

# 2026 Women's College World Series

Friday, May 29, 2026

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

**Mississippi State Bulldogs**  
**Coach Samantha Ricketts**

**Nadia Barbary**

**Xiane Romero**

**Morgan Bernardini**

**Kiarra Sells**

**Peja Goold**

Postgame Press Conference



Texas 4, Mississippi State 0

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Mississippi State. We'll start with an opening statement by head coach.

SAMANTHA RICKETTS: First of all, congratulations to Texas. Thought they played a great game. Just a lot of respect for them and that program. Wishing them the best of luck moving forward.

Just a big thank you to everyone involved in hosting just the top college softball event in the country. It's been an honor for us to be a part of it and to experience it, see how much work goes into something like this year in and year out to help elevate our sport at the highest level.

Obviously not the result we wanted. Could not be more proud of this group for what they've done for Mississippi State softball and for each other, the way they've represented this team, this program, our community, and the support that we've seen from so many people back home, across the country that have come out to support us.

I think we're overall very thankful for the love and support that we've seen, from everything with the Broccoli Guy to just how much people have talked about this group, because they deserve it.

They believe that Mississippi State could be here on this stage when nobody else did. They put in the work and

continued to set this as a goal and raise the standard for our program through the good days and the bad. There really was not a doubt for anyone in this program that we would be at this stage sooner rather than later.

For it to be this group, who really from early on, we knew they were special. They're a great group. They love each other, the way they represent each other, they push each other, they wanted practice to be harder. They wanted everything about what we did to be tougher to get us where we wanted to go.

You can probably say they've done that. Whether it was Ki, Mo-B, Nadia, the ones who were here for four years, really trusted us, they were loyal to this program, for them to go out in Oklahoma City, it just means the world. Just so thankful for them and what they've done for us.

We're going to continue to build off the foundation they set with players like Z, Kelly, all the younger ones we have coming back. Now we're excited, we know what it's about, we can't wait to be back.

THE MODERATOR: Go to questions for players.

**Q. It's really fresh, but what are the things you're going to remember from being a part of this team and this run?**

NADIA BARBARY: Everything. The bus rides, the plane rides, practices, waking up at 5:30 to go lift, everything (tearing up).

MORGAN BERNARDINI: I think just this season as a whole, no matter if you're a freshman or a senior, if it's your first year or however long, it's being able to build this sisterhood, which we really took seriously, and being able to live out all of our dreams.

We did the unthinkable, making history throughout our whole season. Yes, this sucks right now, but it's like what a better way to end it at the end, you know?

**Q. (Question regarding taking the team to its first World Series.)**

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UNIDENTIFIED PLAYER: It meant the world to us. Even getting here was such a big deal to all of us. Honestly, we're grateful to have been on this stage, to have worked our butts off to be here, to be a Mississippi State Bulldog. It was such a blessing. I think we really put in a lot of work and love with each other that here we are today.

MORGAN BERNARDINI: I think that's a testament to our coaching staff, to our university, to every resource and thing we had around us. We knew from the moment I got on campus, we were going to do big things. It was a process, right? Freshman year we didn't even make post-season; now I'm ending my career at the World Series. That's just a testament to our coaches never giving up on us, always developing us.

Me and Ki only played two years actually on the field. I would not be the person, I would not be the player or anything if it wasn't for the coaches who bought into me, who poured into me and just took a chance on all of us either out of high school or transfer, just being able to grow the game and grow our program.

**Q. Peja, just talk about this year. You came over, and then you and the pitching staff, with Faircloth and Delainey, talk about how you will remember this year.**

PEJA GOOLD: First off, I'm just so grateful that Mississippi State gave me the chance to be here and the opportunity to play on this stage, just the fact that I only had one choice to go to one school. I chose Mississippi State, look where it brought me. That's such a blessing and I'm so thankful that God placed me here and led me to them.

As for our pitching staff, it was a fun year, to be able to learn from each other and grow. Just to see how talented we were, too. Also the fact that our coaches picked us from mid-major levels and brought us to the Power Four stage.

They had absolute belief in us, and they continued to pour into us this whole year and make us who we are today. Now we can all say we're Power Four pitchers, which is such an accomplishment for us.

I had a great time with them in the bullpen and with Coach T. I'm excited to see what Delainey, Leila, and Alyssa are going to do in the next few years. They're so talented. I'm speechless with what they have in the bullpen for next year. I'm really excited to see what they do.

**Q. For you guys coming back, what is the biggest thing you learned over these last two days?**

XIAN ROMERO: I really just think buying into each other. Knowing we have each other's back no matter what. Throughout the lineup we did a very good job of picking each other up, whether it was a good situation or bad situation. Just buying into each other.

**Q. What do you think this experience will do for you and your mentality, not the fact you made it here, but the way the two games went?**

XIAN ROMERO: I definitely think it raised the standard in our program with the whole mindset, knowing that we can make it here and we will make it here. Just making sure that, again, everybody has bought into and is ready to do that.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, players. We'll continue with questions for Coach.

**Q. Coach, coming off a series against OU where you put up 18 runs, then this week struggled offensively, what were the challenges the offenses were facing these last two games?**

SAMANTHA RICKETTS: Yeah, I think really it was just adjusting to the stage, particularly yesterday. You could feel the nerves. It is a big stage, it's a big moment. No matter how much you try to prepare them or get them to understand just the magnitude of it, I think it's something you have to experience.

Now every single one of them can say they have it. I think we settled in the fourth inning yesterday. Today I thought we had a lot really hard-hit balls right at people. Couldn't seem to find a hole. When you're facing one First Team All-American pitcher after First Team All-American pitcher, you need to find a break here and there.

