

2025 Women's College World Series

Thursday, May 29, 2025

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Oklahoma Sooners

Coach Patty Gasso

Ella Parker

Kasidi Pickering

Sam Landry

Postgame Press Conference



Oklahoma 4, Tennessee 3

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with an opening statement from Coach Gasso. If you have an opening statement...

PATTY GASSO: Wow... just speechless when you're down there and when you're a team that is struggling to find a way to get on base. And I thought Tennessee played outstanding. Pickens pitched outstanding.

The one thing that we noticed, and I'm just going to be really honest, is I was watching people leave the game, and it was in the seventh. And I shared that with the team, not that that had anything to do with anything, but people thought we were done.

One thing, if you're watching us through the season, we're never done. You give us one extra strike or one extra pitch and we're going to find something out of it. Usually Ella's on the end of that. So been really proud of her and those big moments of really locking it down, locking in.

But you could feel that we were gaining a little bit of momentum. We started playing really good defense, getting those double plays and shutting them down when they had really big scoring opportunities. So we just needed to stay in the game as long as we could and give ourselves a chance, whether it's in the fifth, the fourth, or the seventh, or the ninth. As long as we have one swing left, we have life.

Q. Just take us through the at-bat, Ella. It was such a great at-bat for you. And, Kasidi, if you could talk about your at-bat because you keep the inning going. But let's start with Ella first, please.

ELLA PARKER: Just understanding to keep passing the bat. I wasn't trying to make any moment too big. I thought all the batters before that did a good job staying loose throughout the moment and not letting the moment get to big.

I looked at Maya Bland, and she said, "God's got you. He's our fourth man in the fire." So I stuck with it and ran with it, and we kept the faith until the end.

KASIDI PICKERING: Yeah, throughout my whole at-bat, I was just: Pass the bat, pass the bat. Don't go outside yourself. Ella will have your back.

So that's what got me into it.

Q. Sam, a bunch of double plays up the middle infield, and especially in the seventh. How big was that and for you and the defense to keep battling?

SAM LANDRY: Yeah, it's amazing, we work on double plays all the time. So they're fun to turn in a game. They're definitely a momentum changer. So having them there to change the momentum, keep it on our side. Basically the whole game was kind of on their side. So when we could take those moments and get it back in our dugout, it was a win.

Q. Ella, it looked like you almost pulled the trigger on the first pitch of that last at-bat. How close were you to that? And did you notice Patty dancing as you ran by her?

ELLA PARKER: I honestly don't really remember the first pitch. I just remember rounding the bases with my team's arms wide open and starting to get really teary-eyed and really emotional. And it was really, really cool to have them with us this whole time. And we never got out of it. We kept the faith until the end. And just being able to run into them was, like, really, really, really awesome.

Q. Sam, can I ask you real quick just about staying in the winner's bracket side of things. You get a day of

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rest now. Just sort of hanging in there after a rough first inning for you.

SAM LANDRY: Yeah, you know, not every pitch is going to go my way, but this team is amazing in everything that they do. So I trust them. I knew that -- I was telling Nelly before the game, I just have a feeling about this game. Something is going to happen. Between the double plays, Ella's hit, two home runs, just something about it. I knew that if I stayed locked in, they were going to come around. So I just kept them where I could.

Q. Hi, Ella. Playing for a program like this, I imagine there's so many athletes that you look up to and can be inspired by. Can you talk a little bit about that? Maybe some players that you watched, and then you being that person for all the young girls who are watching you?

ELLA PARKER: I just think it was really cool to have all these players that I looked up to either in the dugout with me or right against the fence in the front row. And I think I looked at Joce the last at-bat, and I was like: We got this, we got this.

So being able to finally be that just makes me really passionate about what's to come for our future and being able to pass that down to next generation.

Q. Ella, you spent part of the season dealing with an injury, but you've come on strong here in the back half over the last month. What over that stretch has worked for you so well or has had you so locked in?

