

# 2026 Women's College World Series

Thursday, May 28, 2026

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

## Mississippi State Bulldogs Coach Samantha Ricketts Morgan Stiles Kinley Keller

Postgame Press Conference

Texas Tech 8, Mississippi State 0

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Mississippi State Coach, if you have an opening statement.

SAMANTHA RICKETTS: Yeah, I mean, not an ideal opening game for us, not to our expectations for what Mississippi State softball is. Against a great team like Texas Tech, we can't make mistakes like we did. For a team that's hung its hat on pitching and defense all year long, just definitely not up to our standards.

That really was the message in the locker room. It was we deserve to be at this stage. We've worked hard, we've earned it. Just trust it and get back to knowing what we know how to do well. We didn't give our best showing out there today. At this point of the season, at this stage, a team is going to take advantage of that.

Texas Tech is a great team obviously. They do everything really well. But we expected better from us. Just I think a little bit more competitive in everything, on the mound, our defense and in the box.

Settled in after three innings, started to take some more aggressive approaches at the plate, getting some balls better off our bats. Quality at-bats is what we're looking for there.

Honestly liked what Peja Gooldpay did coming in for us in the circle. Probably the best she's looked in the last few weeks, trusting and going at their hitters, which can be tough in this environment.

Still have a lot of trust in this team, what we're doing going forward. We've had our backs up against the wall before. They know for us to be at our best, we have to be loose,



having fun, trusting our game. That's where we want to leave everything on the field come tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the players.

**Q. Morgan and Kinley, NiJa is already difficult to face. How difficult is it when she knows she has a lead, not to be afraid of you guys hitting a home run?**

KINLEY KELLER: Yeah, I mean, she's a great pitcher. We just came in with the plan we're going to get on top of the ball, attack her first pitch. We waited with that until the third inning. I think we have to attack better starting from the first pitch, because we can do that, we're capable of it.

MORGAN STILES: I think they punched first, allowed her to settle in early. We let the nerves get the best of us, I think. I think we go in tomorrow having full confidence in ourselves and do what we do.

**Q. You were in similar situations a week ago with the Oklahoma series, losing Game 2. How do you tap back into that mindset and come back out the way you did in Game 3 of that series?**

KINLEY KELLER: Yeah, I mean, we got to come out from the first pitch and attack. We got to play free, play Mississippi State softball. Like I said, just come out for the first pitch instead of waiting.

MORGAN STILES: I think we play our best ball when we're playing free, having fun, on the attack and not on our heels. Just going out there tomorrow, doing that, playing our game. No matter what the score, if we do that, then we can be proud of ourselves at the end of the game.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, players.

We'll continue with questions for Coach Ricketts.

**Q. Sam, you used to be a great hitter that could hit velocity. You saw that today. See it in the second game, too. Talk about trying to make that adjustment. You did catch up to it in the fourth inning here.**



SAMANTHA RICKETTS: Yeah, I think what the players were talking about here, you have to be aggressive and on the attack. If you're sitting back, waiting for it to come to you, at 72, it's going to be by you before you're ready.

That's typically our MO and when we are at our best, we're just attack mindset oriented, not trying to do too much. Not really trying to hit home runs, but find ways to have quality at-bats and pass the bat. This is more this team's offensive style for us this year.

But we did a lot of prep. We felt good about our preparation coming in, seeing NiJa before. You have to almost play perfect against her and a lineup like that. We've seen Tennessee before. Not played Texas this season.

Really I think one thing we talked about last week in the super regional, this is what the SEC prepares you for. We face teams like this week after week. It's leaning back on those lessons we learned and letting that help propel us into what we're looking to do next.

**Q. What challenge is it to face a team with two great arms?**

SAMANTHA RICKETTS: Huge challenge. I think they're both different looks, both going to throw with a lot of velocity. Terry throws hard, but she's that crafty lefty. I think that was a good spot for them to make that change. We needed to be able to make our adjustments sooner than we did.

Yeah, I think they're great matchups. They mix and match. You don't know when they're going to make the switch. You know it's going to happen. It might be once in a game. It might be six times they'll make a pitching change.

When you have a lineup like that, pitchers that are these incredible athletes that can also hit, it gives them a lot of tools.

**Q. Did you notice any nerves, maybe the players pressing early in the game? What did you see from Faircloth?**

SAMANTHA RICKETTS: I think definitely we could tell there was some nerves. We knew there were going to be. We talked about this week leading up to it, last night.

Nerves are a good thing. It means you care. It's about how do you let that fuel you. For us, a little bit too timid early on. That's just not the way we play our best.

I think you could see it from Alyssa a little bit, particularly

the first inning. When she's rolling, she's attacking the zone as well, use that change-up in any count.

I thought she had some good moments where it looked like she was settling. Against that lineup, you have to be on. There's no letup. You can't let up in the nine hole, anywhere in the bottom of that lineup. She did a really good job of taking advantage, making her bring the ball up and coming into the zone.

**Q. I know you didn't get a chance to play here when you were in college, but this crowd today, this environment, what did that feel like for you, for your team?**

SAMANTHA RICKETTS: Yeah, I mean, it's really special. It was really cool, I think, just to see them even walking in, when we started. You have the little girls lined up down the line. It's all the things that you see on TV, that you see growing up both as a player and a coach.

To have that moment for this program, for my players, really it made me choke up, because it's what they've all worked so hard for.

They were here as those little girls in the stands; now they're getting moment. Just really proud for this program, for these girls. They poured their blood, sweat and tears into Mississippi State softball. They believed in us and what we could do when not a lot of people did.

Proud of them. I just think it's a real moment for us.

**Q. What's the process look like for getting ready for tomorrow?**

SAMANTHA RICKETTS: I think it's going back to trusting our experience through the SEC. The way we did that a lot, not trying to carry it with us. Get back into our routine. A 6 p.m. game tomorrow sets us up to treat it like a Friday night in the SEC. We'll go about that the way we typically do in our normal routine, keep the team together.

The biggest thing was getting them to buy into what that approach is going to be for us starting right now, starting when they go to dinner with their parents.

You could tell we were a little bit different during BP today, tried to get them out of that. Didn't really turn it on until the fourth inning for us. That mindset and that switch and that approach that we expect and that we know how to do that we showed last weekend, it has to start right now.

It's the belief that we belong here, we're here to compete, that we expect to win, that we're going to play Mississippi



State softball, let it fall where it may.

They need to start talking about that, believing it now, not when it's too late tomorrow night.

**Q. Both in the first and the fifth, it looked like they got fired up after Mia Williams got hit. How hard is it to fight back against that energy when they're getting fired up so much?**

SAMANTHA RICKETTS: I mean, with the growth of our game, it's really cool just to see female athletes be allowed to be passionate and have emotions and energy. I think it's great when players play like that on both sides.

They know it wasn't on purpose. We know it wasn't on purpose. It's a competitive, pressure-filled moment. Either side is going to use anything they can to really fire up a dugout. I think that went both ways for us.

I did make sure to check on her after the game, "Hey, are you good," everything, because we respect Mia as an athlete, that program.

I think emotion in this game is huge. I think it's something that can get blown out of proportion when it's a female athlete compared to a male athlete. We love to let girls play the way they want to be. And if that's high emotion and confidence, good. I think that's great. If it's more of a levelheaded, they keep their emotions under control, that's great, too.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

SAMANTHA RICKETTS: Thank you.

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