



June 3, 2012

OKLAHOMA – 5
ARIZONA STATE – 3

An Interview with:

**OKLAHOMA
COACH PATTY 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. Coach, an opening comment.

COACH GASSO: I think that was one of the toughest games I've ever been a part of. I think our team felt that as well.

I give so much credit and so much respect to Arizona State and their outstanding pitching staff and their team. Just tremendous athletes and tremendous hitters. They're very well coached.

And looking at their numbers, the one that concerns me the most is their baseonballs-to-strikeout ratio, which means they have great eyes. They understand the strike zone. They've been taught very well. They're very disciplined.

I know Keilani came out just trying to find the strike zone a bit and then really got connected and really started to compete.

It was a little bit slippery out there with a lot of humidity, and I think everybody on the field was really feeling it. And you could see some throws get away from both teams a little bit.

But just love the tenacity of this team, and to find a way to play for a national championship has been our ultimate dream, our ultimate goal, and to know that it is a chance for reality is unbelievable. And the hard work and effort they put in, there's not another team that deserves it more than my Sooners, I guess I'd say.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

Q. Coach, earlier in the week you mentioned that the hard part was getting here, but now it's timeliness. Maybe in case a little bit of luck. That third inning, can you talk about that? Was that one of those cases where there's timeliness?

COACH GASSO: Yes, timeliness and a little luck. The sun was a factor a little today.

But, you know, this team understands you can strike out 10, 12. It doesn't matter how many times we strike out, as long as we're putting runners in scoring position.

One of the big questions I've heard is the amount of runners that we leave on base. To me, (it) is not an issue. It's just finding ways to win.

And as I said, that was one game that I'll always remember. It was just a fight until the very end. And that's Arizona State. They won't quit. They're defending national champions, and for us, the way we've gone through this tournament, we've played the best.

And I like it that way, because we've earned the right to be here.

Q. The fact that Arizona State has six .300-plus hitters in its batting order, did that make it more important to put them away in this game and not stress your pitchers that much longer?

COACH GASSO: Absolutely. You want your team to be at their best. The beauty is that you have that safety net, but you try to avoid that at all costs because everybody is just sweating. I mean, you look at our team after the game, and they just look like they've been through a battle.

So we didn't have ideas of wanting to come back and play at 6:00, unless we had to. But the idea was to respond. If they came out like they did, scored two, find a way to respond. And the fact that it happened early in the game was probably a good thing that ignited us to want to answer back.

Q. Keilani, can you talk about that sixth inning when Katelyn Boyd and Alix Johnson both represented the tying run and how you were able to strike both of those girls out?

KEILANI RICKETTS: Honestly, I don't remember. All I remember is every inning was a battle for 1 through 9, those hitters were just giving me a battle. They were making me work.

I'm just so thankful I had my teammates behind me just backing me up and stopping them from scoring the extra runs.



Q. Coach, Katie Norris had been batting in the eighth hole position. What was kind of your decision to move her up behind Shults?

COACH GASSO: Well, Katie has really been swinging well and feeling very confident. And with Erica Sampson in the sixth hole who has a lot of speed and just a feisty style hitter, I think I needed a little more poise and experience to back up Jessica Shults is why I made that decision, and trying to bring Brittany Williams back in the equation, who has had good success in past postseasons.

So it's just a risk you take and it worked out pretty good.

Q. And Katie, were you seeing better pitches today being in that sixth hole position?

KATIE NORRIS: I think so. And I was just looking for more specific areas of the plate when I was up there. So I think that helped a lot.

Q. Can you talk about your home run, seeing the pitch and

KATIE NORRIS: I honestly was just looking for a ball up in the zone and she laid it there.

Q. Patty, when you signed this current junior class, did it feel like it was kind of a starting point to get to this moment? And with that, how important has the State of California, your roots been to this program?

COACH GASSO: California has been very, very good to me. I'm from there, so I have roots there. And I understand the recruiting aspects of it.

This was a special freshman class who is now a junior group. Every class I bring in, I think, that we're going to win a national championship. If I'm not feeling that way, then I'm not doing a very good job of recruiting. So it's more a testament to what these guys have put in to get themselves better.

I've seen Keilani Ricketts turn from a girl to a woman in two years. And she is reaching new heights here and really setting herself apart from the field.