ELLA PARKER: Just learning more to invest in my teammates. And I know my teammates have my back, and I know I have theirs. Being able to really pour into them helped me, I guess, lock in. Just being able to have them and know that they're my backbone is something I started to learn more about.

Q. This is for the players. Can you just kind of describe in your words what Sooner Magic is, and do you feel like you accomplished it today?

KASIDI PICKERING: Basically we're just so invested in each other and knowing you're never out. If there's one pitch left to play, we know we can take the game over. And going even to the seventh, like Sam kept us in the game the whole time, but we all still had that faith that we weren't out yet.

ELLA PARKER: It's just keeping the faith, like Kas said. Just knowing that you're never out of it until it's over.

SAM LANDRY: What they said. Just kidding. Sooner Magic, they say it a lot. Sooner Magic travels. So I think just knowing wherever we go, we have such a big fan base, even when we were in California.

I think a lot of the Sooner Magic comes from the people that are out there supporting us, and then we're able to keep that within our team and give the glory to God.

Q. Ella, I saw your family right before that at-bat and just today hugging each other. Can you talk about how they have inspired your journey?

ELLA PARKER: My family is my number one support system. I started playing this sport because my older sister played, and I wanted to be exactly like her. So being able to have that moment and share that moment with them is so awesome to me.

THE MODERATOR: Any more player questions? Okay. Thank you, players. You're dismissed.

PATTY GASSO: You're dismissed.

THE MODERATOR: We'll start questions for Coach Gasso now.

Q. Patty, I know we talked about this a couple of times. Are you ever surprised at the way this team is able to stay locked in even in these kind of situations? You talk about the SEC tournament against Arkansas and other times you have been in these situations and come through.

PATTY GASSO: I can hear them out there. It's still -- still everyone is on high here.

This team, this surprised me, so much so that I lost myself for a minute. And I'm going to probably regret that, but I felt it. We weren't so great today. I think they would tell you. We were letting the early score dampen our spirits a bit, and we were making uncharacteristic mistakes, things like that. But then once we scored, kind of felt something. And we'd get a couple of runners in scoring position, and it would kind of die out.

So it was really getting frustrating. But there's something about this -- we're so blessed on this platform, and these guys do have faith and they believe in their abilities. It doesn't -- it surprised me today. But sometimes it just makes you smile. Like, there's no way you just did that.

Q. What specifically is it about Ella that let her perform that way in that kind of moment?

PATTY GASSO: It's extreme belief in herself and extreme focus in what she's trying to do. I don't think she's up there trying to hit a home run. She's trying to make solid contact. And that's the good part of it. If she's trying to hit a home run, she'll pop it up a mile high.

So it's just really setting herself up. She had already done it. So she kind of knew what she needed or what she was looking for. And it was a tough situation to pitch in as well because you knew what was at stake. So I think Ella took a little advantage of that.

Q. Patty, along those lines, Ella's had a lot of big moments through her first couple of years, but when you think about some of what she dealt with this year, the pain, some of the struggles, just what does a moment having a day like today mean to her?

PATTY GASSO: If you knew -- I won't share all of it. This is a young lady still in pain. You don't look at it and think, oh, she is swinging great. She has really taken a mental turn onto how to be there present for her team.

When this is done, like right now, she feels nothing. None of us do. We're just kind of floating around here now. But when we get back to the hotel, she's going to be hurting, extremely.

She's been really handling it like no one I've seen. It's really, really been tough for her. But, again, she really truly says it from the heart, it's for the team. These guys have become really close, and they have felt -- I don't know, they're just underdogs, but they never say that. They never say they're underdogs. They just think that people don't completely believe in them because they're so new to the program, and they just keep proving otherwise.

Q. Patty, the way your defense played today, how rare is it to get some of those big plays, the double plays that you guys had with a team this young in this big moment?