It didn't go our way. It's just more motivation to continue to get better and be able to produce for our pitchers every game, not just one weekend or whatever it might be.

**Q. You have players coming back next year. How helpful is that getting them experience from this year?**

SAMANTHA RICKETTS: Yeah, we're really excited about the future of this program with what we have returning in the circle, even the freshman class we've signed to come in next year.

When we can continue to be consistent the way we have through the post-season, that elevates recruiting. We can bring in better and better players that can continue to push us forward to hopefully continue to reach this stage, like our expectation is.

It starts in the circle. That was why we really attacked the portal last season the way we did to shore up our bullpen and to have some depth not just for this year but for years to come.

I mean, it worked out even better than I think we imagined with the three transfers we brought in, not knowing how healthy Delainey would be. To get her back at the end.

Leila Ammon is really good, too. She just kind of got stuck behind the two older ones. I'm excited for her future, what her, Alyssa and Delainey can do with all the experience they gained this year.

**Q. When did you know this team could be this special to get here this year? It's just happened, but reflect on this week. What are you going to take from this experience?**

SAMANTHA RICKETTS: Coach T actually came into the office in probably October and she said, If our pitching continues to progress the way it is, we're going to the World Series.

We may have looked at her like she may have been a little crazy. She's been here more than anyone. We rely a lot on this experience. She knows what it takes, especially in the circle.

That combined with just the drive that this team had from the beginning of the fall, the goals they set and the way they pushed not just themselves but each other. I think we realized it was going to be a special group. If we could ride the ups and downs of a 60-game season, we could make some noise.

Really we talked all year long that our roster was built for May. With how difficult our SEC schedule was, the lessons we learned along the way, we knew that post-season it's 0-0 for anyone. If we could continue to trust in the work that we had done, we could really do something special here.

**Q. You referenced Canady and Teagan Kavan, do you see any shared characteristics mentally or physically between the two of them? How do you attack pitchers like that?**

SAMANTHA RICKETTS: Yeah, at this stage it's the best of the best. There's a reason that they're here and they're here year after year.

I think it's just kind of looking back big picture, really exciting for our team to see the way that pitching has

evolved and how good it continues to be, not just one pitcher, but pitching staffs. Not just NiJa, but you have Kaitlyn Terry right behind her. You see that across the board with a lot of the teams.

In an era where a lot is made of the home runs and the hitting, pitching and defense a lot of times reign supreme. When you have that great pitching like Teagan, NiJa, they really just set the tone. It takes some big bats, timely hitting, getting runners on base.

We were trying to be aggressive knowing that Teagan wasn't going to walk very many. We got ourselves out a little bit too long. Did a great job keeping us off balance until we could find some breaks there.

**Q. Feel like this program is on the upward trajectory with younger talent. What does having this Women's College World Series appearance and showing that you can break through to the biggest stage in the sport do for recruiting, transfer portal additions?**

SAMANTHA RICKETTS: It's huge. I mean, it keeps us right in the forefront of everyone's minds, the spotlight. Really just because the players that we did have, whether it was the six out of the portal this past year or the freshmen, they believed in what we were building before we made it to the stage.

I think more so for us and the way we've gotten here, it's going to be really important to make sure we stay true to ourselves, which is not just bringing in talented players, which is something we're going to continue to do, but great quality human beings.

That's one thing I learned over the course of my coaching career, doesn't matter how good they are on the field, they have to fit into the culture of the program, they have to be the right type of people, because that's when something really special happens for us like this season.

**Q. I want to ask you about Nadia Barbary, what she's meant to this program, how she stacks up against some of the legends.**

SAMANTHA RICKETTS: Oh, man. I don't know if I can really put that into words with Nadia.

She committed in the eighth grade. I was still an assistant coach here. The rule change went in. We couldn't talk to her for two years. That's when we went through the coaching change. I got the job. She stayed loyal even through all of that, when I know for a fact people were trying to get her to not be loyal.

For her just to really truly believe in not just me and T-Bratt, but the program, what we were building, it's just invaluable.

She was such a big part not just what she did on the field but in bringing all these players we brought in after her. She sold that for Mississippi State. She was a leader on and off, an example for all of them with her hard work.

I really truly believe a lot of Nadia's greatness is a testament to her parents, just the type of people they are, the support they've shown for this program, the way they show up for her and every other player and the coaches. It goes a long way. It just pours into Xiane and the next younger player. That helps us continue to take the next steps in recruiting and building this program the right way.

**Q. Delainey's story became a storyline that resonated with a lot of people. Mississippi State has been a program familiar with grief and healing and adversity. What do you think it is about this program that allows players to overcome that?**

SAMANTHA RICKETTS: Oh, I think really I have to say a lot of it goes back to the faith in so many of these young women. They just proudly wear their love for Jesus on their sleeve. They know that that is what their true value is found in. It's not so much the result on the softball field.

In a game that can be so pressure-filled, they're able to truly have perspective. I don't know if that's why we go through so many things in this program. Maybe God is just testing us a little bit.

We have full faith in Him and in each other to really have each other's backs in those moments. We continue to share Alex Wilcox's story because it is so important for this program to continue to share not just who she was on the field but as a person. I think that leads into talking with her dad after we won the Norman super regional. He said, Hey, Alex and Brandon Everett, they're up there celebrating for us.

I think it is just a huge testament to who we are as people, the love they have for each other, and something bigger than themselves.

For us, we really work hard to find each player where they're at and let them be themselves, not force them into a box. If that means they get to play free, the way that they want to express themselves, then that's who they're going to be. I think that's when they play their best, as well.

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