

2016 Women's College World Series

Tuesday, June 7, 2016
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma



Patty Gasso
Jayden Chestnut
Shay Knighten
Erin Miller
Oklahoma

Auburn - 11, Oklahoma - 7

THE MODERATOR: At this time we have Oklahoma on the dais.

PATTY GASSO: Yeah, quite a game. Another tough game for two teams that played really hard. I know all the questions are going to be about our decision, so I'll wait for those. But I'm very, very proud of our pitching staff who hasn't seen a lot of time. Jayden Chestnut specifically fought her tail off tonight. I thought our offense came out and attacked early, and then we just went a little stagnant. That hurt us. We make no excuses for the loss. We just needed to execute a little bit better, especially late in the game.

But we know that this team will come out tomorrow excited and fired up and back on track and giving everything we have, laying it out on the field to fight for this championship. And that is no doubt. There's no doubt about that.

Q. Patty, I don't want to ask you about not starting Paige, but did you consider bringing her back after you had a seven-run lead or any inning thereafter?

PATTY GASSO: I thought it was a little too early. I think we would have kind of shot ourselves in the foot if we did that, so it was more the consideration of the sixth and the seventh, and we had opportunities, and it was almost like we were really pressing, which we don't do, but we were pressing to try to get that run.

But Jayden Chestnut kept us in the game, and she did a very good job of that.

Q. Patty, you said yesterday that you really wanted to go get a good night's sleep and wake up and see where things were. Can you just kind of talk me through the day and when you made the decision to sit Paige (Parker) and sort of how she felt physically?

PATTY GASSO: You know, this has been a really tough road for both teams because on Thursday we -- although we only played a couple innings, we were here all night, and so it's not a day off, really. So we played Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday. That's honestly too much for one person on the mound to handle. Paige would go out there and she would take the ball if we gave it to her, but it just wasn't in my opinion very smart to do, because if she's not at close to her best and we can't get this done, then I don't know that she'd have much left tomorrow.

Our team was excited to see Kelsey Stevens and Jayden, and they all were fired up for this opportunity. You saw us come out really hot. It's just unfortunate that we didn't do a better job offensively to help, but we hung in there, and these guys kept us in the game.

But Paige having this night off I think will help her tremendously for tomorrow, and like I said, whether we have gas in our tank or not, we're going to do everything we can tomorrow as a team.

Q. Patty, you mentioned your offense went stagnant after early. You had a great small-ball game early in the game. Did you think about going back to that at any time?

PATTY GASSO: Well, we couldn't get runners on, so it was kind of hard to do that. But we're bringing out all the stops tomorrow. I know our team will be ready for that. You know, it's hard to do it when you don't have people on.

Q. Shay and Erin, when Shay hit that home run and the girl brought it back, it looked like all the fans jumped up and they were celebrating. What did that moment do for your psyche and what happened there in the dugout after that?

SHAY KNIGHTEN: Well, for me, it was a great catch. She made a great play. There was no doubt about that. But for us as a team, I think that just kind of brought us together more, and we knew coming in it was going to be a dogfight, and that just made us want to fight that much more to get this win. It didn't turn out that way, but we're going to keep fighting until we get what we want.

ERIN MILLER: I think it just solidified that this is going to come down to the last pitch of the game. Both of us

want it that bad, so you're going to see a fight tomorrow, too.

Q. Coach, it's been a while since you guys have lost. How do you feel about the resiliency of your team in a situation like this given you guys were up so many runs and it kind of snowballed?

PATTY GASSO: You know, we don't even talk about the amount of wins. I don't think I've ever mentioned to them -- we've never talked about the streak. What I know is that we're not supposed to be here. I don't think anyone expected us to be here, and that is a good place to feel when you're here. We're taking that momentum, and like I said, we're going to do everything we can with it.

We aren't down. This team comes back like vengeance when somebody beats them, and they know it and I know it.

The key is not to get caught up in the big outcome of things. The key is to stay in the moment like we've been doing and piece things together. We're going to be ready for that.

Q. Patty, you said that Paige would have pitched if you would have put her out there. Did she try to argue that point with you at all?

PATTY GASSO: No, no, she didn't.

Q. It sounds like a lot of it is just well-being of a person, which I know in this sport, pitchers are seen as OK, they can go out there every day, but at the end of the day she is a human.

