



June 4, 2012

Oklahoma – 4
Alabama – 1

An interview with:

**COACH GASSO
DESTINEE MARTINEZ
KATIE NORRIS
KEILANI RICKETTS
JESSICA SHULTS**

THE MODERATOR: Joining us from Oklahoma, we have head coach Patty Gasso, and studentathletes Destinee Martinez, Katie Norris, Keilani Ricketts and Jessica Shults. We'll start with an opening comment, and then questions.

COACH GASSO: Well, one of the biggest wins in our program's history just happened, and it was very exciting to be a part of. This team is just so confident right now. They just feel it. It's a pleasure to be around them because I have never been so calm and confident and cool, and thinking straight in such a big arena because of them.

Keilani (Ricketts) had another outstanding day against a very outstanding ballclub that can swing, and we all know that. But she had a good game plan. She executed it well, and the few innings where we lost a little bit of control, but it didn't come back to hurt us, I think one of the best things for this team is when you score first on them.

We just kind of go back and forth. I know we left a lot of runners on base. I get that question a lot. But I have no panic and I don't have any fear because I know that they'll come through.

So, when you score on us, we want to score right back. We did that in a very fine fashion, and we just got a lot of confidence from it, and just kept going. So this team feels good. We felt we executed our game plan offensively pretty well, although we did strikeout a few too many times, but we did a pretty good job handling one of the best pitchers in the country.

Q. Patty, you talk about one of the biggest wins in the program history. Is it safe to say that was one of Keilani's best performances she would steal a base and go down the suicide squeeze, for crying out loud?

COACH GASSO: You want to talk about performance overall? Yes, Keilani seems to be calling her own steals these days, so

KEILANI RICKETTS: You gave me the hand.

COACH GASSO: I did not. I did not. I could say I did and look like a genius. But she's just a tremendous athlete who wants to compete and wants to win. I'm not afraid to run with her. I think when you see Keilani on the base path, you might think she won't run. She can run. She can slide. She's very athletic. I don't know that it's always smart on my part to have her in those situations, but it fires up this team.

I think the squeeze was probably one of the biggest plays just because it gave us insurance; and we know that going up against a team like Alabama with so much power and tradition, you need insurance. I think Keilani, overall, was very good today.

Q. You had so many hard hit balls tonight against one of the best pitchers in the country. Can you talk about this offensive night in more detail? Because you pounded the ball all night.

COACH GASSO: Just stuck with a good game plan, had a pretty good eye. I see that we ended up having four baseon balls. We just kept getting runners in scoring position. You know, a team could say, wow, we keep leaving runners in scoring position. We have bases loaded. We're not getting anything out of it.

But they just stick with the plan. That's what's so cool about these guys. They don't get rattled. They don't get fazed by it. They keep staying the course, and they trust it. That is a tremendous tribute to my coaching staff, and Tripp MacKay who works so diligently with our hitters, and Coach Lombardi that does endless study of film to prepare Keilani for what's coming.

Q. Keilani, is it tough to stay poised out there when you see those runners on base, as a pitcher? And how do you stay confident when that's happening?

KEILANI RICKETTS: You mean when we leave runners on base?

Q. Right.

KEILANI RICKETTS: I think it just shows that we're putting the ball in play and we're getting hits off one of the best pitchers in the country. I trust that we're going to make it happen just because we're getting runners on base, and that is



one of the hardest things to do off Jackie Traina is get runners on base. We all trust that we're going to have something happen to get the runs on the board.

Q. Destinee, then Katie, then Jessica, assuming that you guys see Traina again tomorrow, how much confidence do you build off of a performance offensively like tonight?

DESTINEE MARTINEZ: I'm feeling pretty confident. We went in today kind of knowing a lot about her. We've been studying a lot of film, and we kind of know what pitches she likes to work with the most. I think I'm pretty confident going into tomorrow.

KATIE NORRIS: We have a really good game plan that we put into play. We stuck to it today, so we'll keep pushing that.

JESSICA SHULTS: Jackie Traina is one of the best pitchers in the nation. I wouldn't be surprised if she came up with a different game plan. So we have to be ready to battle like we did today.

Q. Coach, there's been attendance records all week. What have you thought about the crowds not only tonight but all week?

COACH GASSO: One of the things we talked about before going on the field is, if you come up clutch and make plays or get those big hits. Let the fans and let the crowd take over. Let them bring you the adrenaline, let them bring you momentum, and they step up. It's such a pleasure and a joy and experience that these athletes will remember forever. It's overflow crowds just screaming for you. It's something that they'll, on a softball arena, I hope they'll experience it again if they're part of the Olympic movement. But right now, this is what we have, and it's pretty tremendous.

Q. Jessica, what Coach Gasso was talking about how you guys are confident no matter how many runners you leave on base, lot of people would say, hey, Alabama's dodging bullets and getting momentum from that. But you guys seem to say, hey, eventually we'll breakthrough. Is that what your mindset is that we're going to keep going at it?

JESSICA SHULTS: Definitely. Getting runners on base is a great thing that builds momentum for our team that we can hit this. Getting runners on base, even though we're not scoring them right away, things are going to come together, and people will catch up at the right time.

