

2016 Women's College World Series

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Oklahoma City, Oklahoma



Patrick Murphy
Chandler Dare
Sydney Littlejohn
Leona Lafaele
Haylie McCleney
Alabama

THE MODERATOR: We'll start with questions for coach.

PATRICK MURPHY: I just want to say thanks to everybody associated with the Women's College World Series, the University of the Oklahoma, USA Softball, the All Sports Association in Oklahoma City and you guys. We really appreciate the coverage and without you, our sport isn't as significant as it has become.

So we appreciate the coverage and the space in your papers and on your telecasts, because it's, it does a lot for the sport.

THE MODERATOR: Open it up for questions.

Q. You made a lot of changes to your lineup. Can you go through the thought process on some of those?

PATRICK MURPHY: Well, just like Demi (Turner) was our normal two hole, and I thought she was kind of at a spot where she could do that again. She was close to a hundred percent. Definitely offensively. Wasn't too sure defensively.

And then (Marisa) Runyon has been in that spot before. And then Chandler is like the second lead off in the six spot. So that's why we put her there.

Q. Last night you said that there are three things you need to do in the Women's College World Series: Timely hitting, good fielding, good pitching. Was it just all three of those things coming too late in this game?

PATRICK MURPHY: You could say that. Sydney came in and did a really good job after she, Madi (Moore) came, in. And then the thing that we always ask them to do is get

the tying run at the plate in the bottom of the 7th, and we did that.

So there was a lot of fight and a lot of grit. If we had one more hit in the bottom of the sixth or a hit when we had the bases loaded one out earlier in the game, it's a different story. Because it was 2-1 at the time.

And then we hit into two double plays. So, Carley (Hoover) made some good pitches and so did Alli (Walljasper) at the end. The pitch to Reagan (Dykes) was a nice jam pitch, so you got to give them credit, too.

Q. Two questions. First of all, was Alexis (Osorio) available in this game?

PATRICK MURPHY: No, not really. We've said all along that we wanted to win with a pitching staff and Sydney's a second team All-American and carried us during the SEC. Probably was the main reason why we were the 6-overall seed.

And then Madi has looked good in her last couple outings. So I told the team last night, if we're going to do this with a staff, if you're going to win it, you got to win it with everybody on board.

Q. That lead off home run, how big of a momentum boost is that for LSU? How did that affect you guys moving forward when they get on the board so quickly?

SYDNEY LITTLEJOHN: Well, for us, it's always very important to score first. But that's also a good thing about being the home team, you get to be the last one at bat.

Whenever they put one run up on the board, whether it be a home run, base hit, however they do it, it doesn't really worry us just because we know the defense has our back. We came up short, but as you can see our offense fought until the very end and very proud of them for that.

Q. Chandler, can you tell me about waiting so late before the offense got going and the missed opportunities before that. It seemed like, particularly late in the season, there were a lot of times when the bases get loaded and not -- it doesn't turn into a big inning like it did today.

CHANDLER DARE: We just couldn't get it going in the top of the innings before it. But we tried our best, we fought to the very end and that's all you can ask.

And we wanted it so bad for each of our seniors and every player on the team, and we just kept fighting and fighting and fighting and, finally, we found the holes and that's all you can ask.

HAYLIE MCCLENEY: It's just unfortunate. Because we did put ourselves in what we thought was a good position. Getting people on base, we just couldn't get them in early in the game like we needed to and, but you can't say this team didn't fight. You cannot say that. You don't have to win a championship to be a champion, I can tell you that, because I'm sitting up here with three champions and I got 18 champions in that locker room. It doesn't matter win or lose your last game.

LEONA LAFAELE: I think it's all about adjustments and we like you saw didn't make the adjustments fast enough, so that's credit to their pitchers, but I still think that we did fight hard and all we needed like coach said was just maybe one or two more hits and it would have been a different ball game. So I'm proud what have we did and just got to learn from it.

Q. I know your team is hurting right now, obviously, but what do you have to say about the season and the future of the program after coming back here again for another year?

PATRICK MURPHY: Well thank you for that. I'm really proud of the four seniors, they're great young ladies. Couldn't ask for anybody better to represent the school, me, the program, their teammates. Three of the four have graduated already and (Andrea) Hawkins needs a semester she's going to go to physical therapy school but Kallie (Case) and Haylie and Leona have their degree in hand and that's number one. If you know me it's about the total experience, it's kind of getting here is icing on the cake. Obviously all of us would love to win a national championship but I know they're going to leave the program better young ladies than when they entered and that's the biggest thing for me. And the greatest thing that these four seniors have done is they created a legacy that they're going to pass down to all these kids and from year after year after year after year they're going to make a significant impact on the program whether they know it or not. Because all these five freshmen have been with them for a whole year and they're going to rub off on all of them in a good way.

Q. How tough of a draw -- I know you're in the final eight, but when you look at what you guys stacked up against. How tough of a draw was that?

