. So I'm super grateful and thankful for the opportunity. And as a team, it's an honor to share the field again with these guys, especially in OKC.

PAIGE SINICKI: I think for me it's I've really realized that things in life don't come easy. And so being able to have the discipline and the hard work all these years to really enjoy this moment with the girls to the left and right of you, it's really awesome.

I remember all the times growing up watching the game on TV or even the past few years where maybe we fell short and didn't get here, it's really cool to see a program like this planting a seed for hopefully all of us to reap the harvest later on.

Q. Melyssa, you've compared this team, I believe, to Syd Romero's freshman team at OU. I'm curious what parallels you see there in this group, and off of what Kai said, maybe what you guys did differently in the fall that brought some different things out of this team.

MELYSSA LOMBARDI: I think about that group, and it was the same. It was a mixture of a young freshman class

sprinkled in with some older athletes that were experienced and some athletes that were sophomores and juniors that were experienced.

So just going through this year, this group reminds me of that. I mean, the two teams are very different, obviously, but similar with that I think about our freshmen this year. And we talk a lot about taking on strain and everybody needs to have the ability to take on strain, and usually you see that more through your upperclassmen who are experienced.

And our upperclassmen have taken on a lot of strain, but you watch our freshmen, like Rylee and Stefini Ma'ake and all these other guys, they have been a huge part of what we have done, and that's attributed to this group right here, our seniors, that have forced them to play at a high level.

I think about that and Coach Romero's year, they were forced to play at a high level from experienced athletes. So to see our freshmen stand up to it and say yes, let me know what you need me... you know, for our seniors to ask them to play at a higher level and for them to do that.

And so to me, that is the leadership that we have here that I'm really, really proud about. We have such great leadership on and off the field. They trust each other so much. They work hard and play hard for each other versus themselves. And I think that's really important when you're doing something like this and competing for a national championship.

To speak on the fall, we did. We got to do some things that were different than we've done before. We needed to push ourselves. We've pushed ourselves before, but we needed to push ourselves in a different way. We needed to understand how to do challenging things and not be stressed by challenging things but to embrace and to enjoy every minute of it and the opportunity of it to get to versus have to.

And I think the lessons that we learned in the fall really took us into the spring and set a really good foundation for our non-conference schedule, and then from there, that preparing us for our conference and, again, preparing for post-season.

Q. Lyndsey's had a great season, but how much has Elyse and Staci in this post-season played into that as well?

MELYSSA LOMBARDI: They've all played into it. We talked all year that if we want to be standing here, we have to have a staff to be able to do that.



And what I'm very, very proud of is our staff and what they've done. This staff is different. This group is just different, but our staff is different as well. I love how much they love each other. I love that when they take the ball from each other, they hug each other. And that's saying I got you. I'll finish this for you.

They work on their craft, but they also work on each other's as well. They're very aware of what the other is doing, and they're a team within a team. And I think of softball, and it's about pitching. It's always been. And you've got to be able to have that staff that can handle different looks that they're going to see. And I love that our staff can do that.

I think about Staci Chambers. She was injured in her first weekend and from there had to get some things situated and rehabbed and back. And so it was taking her a little bit to get back to where she needed to be.

Indiana, we're playing them, bottom of the seventh, game is tied up, hasn't had a lot of innings, and I said Staci, let's go. Because she was the match-up. She's a competitor, and I knew she was going to get it done. That's what I think about with every one of our pitchers.

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

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