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An Interview with:

**OKLAHOMA
COACH PATTY GASSO
LAUREN CHAMBERLAIN
KEILANI RICKETTS**

THE MODERATOR: Oklahoma. We have Patty Gasso and Lauren Chamberlain and Keilani Ricketts. We'll start with an opening statement from Coach.

COACH GASSO: Glad to have it over with. I'll say that. Just tough to get started right out of the chute. But I think we were excited to get it over with and not sit around and wait all day and watch games and have that anxiety. So I'm glad we had this first game.

But Sara Nevins is a tough, tough lefty. Very, very good pitcher. I wouldn't want to face her again. I hope we don't. She's really a tough pitcher and did a fantastic job.

I think what I loved about our team is, once they scored, that Destinee Martinez found a way to get on. Lauren Chamberlain stepped up, and we answered immediately.

And I think those are important things that you, as a team, need to do when you're at this big venue and trying to win it all. You have to know how to answer, and I think that was the thing that stuck out most to me is how we answered immediately.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

Q. Lauren, to hit a ball into the wind that hard on the button, makes me wonder if you were looking for a pitch. Tell us about that atbat?

LAUREN CHAMBERLAIN: I was struggling a little bit in my first atbat on just trying catching up to her speed. Getting a little jammed on it, but tried to keep the same approach of just getting a good pitch and putting a good swing on it. So second time around, I didn't want to get cheated.

Q. Was there anything different about Nevins' pitching after the first few innings when she held you all hitless, or did you all just start figuring her out?

LAUREN CHAMBERLAIN: We just talked about sticking with our game plan the longest, which teams to stick with the longest. And we just stuck with it and started making some adjustments where we were standing in the box and shortening our swings and just getting used to her speed.

Q. It took a while for you guys to kind of get settled in as far as on offense. Was there a little bit of nervousness going into this first game today?

KEILANI RICKETTS: I think so. I think you could tell that we were definitely nervous coming in with our atbats. You can't come in too nervous and too tired against a pitcher like Nevins because she did a great job of just having us guess up there.

I think as we started to settle in, we started to see our pitches better.

Q. Keilani, were you as on in your mind as you were the last game of the Super Regionals? It seemed like you were getting them to swing at offspeed stuff, but were you in the same kind of command?

KEILANI RICKETTS: I think I was just sticking with my game plan. You know, in Super Regionals, we stuck with the game plan and just let the little things go and keep going with it. And that's what works.

And I think this game, you know, I was just confident in my pitches on both sides of the plate and just had to keep sticking with the game plan, no matter what.

Q. Keilani, just want to ask you about going up against Coach Eriksen, who you've played with in some international play. Just want to ask you whether that changed anything for you or do you have a better sense for what he likes to do with his softball team, having played for him?

KEILANI RICKETTS: Honestly, I played for him the past summer, and we've gotten closer this summer. But it doesn't change us just battling with each other and battling against each other when we're out there.

We said hi to each other out there, but we were still like enemies on the field. And then after the game, we were back to being close again.



Q. Coach, can you talk a little bit about your strategy going up against Coach Eriksen, running pitchers in and out?

COACH GASSO: Well, I haven't seen that before, not in the way that he does it. So I think it's pretty effective. But I think it's probably a little bit tough for a pitcher to really get in a groove when you're going in and out like that.

But we had a game plan. You hear that word used a lot up here. We had a strategy for every pitcher that they were going to bring out. And I think it's a very effective strategy for them because it's tough to really get settled on one pitcher.

So we knew it was coming. We were just sticking with what we know.

Q. Coach, have you ever had a 345 as reliable as Chamberlain, Ricketts, and Shults?

COACH GASSO: If I didn't tell you Lisa Carey, Ashlee Barrett, they would strangle me. They (this year's group) resemble(s) some of the heavy hitters we've had in the past.

I think our lefties did a pretty good job of fighting off Nevins. She's tough against lefties, just like Keilani is tough against lefty hitters.

So I'd say they're very comparable. This group might have a little bit more pop than the other, a little bit more consistency, but very similar.

Q. Would you be willing to give us some insight into that game plan at the plate, just what were you guys able to do third inning forward?

COACH GASSO: I'm just going to kind of leave that alone, because we may be facing them again. So I'm going to leave that one alone.

I think the more you see her, the more you can get a little bit comfortable. It's getting comfortable with the umpire's strike zone and how – you've got to figure things out. And it took us a little while to figure out where the strike zone was and what we were going to do with it.

So and any team would tell you that. It's just the combination of not seeing that pitcher, the umpire -- figuring out her strike zone -- and trying to match it up. And I think we started to do that as the game went along.

Q. Patty and Keilani, especially the older veterans, talk about at tournament time what happens between an early Game 1 like this, looking ahead, what you want your players to be focusing on and what you as a staff will be doing between now and tomorrow night?

COACH GASSO: We'll be looking at a lot of video and watching the games tonight and developing our game plan for whoever it is that we're going to face.

I think what's really important in this first game, you know, you're the first one that plays. So no matter what any of these guys tell you or the other team, there's nerves out there. Everybody out there is feeling it because we are the opening act. So we're wanting to put on a good show and we're wanting to win.

The goal here is to keep these guys in tune with what they're good at and not get sometimes we get frustrated at ourselves because we're not getting what we want. And that can turn into some emotions we don't want.

It's keeping emotions in check. If we're not getting what we want, stay positive and keep working at it. We've just got to stay in tune with that because it can really mess you up if you're starting to get mad or let these emotions take over. You've really got to keep your emotions in check.

We talked a little bit about that. But the nice thing is we have time to rejuvenate and spend the rest of the night preparing for what's ahead.

KEILANI RICKETTS: I think we just need to trust each other and trust ourselves because when you're nervous out there, it's easy to try to do too much. But obviously what we did before was good enough to get here. So we just have to stick with that game plan, just relax out there.

Q. Keilani, Coach talked about answering immediately, and I guess when the offense came back and gave you those two runs on Lauren's home run, how did that help your mindset then going into the rest of the game?

KEILANI RICKETTS: I think with the defense backing me up, it gives me relief out there, and I'm obviously just trying to get outs for my teammates.

And it's a lot calmer it calms me down, I guess, when they're producing runs for me. I just have to trust them because I know they're going to produce runs for me.

We've come back a lot this past season and I just trust that they're going to.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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