

# 2026 Women's College World Series

Wednesday, May 27, 2026  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

**Arkansas Razorbacks**

**Coach Courtney Deifel**

**Ella McDowell**

**Robyn Herron**

**Dakota Kennedy**

Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: We'll go ahead and get going. We're joined by Arkansas head coach Courtney Deifel and players Ella McDowell, Robyn Herron, and Dakota Kennedy.

COURTNEY DEIFEL: We're just excited to be here. We're enjoying all the events today. We're excited to get after it at practice and excited to roll tomorrow.

But we are definitely soaking this in today and enjoying it.

**Q. Courtney, where is it kind of finding the balance of enjoying a day like today and being this team, the first one to do it, but knowing there's still a national title at stake as well?**

COURTNEY DEIFEL: I think the nice thing about today is you get to go through all of these festivities, we'll say, and we have practice on the back end of today. We get to go through it, focus on practice and turn the page and get ready to compete tomorrow.

The nice thing with this team, we haven't had to focus in getting ready to compete. We saw some video today. We still have practice tonight. We'll get up tomorrow and go through our game day routine, and it's a pretty easy balance with this group.

**Q. Coach, we talked about this before this season about the family history here and you playing here in a World Series and then watching your sister play here. Has there been any memories that has hit you since you're here today and since you arrived here? What's kind of the family situation? Who's going to be here this week?**

COURTNEY DEIFEL: The whole family is here. My husband and boys are behind you back there. My sister, my mom, they come in tomorrow. My dad, my stepmom come in tonight.

Yeah, we had a seven-year run here, our family did. You know, I was asked that before we got on the bus the other day of -- about this event. We haven't done this event. We were there back when it started when she played when just the National Championship was on TV. When I started, the sidelines were berm, and it was grass, and my senior year was when they extended the seating.

We haven't walked out on the field yet. When we walk out on the field, I think it's going to be pretty amazing to see how much it's grown. It definitely has been incredible to see the growth of the sport, and that's definitely reflected in the growth of the World Series and the stadium and the exposure and the stage and the press and all of those things.

It's just a really exciting time to be involved in softball, and I'm really looking forward to these players getting to experience that.

**Q. Courtney, Rhonda got a little emotional when talking about your friendship, calling it an honor to play against you tomorrow. Just what does your friendship with her mean to you? I know there's a huge game on the line obviously, but what will it be like to play against a close friend tomorrow?**

COURTNEY DEIFEL: It's so beyond softball, and it's so beyond the competition. She has one of the biggest hearts in this world, in this life. So to get to see her just do what she loves with the team and seeing how she coaches them, see how they look at her and respond to her, I feel that in my heart too every time I look at her.

So I think there's just such an immense amount of respect and love between the two of us, and we also know that we're going to line it up, and you can have both. You can have both. You can really love someone and respect them and want to compete and put everything out there and try



to win the game. I think that we both have both of those things in our hearts.

**Q. Once again, congratulations. Ella and Robyn as well, a thought on this, you guys haven't played a game this late. Are you worried about the routine of the day? Maybe being antsy, trying to calm the nerves down?**

ROBYN HERRON: I think it's going to be not the nerves sitting with us, it's just we're wanting to play so soon and so excited to be here. I've played an 8:00 p.m. game before. It will be kind of a similar schedule, just doing our normal pregame routine, but just wanting to be out there and having to wait that long.

Sure, we want to play early, but we're just excited to play.

ELLA MCDOWELL: I'm just very excited and very thankful to be here, especially this late in the season. Postseason is all I've ever dreamed about as a softball player. So any game that I can play with my teammates, I'm so thankful for.

**Q. Courtney, when you came here, I'm sure you shared in the process of, hey, this is a sleeping giant. I believe in what we can build here. What were those thoughts that first season when you were going through that, and how much do you savor the moment now that you're here?**

COURTNEY DEIFEL: My belief never wavered in the first season. The first season was a lifetime ago, so thanks for bringing it up again (laughter). No, I think going there, it was a why not? Why not? Some people were like why Arkansas? Some people probably asked why Arkansas, why Courtney Deifel?

At the end of the day, we both saw a lot in each other, and it's worked out really well. The belief and the ability to do this, when we were going to do this, that hasn't wavered. We knew it was there for the taking. We knew it was there for the building. It was getting the right people around me and getting the right players in that continued to work towards this. And we just -- our belief never wavered.

