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An interview with:

**COACH GASSO
LAUREN CHAMBERLAIN
DESTINEE MARTINEZ
JESSICA SHULTS
KEILANI RICKETTS**

THE MODERATOR: Joining us from Oklahoma we have head coach Patty Gasso, and studentathletes Lauren Chamberlain, Destinee Martinez, Keilani Ricketts and Jessica Shults. Coach, an opening comment?

COACH GASSO: I first want to congratulate the University of Alabama for an unbelievable series that we had with them. It's something that we'll remember. They played hard. We played hard. It was, I'm sure very fun to watch on television. Their fans were tremendous. They brought out the best in our fans.

It was just one of the most intense, loud, vocal, exciting games I've ever been a part of, the whole series. It was really a battle between two excellent teams. So I congratulate them. I know how hard and how long they've wanted it, and they really deserved it. They did a fantastic job.

I also want to thank the All Sports Association, the NCAA, the great University of Oklahoma, all the volunteers and people that have made this such a wonderful experience for our studentathletes. I just need to say some thank yous.

First, we give the glory to God, whether it is win or lose, we give the glory to God. This team has been blessed from the very beginning to put out their best. They've really been blessed with great talent. I've been very fortunate to be able to coach them. I love them like they're my own kids. I hurt for them, and yet I'm so proud of them.

So it hurts. It hurts me. It hurts them, because I don't want to let them go right now. They're playing good softball. We really worked hard, and I stand behind each one of them. They're special.

Victories that have happened have been on the field, but bigger victories behind the

cameras that you don't see that I get to see every day. To see these guys turn into women. A lot of girls became women on this team. We've been very, very blessed to be in an opportunity to play for a National Championship, and that I could not be more proud. It wasn't our time. We know that. We know when it's right. We'll be back, and it will be ours. We've learned a lot in how to do this.

I just want to thank my assistant coaches who are absolutely phenomenal and make me look good. I get all the spotlight. It's not about me. It's about my assistant coaches. My staff is fantastic. Our families are supportive. I'm just very lucky. I'm very fortunate. I'm extremely blessed to have a team that I look forward to going to see and work with at practice every day. Whether I feel like practicing or not, when I see them, I want to be there.

So this has been an unbelievable journey. Although we didn't get what we wanted, it's an unbelievable journey that I will remember for the rest of my life.

Q. Coach, obviously in the 7th inning there you got the home run after the collision play. What, from your vantage point, did you see? And what were your thoughts on that play?

COACH GASSO: On the collision? Yeah, Destinee (Martinez) was on the wrong side of the line. When there was that collision, that was the right call. She was just trying to be aggressive, trying to make something happen. It was a tough play. She was just trying to make something happen.

Q. It seemed like you lost some momentum when the rain came and then you had a delay. Could you talk about that time period there and maybe what went on? Did you lose some momentum there?

COACH GASSO: It was a weird day in the way of this is the biggest game of my life, their lives, and we're sitting in a locker room for three hours trying to figure out what to do to stay loose; and we didn't have any problems doing that.

We came out wearing our shorts. We came out with everything that we thought was going to be it. We came out on fire, absolutely. But I could see that Mother Nature was taking its course. Unfortunately, the time when it was getting heavier on us, there is nothing we can do about that. The umpires handled everything fantastically. I think they had a tremendous series, all of them. I think they were really, really outstanding.



It's just the way it happened. It wasn't meant to be. We worked hard through it, and Keilani gave everything she had. I stand behind this pitcher. I'll take her over anybody in the country. I'm so glad she's mine, and I stand behind her through thick and thin.

It happened, yes. It did take momentum away. It's hard to come back out and get refocused and feel the count, and it took a little time to get warmed up; but that just happened. It's just the way that it was meant to be and the way it happened. We left everything on the field.

Q. Was it just bad luck on defense?

COACH GASSO: Kind of. Yeah, there is nothing we can do about it except play through it, and we did. We played as hard as we could.

Q. Keilani, can you talk about that fourth inning and what it was like to pitch with the conditions worsening and then the whole thing with having to come back out with the runner on third base?

KEILANI RICKETTS: Honestly, I just wanted to pitch through it. I wasn't really focused on the rain. I didn't realize it was affecting the way I was pitching, even though I was throwing a lot of wild pitches. I was just so focused on trying to get through it, even though the rain kept coming down, and it was affecting the way I was pitching.

Alabama did a great job, as they have done this whole series, of taking the momentum and going with it.

Q. Coach, it's obviously tough to take now. But knowing what you have coming back, does that make it a little easier?

COACH GASSO: Oh, absolutely. Last year was one of the greatest experiences for our team, and you could see what it did for us this year. There was a lot of poise and a lot of calm. Probably me, mostly, because they were so confident they made me feel that way. So there was just a really great atmosphere all around with the youth here.

Four freshmen in the starting lineup. No one talks about that, and you don't need to, because they don't play like freshmen. That's okay. They don't want you to pay attention to how old they are, because they've really grown from the very beginning. So will it help us in the future? A 100% yes.

Q. Jessica, could you talk about the time period when the rain's coming down and

you're catching Keilani, how the conditions changed on you, and how things went?

JESSICA SHULTS: We were just trying to focus on getting through it and wanting to play through it. It started to rain a little harder than we thought. But I mean, it's going to happen, and we just got to play through it.

Q. Can you talk about cleaning the plate for the umpire?

JESSICA SHULTS: It was really muddy. Yeah, it was weird. I don't know.

Q. Would she not clean it for you?

JESSICA SHULTS: Oh, no, she would. She just didn't have the thing yet.

Q. Patty and Jessica, did you think that the ball you hit in the fifth was going out? The one to right center that carried to the track?

JESSICA SHULTS: I thought I hit it pretty good. It could have gone either way, like it did. But we should have gotten a little more on top of it.

Q. Did you think it had a shot?

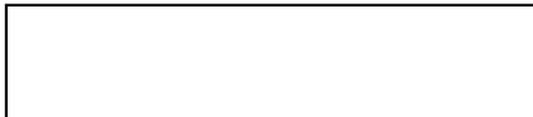
COACH GASSO: Every time they swing I think there is a shot. We've hit as of today over 100 home runs, 101 or 102. So any time these guys put a swing on it, I feel that way. Winning championships is a game of inches one way or another. It looked like it might have a shot.

Q. Can you talk about Jackie Traina. She gives up the two big home runs and then really seems to find another gear. You've seen her three days in a row. What is it about her that allows her to get through those situations?

COACH GASSO: She is extremely poised. You don't see her get rattled much. I really respect that for her age. She seems to really sometimes thrive on getting herself out of innings. I just feel like she's such a tough competitor when she's got runners in scoring position, and really comes up with some quality pitches. We have not had a chance to face her. Extremely, extremely impressed with her and her poise and her competitive spirit.

Q. Jessica, despite the loss, what does this long postseason run do for a young team moving forward?

JESSICA SHULTS: It's pretty exciting to know we have so many people coming back. We had a great group of seniors that brought a lot of leadership. But we're going to be seniors next year too. I feel blessed to be a part of this team



and have my best friends with me. It's been a great year. I'm just so grateful to be back with them next year.

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