

2026 Women's College World Series

Saturday, May 30, 2026

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

Tennessee Lady Volunteers

Coach Karen Weekly

Karlyn Pickens

Emma Clarke

Sage Mardjetko

Postgame Press Conference



Tennessee 2, Texas Tech 1 (9)

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Tennessee. We will start with an opening statement from the head coach.

KAREN WEEKLY: What a game. Classic old-school pitchers' duel. That's a heck of a team. Just loaded, loaded one through nine. The two pitchers they have.

I'm just so proud of what our team did and these young ladies sitting to my right. I felt like we rode the waves of momentum really well. It would have been easy when they scored that run late to kind of fall off emotionally. We didn't do that. So much of that is because of these three here and the leadership they provide and so many others on our team and the leadership they provide.

Late in the year we started to do this mindset journal. Each girl would pick a video and put it in our group chat, then the team would watch the video and journal on it. Everything had to do with mindset.

One of the ones that I think Amayah Doyle put in there, basically it was when bad stuff happens, to say good, good, because good, now we get to do something else, now we get to respond to adversity.

When we came off the field in the seventh inning, that was the word in the circle: Good, good. We'll figure this out, find a way.

I'm so proud of their toughness and their grit.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the players.

Q. Emma, were you hunting in the last at-bat, made adjustments?

EMMA CLARKE: Honestly, just looking to swing at strikes and get something going for my team. So being a lead-off, I just wanted to put the ball in play any way I could, and it worked out.

Q. For the pitchers, heck of a game from you all. Could you talk about defense behind you to keep it right there.

KARLYN PICKENS: Emma Clarke, just like ball magnet. Every ball hit her way, she's going to field, they're going to make a play. I think that just gives us the most confidence to be able to throw our pitches right in the zone knowing our defense is going to be there to make the plays. Gives us a lot of confidence.

SAGE MARDJETKO: The defense is what kept us in that game. You don't see those in the stat sheet, but they're the reason we won that game, because of how tough they are behind us.

Q. Emma, take us through that at-bat, the emotions rounding the bases.

EMMA CLARKE: Just so much joy. I had so many thoughts. But I immediately just looked up and started to give God all the glory because I'm so grateful to be in this position, to be on this team with these people, to be able to have opportunities to be in moments like this even when they don't work out. It's literally such a blessing. I just couldn't do it without the girls to my left and right.

Q. How much do you two communicate during the game knowing you could come in in any given moment?

SAGE MARDJETKO: I mean, today was a lot about what are you seeing, what is the zone like. And then being each other's biggest supporters. Going up to Karlyn, saying, hey, you got this. There's no one I'd rather have out there. Giving her more confidence. She does her job, I come in and do mine.



KARLYN PICKENS: We have so much trust with one another. I know if Sage is out there, she's going to get the job done. We're going to be supporting each other.

Sometimes it's lighthearted, sometimes we need a good laugh or get each other motivated to go out there and do our job. That's what we do as teammates.

Q. Karlyn, this Texas Tech team has drawn the fourth most walks in the nation. How did you combat that?

KARLYN PICKENS: The game plan was to get ahead, trust my pitches. We talk a lot about limiting the freebies, the free passes. Just throwing my game, trusting my pitches and trusting Megan, the pitching coach.

Q. Pitchers, what were your feelings like during that (indiscernible) seventh inning stretch, keeping it focused during that adversity?

SAGE MARDJETKO: Yeah, I mean, I just have so much trust in this staff and our coaches. No worries. Just like, Okay, now what? Just moving on to the next pitch, not dwelling on what might have happened, focusing on what we're going to do about it now.

KARLYN PICKENS: I would say I expect the same from Sage as well in those moments. You're going to want the ball. Having that confidence. When Sage went in, I knew 100% she was going to get the job done. It's nice to have that type of staff, who is out there, having that much confidence and trust, it's pretty cool.

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

Q. Can you detail what you've seen in Emma's progression as a hitter.

KAREN WEEKLY: Yeah, when Emma came in as a freshman, she's just such an athlete, we knew that. She's gotten stronger. You see the benefit of what she's done in the weight room, how her body has filled out.