**Q. For both Robyn and Coach, as you've been diving into Nebraska's lineup, what are some of the challenges that they present?**

ROBYN HERRON: I mean, they're just a well-rounded lineup. They have pretty much all, I guess, tools you could have, but we do too in ours. They're just good competitors, and we're ready to get out there.

COURTNEY DEIFEL: I just think they're very complete, and then I think that they do a lot of things really well, and they're doing that really well right now. Yeah, I think they're really strong 1 through 9. They're strong with the next few that come in. So we're continuing to dive in the prep of how to counter that.

**Q. Robyn, I know your faith is hugely important to you. You're such a leader on and off the field. How has that faith kind of helped you become a leader, and how has your faith kind of grown you throughout the journey?**

ROBYN HERRON: I think it's helped me a lot. It's helped me know who I am and that my identity is not formed in this sport. And just knowing that about myself helps me lead others and cared for others. I think just loving one another is so important, and I've really just learned how to display that with my teammates this year.

**Q. For the three players, describe playing for Coach Deifel, what she's meant to all of you, and getting to the World Series. Obviously you want to get here as a team, but also getting her back here to the World Series as a head coach.**

DAKOTA KENNEDY: I think it's just unwavering faith in us throughout this entire season, just her belief in us as players, as people, us on this team. I think it's meant so much for me for sure, and I think all of us on the team.

I think just her leadership, knowing that she's been here and instilling that in us, I think it's a great opportunity to get here and her be with us.

ROBYN HERRON: I think for me personally, Coach Deifel has believed in me even when I didn't believe in myself. Her just being able to be that supportive and just how much she loves us just makes us want to go to war for her any day, like I would do anything for her.

Just the woman that she is just inspires us all to be better as her players.

ELLA MCDOWELL: Coach Deifel makes so many sacrifices for this program and just for everybody in the state of Arkansas really. She loves me so much, whether that's making brownies or pushing me harder in practice. I wanted to do this for her really bad, and I'm so thankful that she's my coach.

**Q. Dakota, you accomplished a lot at another premier program, but why was Arkansas the right fit to kind of finish out your collegiate career?**

DAKOTA KENNEDY: Obviously I played against Arkansas a few times in my career, just seeing how competitive they are as a team, and just doing something that means more to me, getting this program here for the first time. I came here to compete and win with my teammates, and we've done that. Being able to do that with them has been so special to me.

Again, just the unwavering belief from Coach Deifel and the entire coaching staff just throughout this entire season has meant so much.

**Q. Robyn, talk about your growth as a pitcher. I know, if I'm understanding, obviously you had Kaci Clark Zerbe, you know very well, learning from her, and then talk about Coach Deifel, just the development of you as a pitcher to now.**

ROBYN HERRON: Yeah, my pitching coach from home, Coach Kaci, and Coach Deifel have similar coaching personalities. I think that's why I was drawn to Coach Deifel in the first place.

I started off my career not really knowing what I was capable of, and just for Coach Deifel to allow me to grow and putting me in comfortable situations, I know I'm just capable of so much. I've been through a lot of trials in college, and just I've learned that, even know when things come up, I know that I can get through anything. Through the help of my teammates and my coaches, that I can face any lineup, and I just have full faith.

I've learned to have full faith in myself and just to rely on my teammates who have my back.

**Q. What has DJ meant to you? He seems to have this really big personality and makes things a whole lot of fun.**

ELLA MCDOWELL: Coach Gasso is awesome. He puts in so much work for us hitters, and he's so selfless always trying to understand us better and just connect with us on a deeper level. Yeah, he's just the man. There's no other way to describe it.

DAKOTA KENNEDY: I totally agree with what Ella said, and I think it means so much for him to want to get to know us as players. Being able to play with Ella is awesome, but we're two completely different players, and Gasso really takes that in and understands how to work with each of us individually. I think that helps us excel as the athletes we are.

**Q. Courtney, Nebraska has three players who used to play for Arkansas. Does it help you guys in knowing**

**what they were like when they were Razorbacks? Since it's been so long, do you pay attention to that? What is your thought process going against Hannah, Lauren, and Kacie again?**

COURTNEY DEIFEL: I think we just have a ton of respect for those three. They've been in a different system now for two years, so they're different players. You can see that reflected in the video and watching them.

It's not taking that into anything that we're doing to prep for them. It's looking at who they are now as Nebraska Huskers and preparing for that.

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