And she's worked really hard for that. I've seen Jessica Shults go to another level. I've seen Brianna Turang, Michelle Gascoigne, all of that junior class has really elevated, and you're going to see it happen from every class.

So if I'm not recruiting a class, coming in saying I believe we can win it all, then I've got to reevaluate what I'm doing.

Q. Patty, four players up here got seven of your nine hits. Is Lauren Chamberlain in a slump? She struck out three times?

COACH GASSO: Are you serious? She's not in a slump.

Q. Keilani, even though you got 13 strikeouts, you were behind in several counts. Were you and the umpire on different planets or (laughter).

KEILANI RICKETTS: Honestly, I was getting behind because they weren't chasing after my stuff. They were making me throw more pitches. They were battling off my pitches in the strike zone and I kept falling behind in counts because they were just battling.

Q. Keilani, did you feel like it seemingly was easier for you the first couple of games, or it looked that way. Did it seem like it was more difficult for you today? Did you feel like you were grinding a little bit more?

KEILANI RICKETTS: I think so, just because the competition is getting closer to the championship game. So everybody wants it out there, and it's going to be more of a battle as we get closer to that.

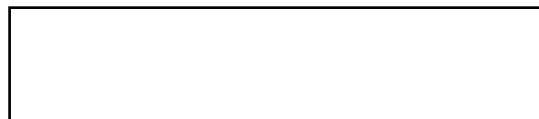
Q. Jessica, Coach talked about that third inning, but being kind in the of middle of that, could you just take us through what that was like and when it snowballed like that and what was working for you guys at the plate?

JESSICA SHULTS: I think the main thing was to bounce back after that tworun lead that Arizona State got in the first inning. And our whole thing this year was to fight back, even if we get behind. We don't get too much pressure, we don't focus too much, just stay calm and know things are going to happen for us. And they started to come together that inning, and it was contagious.

Q. Jessica, were you able to watch the shot you hit to right, and did you get a sense of how close you came to catching it? The tworun double, when she dove in, when she ran in and dove, were you following the arc of the ball or were you too busy running the bases to know how close it was?

JESSICA SHULTS: It was pretty close. It would have been a great catch if she would have caught it. So it could have gone either way.

Q. Keilani and Jessica, about Lauren Chamberlain. She had a long atbat prior to you



guys getting the twoout hits. And I just wonder if that made a difference in those hits. You got to see a lot of pitches in the ondeck circle, and did that help you to know what to look for?

KEILANI RICKETTS: Lauren, she's always been there to get the clutch hits for us, but she's not going to get it every single time. We know that she's there and we have to get her back because she has our backs whenever we can't hit. So I think it's just picking each other up.

JESSICA SHULTS: Yeah, definitely. I feel like, I mean, Lauren's seen a lot of pitches, helped Keilani see a lot of pitches. We could tell she was right on it. She just missed that. So helps us go up there with confidence, too.

Q. Coach, what was the scouting report on Dallas (Escobedo) and what was your game plan against her, because you seemed to get on her pretty well?

COACH GASSO: Important just to zone the ball down, not let her take it up in the strike zone. So you have to understand where the umpire is working and how you adjust from that. That's very important. I think umpires, it's important they are trying to figure out where their zone is as well. So we're trying to work with them at the same time.

She threw changeups, pretty good changeups, but we just really were thinking of that as a waste pitch, a showme pitch is what we call it. So just looking at angle balls down, work down on top of that rise ball which will turn into a hard line drive.

Sometimes we went a little too far out of the zone for strikeouts, but we were pretty successful with some others.

Q. Jessica, a comment on Keilani's seventh inning, because it's the only time in the game she struck out back to back to back batters, did it after the first runner reached. Did she really raise her game in the seventh?

JESSICA SHULTS: Definitely. Keilani is a competitor. She wants to go out there and perform at the best level she can. I was just trying to keep her calm. And she made it happen.

Q. Coach, can you talk about the crowds, the onrecord pace and being able to play in your backyard for the next two days?

COACH GASSO: It's a dream come true for these athletes, because we, as the University of Oklahoma, are the only university that gets to feel this feeling. There's not another school that's going to bring 10,000 people. Not that everyone

here is a fan of the Sooners, but it feels like it when you're in the game.

So the crowd, the noise, the adrenalin, the momentum that you get, is really indescribable. It's something that they'll remember forever.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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