

2016 Women's College World Series

Friday, June 3, 2016
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma



Carol Hutchins Kelly Christner Megan Betsa Tera Blanco

Michigan

Michigan - 2, LSU - 0

THE MODERATOR: Good evening. We have University of Michigan on the dais. Coach, general comments about the game?

CAROL HUTCHINS: Just what a great game. What a pitchers' duel, what a gutsy performance by really both pitchers. And in a game like that, and I told the kids late in the game there, you know, you've got to stay tough, and toughness is not allowing yourself to go mentally in the wrong direction, to start worrying about, oh, we haven't scored runs or to extort worrying about anything, just staying tough and staying in the moment, and I thought we did an outstanding job of that, and it just really came down to a timely hit, but some really key bases in that inning, in the bottom of the sixth.

I thought LSU played outstanding, and (Allie) Walljasper was outstanding, but we were outstanding, as well, and again, Megan Betsa gave us a great chance to win, and that's why we're sitting up here.

Q. Coach and Megan, LSU had a little something going, I think it was in the fifth, first and second, nobody out, and you had a long talk with Megan.

What was the message, and what did you do to bear down and get those outs to end that threat?

MEGAN BETSA: She came out there and just asked me if I was calm, and I told her no. She just told me, reminded me that I needed to be calm and trust my spin and trust my defense and let them work behind me.

Q. Tera, talk about how you may have changed your approach with the new pitcher coming in. Did you have to adjust quickly? And then also take us through the emotions when you saw that ball taking off your bat.

TERA BLANCO: I mean, I just went up there, I was

looking for a good pitch to hit and get it out in front. She throws hard and I was just looking to hit the ball on the ground. I was really excited when I saw the ball off my bat, and I'm pretty sure everyone else was, too. And I think the energy of my team and Megan just throwing her game made everyone more excited.

Q. So just your approach didn't change then? The pitcher wasn't so radically different?

TERA BLANCO: They were a little different, but just see ball, hit ball basically.

Q. Coach, it appeared that a lot of their players were swinging early in the count. Was that part of the game plan going in against Walljasper?

CAROL HUTCHINS: A lot of our players were swinging early in the count? I thought the first few innings we weren't swinging at all, and I thought we were pretty focused on her changeup, which was excellent, and let it get in our head a little bit, and I wanted us to go up there and hit the fast one, whenever it was, and then late in the game we did start swinging early, and it was effective as we had a few hits and got something going. But you know, we definitely -- she did an outstanding job against us, and we needed to attack by just simply hitting the fast pitch and not thinking. We're not very good at that thinking thing.

Q. Megan, the strike zone looked like it was shrinking for you in the middle part of that fourth, fifth inning. It looked like there were some pitches that were called balls.

MEGAN BETSA: I didn't notice. Obviously I want every pitch called a strike, so if it's anywhere near close, I'm going to react, but I thought it was in the strike zone.

CAROL HUTCHINS: I thought she was outstanding behind the plate. I hope we have her again.

Q. With the one-day delay were there any little jitters or tightness going on at the start?

KELLY CHRISTNER: I don't think so. Today we went out and hit for an hour before, just to kind of loosen up, feel good, and I think we were just even more excited to get out there and play.

Q. Kelly, can you talk about your at-bat in the sixth? There were a lot of pitches that you looked at that went by, and then finally you were able to

take a swing and get a hit.

KELLY CHRISTNER: Well, yeah, early in the at-bat, I was looking to bunt, just to move (Sierra) Romero over, and she was throwing balls, and then with a 3-0 count, especially in that situation you're taking, and then we decided to also take on the 3-1 because if she throws another ball then it's first and second, no outs. And I'm so comfortable with a two-strike at-bat, I was just looking for that pitch to hit because I knew she was coming with another one.

Q. Can you also talk about on the next couple at-bats when you were on first and Tera was at the plate, can you talk about what you felt like after she hit the ball and you saw it was going fair?

KELLY CHRISTNER: Yeah, well, I was on second. I was on first for Kelsey's (Susalla) and then she walked so I was on second. Right whenever I saw it, I thought, 'Please get over her head, please get over her head,' so I was looking to tag up at second base, and then I saw that it was over, and I was like, just run fast and get home and help my team get some runs.

Q. Megan, what was working particularly well for you tonight?

MEGAN BETSA: Well, earlier on in the game it looked like they prepared for my rise and not really for my change, so I was just using that to my advantage, making sure I was throwing it low in the zone and keeping my whip just to fool the hitters, and it obviously worked.

Q. And you mentioned that -- she asked you if you felt calm and you said you didn't. Did you quickly find that calmness after that?

MEGAN BETSA: Yeah, I just took a deep breath. We huddled back as our infield huddle and I was just ready to attack the next hitter and get out of the jam.

Q. You touched on the at-bats that your hitters had in that inning, and Kelsey particularly fell behind 0-2 and then worked the full count and got the walk. Talk about her at-bat and what that meant to the inning and just the patience that your hitter showed there.

CAROL HUTCHINS: Well, it's just one of our philosophies is just to be a base. Find a way to be a base because whether you get a hit or you get walked, they make an error, any time you're on base you have a chance to score. Give her credit for being 0-2 and finding a way not to swing at her pitches and make her throw it where she needed to. Kelsey is a dangerous hitter and it was a good at-bat for her.

Q. Megan, I just want to ask about OU and how you handle a team like that where all those hitters can hit the ball over the fence?

MEGAN BETSA: Well, I throw a lot to my own hitters, and I think we have one of the best offenses in the country, and I'm pretty successful doing that, so I think if I can beat my own hitters, I can beat anyone in the country.

Q. I noticed you all had MLE written on your arms. What does that stand for?

KELLY CHRISTNER: So Emily Hepker -- she's just like one of our people, and she has --

CAROL HUTCHINS: Lymphoma. She was diagnosed with lymphoma in 2007, and she came to one of our softball games and Jess Mendoza said you need to go meet the softball team and she introduced herself. When I asked her what she did for a living, she said, well, I have cancer. She's spent her whole life fighting it, and she's been able to be a part of our program for a few years, and we often bring her on a lot of these trips, and she was supposed to come with us on this trip. She was very sick the day we left so she couldn't come, so this was our way of honoring her. But she was in our dugout tonight. She felt better, and I'm convinced that's why we didn't play last night, because we were waiting for her.

Q. Megan, you keep hearing Hutch week after week talking about how gutsy you are. Are you learning something about yourself the way you're pitching in these postseason games?

MEGAN BETSA: Yeah, I'm learning that I am a lot better than I ever thought I would be. I have a great team behind me and they put themselves out there for me and I just realized I need to do the same and give me all, and whatever at the time is good enough.