PATTY GASSO: Sometimes, yeah. That has a lot to do with it. I mean, I think they all knew it, too. We're in the hotel. We see her, and Paige will tell you I'm great, I'm great, and she would go out and give you everything she had, but there is exactly what you said, a point where what do you risk for this; let's try to get it done another way and let Paige feel like she can be close to her best and really have a chance to win a championship. It would be unfair to her and this team if I put her out there again tonight. That's how our coaching staff felt.

Q. I saw Paige throughout the game. She was talking to you guys in the dugout a lot while the pitchers were on the mound. What kind of role did she play tonight? And you mentioned the sixth and seventh innings, if Shay's ball gets by the glove, is that when you hand her the ball?

PATTY GASSO: Yeah, she was a cheerleader stat girl tonight next to me and just kind of helping me with things and just very engaged in the game and really -- I take offense somewhat of how people talk about our pitching staff, and I think Paige takes offense to it, too.

I mean, she's been the highlight of this group, but these guys have worked their tail off every day, and to give them an opportunity I think, especially Jayden Chestnut as a freshman out there, not only did she keep us in the game, she gave up two runs -- against Auburn that happens, be real about that. But she kept us in the game. And for a freshman like Jayden to come in and get that experience is going to be so valuable down the stretch. Paige took off down into the bullpen late in the game in hopes that we could find a way to get on the board. That kid made a great, great play, and that's -- I said it yesterday; whether it's our team or their team, those kind of plays win you championships. What we've got to do is have those kinds of plays work our way tomorrow.

But when you're fighting with all you have, those are the things that -- I jumped up higher than anybody, and then I felt kind of ridiculous. But you're so caught up in the emotions of the game and with your team that it's so stressful but it's so, so fun. So fun.

Q. Jayden, you came in and kind of inherited a tough situation that you found yourself being able to battle back a few times tonight. Can you talk about how you felt as the game progressed?

JAYDEN CHESTNUT: Yeah, I mean, I was always ready to go in, and I had a lot of excitement about it, and my plan was to just go in and be fearless and keep us in the ballgame, and I think I executed that pretty well.

Q. Erin, Patty alluded to this, as well, but obviously the first couple innings you guys were on (Kaylee) Carlson. Is it a credit to (Rachael) Walters and (Makayla) Martin coming in or was there more pressing you felt from your offense?

ERIN MILLER: Credit to them. I thought they did a great job on the mound keeping us off balance. That's something we're going to do better tomorrow. I think we're making soft outs, so I think as an offense our goal tomorrow is put the ball hard in play, be tough outs, and get a rally going late in the game.

Q. Erin and Kady, you've played so much softball, you've been in situations very similar to this before, so what will you tell this squad -- I know you'll talk to them and be leaders on this team, so what will you tell them about, okay, it's one more game?

ERIN MILLER: It's about resiliency. It's about how you answer. I think we've done a great job of that all season. Someone throws a punch, you throw it back. That's the game of softball, I think. You're going to see a dogfight tomorrow. It's for a national championship; why wouldn't you?

Q. Shay, I wanted to ask you what did you think

when Coach Gasso asked you to squeeze bunt in that situation, and had you done that in a game before this year?

SHAY KNIGHTEN: I just did it for my team. Whatever she needed me to do, whatever the team needed from me at that time, that's what I was going to do. She needed a squeeze, and I knew I had to execute it one way or another. There was no going out of it. It was doing it for my team, sacrificing myself for the greater good of the team, and I got it done.

Q. Jayden, obviously a tough game to give up. What do you have to do to get over this and be ready next time your number is called?

JAYDEN CHESTNUT: Yeah, it obviously didn't turn out my way and it stings a little bit, but I think it's just motivation to come out tomorrow and just fight even harder.

Q. Jayden, you're on a team with a lot of other Oklahoma kids, but being an Oklahoma kid out there in the circle, was there a moment at all tonight where you sort of allowed yourself to just enjoy it and realize what you were doing as an Oklahoma girl?

JAYDEN CHESTNUT: Yeah, I definitely went out there and just enjoyed the atmosphere, and playing on my home field -- well, not home field, but my home state field, and I don't know, it was just a great experience to be out there on that field.