PATTY GASSO: They love, love, love defense so much that my shoulder, my knee, everything is falling apart because we just have to hit them ground balls constantly. They're all great hitters, but a lot of them, if you asked them what they like better, they'd say defense.

They believe, and I believe, defense wins championships. And we had our backs against the wall, and we're rolling double plays to get out of it and keeping ourselves in the game.

Coach Rocha is coming over asking, I don't know, I think we might need to make a change. And we're just -- a lot of

things just keep us within two runs, and the defense did that.

Uncharacteristic mistake with Pick, and she would tell you that. I know she didn't feel great about that. But the infield and Hannah Coor's play was an absolute momentum changer, and that really saved the game for us because they were about ready to go off.

Those guys swing really, really well. But these prime-time defensive plays brought momentum into our dugout.

Q. Patty, I will ask similar to what I asked Sam, the importance of winning an opener. You guys have won a championship, obviously, not winning the opener, but the way this setup is, just how crucial... obviously you want to win everything at this stage, but how crucial did this feel like this was? And maybe your experience, it's in your head differently than it is the players'.

PATTY GASSO: It is. It is an absolute bear to try, almost impossible. I remember that year, and I don't remember that year, but it was us and Florida State losing our first games here and playing every game you could possibly play to get to the national championship game together in different brackets.

It is very, very difficult. It is exhausting, to the point where you're like I feel uncomfortable with how these players look. They're completely out of gas.

Thankfully we've added more off days. Winning the first game sets you up. Sets you up. It's really, really important. And I think this team doesn't even know that. We talked about it, and they don't listen. They just do their thing.

Now that they know they get a day off, they're going to celebrate harder than they did when the ball got hit over the fence. So they like their rest. It's a big blessing for your team.

Q. Saturday after clinching the super, you talked about clutchness. How do you find it? How do you foster it? How does it keep finding its way top to bottom on your roster?

PATTY GASSO: I think you witnessed it right there. It's, again, where your heart is, and your heart wants to do it for your team, for your program, maybe even for your coaches. Like, you're bought in. You're bought in with what you're doing, and you're going to do anything you can to do it the right way.

And that's what I love about this team, is that they're just -- they'll sell out for you, and they don't care. They don't care what the score is, they'll just keep fighting until they get there. And they've proven that.

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Q. There's a lot made about Pickens' speed, but doing rise, drop, change, how hard is that to prepare for, and how it goes with Ella hitting two home runs off someone who has only given up six all season?

PATTY GASSO: Yeah, well, our preparation is almost ridiculous. We're putting up the machines at like 80 miles per hour. A machine can't even pitch that hard. So we're trying a little bit of everything. We were really trying to stay off the ball up and stay off the change-ups and just really try to attack early, early, early in the count.

We drew some important walks, but I've not seen, nor have they seen, speed like this except from her. So it is tough. It's hard to train for.

And you had a second part to that, or did I get it? Oh, Ella. I call her a professional hitter. She's got a beautiful, pure swing, and she knows how to get there short. She can handle. She's someone Pick can handle that speed. A couple others can, and others were trying to. So it just timed up perfect timing, and that's just the blessings that we continue to get on this platform. It's amazing.

Q. Patty, was there a decision between maybe subbing out Sam Landry, and what went into that? And also what were your discussions like with her throughout the game?

PATTY GASSO: There was a little talk between Coach Rocha and I about KD because KD had a pretty good go against them and Sam just was falling behind in counts. So we were talking a bit, but we just kind of -- she kept getting outs and started to get more ground ball outs for us later in the game. So we stayed with that.

And just conversations with her is just: Steady, steady. Stay with it. How are you feeling?

Oh, I get so mad, I get mad at myself.

Okay. Bring it back. Bring it back.

Again, pitchers don't want to let down their team. It's emotions pitchers deal with a lot. They deal a lot with that emotions, highs and lows. And she gutted it out today.

THE MODERATOR: All right, that'll wrap things up for Oklahoma. Thank you.