Q. Coach, somebody tweeted after the second inning when you left two runners on base that it looked like you said coming off the field, we got this. Do you remember that? Or I guess that's your feeling, right?

COACH GASSO: I say that a lot, because I do believe it. I just can't let it get in their head of frustration. So we're there. We're there. We've got this. One hit, we'll be there. We've got this. You hear that a lot in the dugout.

Q. Jessica, you had a good seat for what Keilani did from the circle tonight. Looked like she might have gotten stronger as the game went on, not to say that she was bad early. But what did you see out of her and her pitching performance tonight?

JESSICA SHULTS: Keilani's a great pitcher. Every game as the game goes on, she gets stronger and more confident with her pitches, starts working both sides of the plate. I saw all around today at the plate, stealing bases to on the mound. Keilani had a great performance today.

Q. Your 6, 7, 8 hitters tonight reached base nine times, and Norris laid down the squeeze. Did you see that putting a lot more stress and a lot more pressure on them when you have that kind of balance throughout your lineup?

COACH GASSO: Yeah, I didn't think they expected that from Katie Norris just because she's been hitting the ball so hard. But defensively you could see they were playing for the doubleplay ball, and sometimes you've just got to catch a good team by surprise.

You might look at it and go, wow, that was a good call. Well, maybe it wasn't because she could have hit a threerun bomb. But at that point it was thinking, okay, avoid the doubleplay. Try to pull a run out from it. I love what the middle of the lineup is doing.

You know what people don't really talk about is this one right here (Destinee Martinez) who has been on fire. And she just quietly sits here. But Destinee Martinez is one of the main players in this series right now. There is no doubt about it. She really her job in the two hole is to get the bat in the hands of Chamberlain, Ricketts and Shults. And she's doing that like I've never seen.

If she's on and gives those guys the bats, we've got some good stuff happening. She's doing exactly what we're asking her to do.



Q. Keilani, in 24 hours you guys could be sitting here talking about something pretty cool. Is it going to be hard to wait for tomorrow's 7:00 p.m. first pitch?

KEILANI RICKETTS: I think that we're just going to go after it as we've been going after every single game in this World Series. Every single game has been tough. We're not going to overlook it. We haven't won that game yet. We know Alabama's going to bounce back and be fighting hard because they don't want their season to end on a loss. We know it's going to be a battle tomorrow.

Q. You mentioned Keilani's allaround game. How far has she come hitting the ball since day 1 here at OU?

COACH GASSO: Quite a long way. I think she could tell that you most her time was spent being the best pitcher she could be. So a lot of her time was spent in the bullpen and working on mastering her craft, so to speak. Once we felt like she really had that done, we spent more time in the cages, and you could see her commit to going and getting extra work done. But if you ever watch her swing batting practice, it doesn't take much from her because she's so strong to hit balls out and change the whole dynamic of a game and turn it around in one swing. I think she starting to recognize how important she could be for her own cause and for our team.

We've put a lot of emphasis on her and had a lot more confidence and sees the ball very, very well. And has really been such a big part of our offense and our defense.

Q. Destinee, coming into the game tonight, you're hitting .500 here at the Women's College World Series. You've seen all kinds of different pitching; what are you doing at the plate that's been so successful here?

DESTINEE MARTINEZ: I see it pretty big, and studying each pitcher and knowing what their best pitch is, and knowing what they're going to go to helps me out a lot also.

I mean, I didn't really know I was hitting .500. That's great. But I've just been seeing it really well, I guess.

Q. At the top of the lineup, Georgia's been in a little bit of a slump. What's her mindset right now, and how can you get her to break out of it?

COACH GASSO: She's been walking a lot, so that's a good thing. She's finding ways to get on. I kind of think she's pressing a little bit too

much and trying to make things happen. She's a better hitter than what she's showing, and I think she's just pressing a bit. I trust her, and I think she'll be she's a good learner and will understand what she needs to do different tomorrow.

Q. The pitchers came in combined with 769 records. Is this one of the best pitching matchups you've ever seen?

COACH GASSO: I think so. There's been outstanding pitching this entire World Series, some of the best. It's been such a treat for fans. But to see these two go after each other, we talk a lot about the team that sticks with its game plan the longest and trusts it, you've got to trust it. You've got to trust it. We've done a good job of that.

I know Pat Murphy, and I know Alabama; and I know they're going to come out ready to play tomorrow. The beauty is we've got a safety net. The team we talked about today take this like a Big 12 series, because every Big 12 series, we've won. We've always won the first game.

So that being said, we won the first game of our series. We have two times to try to win one more to be national champions, but we're just taking it in. Something we can relate to, which is a Big 12 series.

So we did our job tonight. Win one more, and in the next two days and you've won the Big 12 series, but it's a little bit bigger than that. But we're just keeping it to something we can definitely relate to. We don't want to get too big. We don't want to see the big grand picture. We're just staying with something we can relate to that is very easy to understand for our team.

Q. Jessica, after what you went through last year, could you talk about what it means to get a second chance and be playing as well as you have the last few days?

JESSICA SHULTS: It's just been an honor, honestly. Just being back with my teammates and being back on the field playing the game that I love. They picked me up last year, and it was an awesome experience to get here and be a part of it. This year to have the opportunity to play and everything is just a dream come true. Yeah, a dream.

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