She's just a beast. I tease her every day because sometimes she'll take a little something off her swing. I'm like, Man, let the beast play. When she gets after it and releases the barrel with everything, good things tend to happen.

She's just matured so much. The thing our team loves about Emma, she's our hype person. She is just full energy all the time, all the time. She's everybody's biggest cheerleader.

Q. The defense, the plays they made, talk about your defense. You made some moves that paid off and the work ethic of your defense?

KAREN WEEKLY: I'll put our outfield up against anybody, anybody. We saw slipping people in and out there. Alannah and Gabby have better arms than I've seen. You want them on the corners when you get that runner in scoring position.

Tae has a little bit more range. We wanted her in there early in the innings. That catch Alannah made in left field, that's a game saver right there. Sophia coming up and firing those balls, nailing one runner, barely missing on the next one.

We see that kind of stuff in practice all the time. It's a very, very competitive outfield. That's why we have some really good outfielders that aren't in the game because we've got some studs out there.

Q. Going into this game, Texas Tech had scored 70 runs in the NCAA tournament. For you guys to hold them to one, what can you say about what Karlyn and Sage did today?

KAREN WEEKLY: Just everything. That's just a stacked lineup. I mean, it's unbelievable when you look at the names and the accolades, what they've accomplished in their careers.

For those two to do what they did, it's a credit to them because they're really, really great pitchers.

It's not just about being a great pitcher, they rise in those moments and are great teammates. The team wants to have their back and come through for them. That's why you see we play defense the way we do and continue to fight at the plate the way we do.

Q. Huge game out of Taelyn Holley. Talk about what you saw from her in that at-bat?

KAREN WEEKLY: I mean, fricking awesome. It's really cool that freshmen have had two of our most special moments here so far with Elsa a couple days ago and now Tae. We knew when we recruited this class, they were really, really special players.

The thing that's impressive is they came in in the fall and it wasn't I'm going to ease my way in, I'm a freshman. It's like, no, I want to play, I want to be great. They have really, really high goals for themselves. They came off championship teams in high school and travel ball. They

expect to be out here. They expect to produce in those big moments. They don't let things faze them. If they don't come through, the next at-bat they're right back at it again.

Q. What did you say to Taylor Pannell in the handshake lineup?

KAREN WEEKLY: Good game, like I say to every player. Good game.

Q. Last year after you guys lost to Texas in the semifinals, you said the key to getting to the championship series is taking care of business. You're in the semifinals. How cool is it to watch your team take down the reigning national champion and runner-up?

KAREN WEEKLY: I hadn't really thought about it that way. You got an opponent in front of you, and they're awesome, they're here, they're really good.

Yeah, we haven't stayed in the winners bracket through two games since 2013. It definitely makes a difference especially now with the format where there's the days off. Back then you didn't have as many days off if you kept winning. It certainly makes a difference, and we will take full advantage of the day tomorrow that we have to get some more rest.

Nothing is going to get easier from here on out. Two days ago was really tough. Today was really tough. It's a national championship for a reason. If you want it, you're going to have to find a way to be the toughest team when those moments come.

Q. Was the plan going in today to keep Pickens as long as you could?

KAREN WEEKLY: We hadn't really set an innings limit on anything. It was more about just evaluating how she was commanding her pitches, utilizing her change-up and whether we were able to command both sides of the plate.

I felt like she was doing a good job of that. We had Sage ready. So yeah, there wasn't any set plan for it.

Q. Your team has shown to be able to win in multiple ways. Speak to how your team can show grit and winning in different ways whenever the moment needs for whatever it takes.

KAREN WEEKLY: I think the key word, you just said it, is 'grit'. We have won in different ways all season long. I think that allows you to stay emotionally calm and stable and not be going up and down, up and down with how the

game's playing out. That was the thing I was most impressed with us today.

I think we know we can find a way if we keep at it. We know we have pitching that is going to keep us in a game.

Sounds like a cliché, but they have each other's back. There's 22 girls who are all fighting for the same thing.

Maddi Rutan got some of the biggest we call them bouquets in our locker room for being the best teammate she's been, even though she got taken out of the lineup a couple weeks ago. She's right on the fence, pouring energy into people, hyping them up. It's those little things that don't show up in a stat sheet. Those are the things that allow you to win games when is crunch time like it is here.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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