PATRICK MURPHY: Well, it was murderer's row, really, but everybody's good here. You guys, you all know that. And the gentleman the other day when he asked about the margin of error, if Sydney Booker's ball doesn't hit Bianka's (Bell) glove at third, that's two runs. And it's a different game. It's this much (Indicating) and then the short stop's right behind her and throws out our runner at the plate. So, the margin of error when you get here is the tiniest of all sports. Because every pitch matters every play matters, and if you get a free base, it could come back and bite you in the butt. Passed ball, wild pitch, whatever it is. Errors. It just, you have to play clean and then get the key hit. And we didn't get that.

Q. Touch a little bit on your career here and then for Chandler, Sydney, what is it about this senior class? What kind of impact did they have on you?

LEONA LAFAELE: Not happy with the outcome but I am very proud of us. For myself, I really wanted to go home with a bang this year and I feel like I actually escalated or elevated my game and so and for I think the whole team, we tried really hard and it's tough. But you know what? I'm proud. I'm proud to wear this A and I'm proud of all the girls sitting up here and all those girls that are back in the locker room right now. For the future of this program, we're just going to keep coming back. We're always going to be coming back. We're always going to be up there. So I'm proud of everything we did this year and super proud of this one right here.

HAYLIE MCCLENEY: You asked us to sum up our careers and I don't think it's something we can do and I don't think it's something that we should ever or we ever expected to do. I never thought this day would come. But I can't say enough about this program. There is no other place in the world like Alabama. I played in Japan, I played in Europe, Alabama is special and it's a special program because we leave better people and not just better players. That's easy when you go into college of course you're going to leave a better player. Not everyone leaves a better person. But everyone that graduates out of our program leaves a better person. And we go out into the world and we impact others and we lead and we learn how to put others before ourself and that's what I'm most proud of. Because everyone on this team is a great person. And you can say that every single year. We never have a bad egg. And that's because of Coach Murphy. All you recruits out there, you need to come to Alabama. I'm telling you, man, it's literally the best place in the world.

CHANDLER DARE: Yeah, these seniors have been one of the biggest impacts on my life. From everything that we have gone through in the fall, to now, just to see where they have led this team to, nobody probably

expected us to be here and they led us the whole way. The fight that they had, on and off the field, I mean, I know everybody on this team has learned something from every single senior and can't thank you guys enough and we're really going to miss you guys.

SYDNEY LITTLEJOHN: There's not enough good things you can say about these seniors. I had to talk about each one of them, I mean Haylie has saved me so many runs and so many games and she's an even better person. Leona has talked to me and taught me so much just in between each pitch like those little conversations like I'm never going forget that. And Kallie, she was my host on my official visit, so we built a relationship going from there and God bless Andrea, she's my neighbor, so she's not getting away from me. But the impact that these seniors have left is like, it's unbeatable and the legacy will live on forever. They have taught each of us so much. Whatever they taught us mine and Chandler's class is next, it's going to be hard shoes to fill, but we're going to do our best to do it and I can't thank them enough for everything and for each of them they're about to go into the world and just change so many people's lives and the best is yet to come.

Q. Today being the best example, probably, but how much of a struggle was it and a puzzle was it for you to try to take these pieces and create a lineup. You mentioned having holes in it even late in the season and just trying to find that right combination.

PATRICK MURPHY: Well, you just try to figure out who might get hot. Instead of waiting for them to get hot, you almost like force them to get hot and put them in a position where they have to succeed. I've done that a lot where somebody might be struggling on I'm going to say you're in the three or four hole. The team needs you right now and Runyon is a good example. She got a hit in the last inning. Most people would have folded their tent and she would have said, I'm done with this, but she comes up with a hit in her last at bat to keep it going. So, I'm proud of everybody and the theme of "pass it down", we almost did it. Just so close. And in the sixth inning and also in the seventh, so...

Q. Sydney and Chandler, in next year when you look at what you guys have back and what the expectations are on this program now, with the ones that are leaving what do you see the season next year and what is your challenge each of you in leading it?

SYDNEY LITTLEJOHN: Like I said before, these seniors have taught us so much and we're going to try to carry on their legacy, so I expect us to be back here for the fourth consecutive year.

CHANDLER DARE: Yeah, I mean, they're some big shoes to fill and they know that we're going to be calling them, texting them, asking them hundreds of questions throughout the year, but looking forward to it and we plan to be back here again and that's always the goal.

Q. You talked about it a couple weeks ago before the Regional the power of the SEC. And you see right here four teams and success for the SEC. What do you think this says about LSU's moving on Auburn, Georgia and what the SEC's been able to accomplish at this event specifically.

PATRICK MURPHY: I just think it's every weekend that we play in the SEC and there's eight, because we play 24 conference games, is a mini Super Regional and you get prepared to get to Regionals and your Super Regional. And then when you get here, it's almost like the hardest part is to get here. I know for us, when we get to regionals and there's no SEC team there it's like the biggest breather ever. And you get to play somebody that you played usually all year. So, but just to play week in, week out, against some of the best players in the country, it gets you prepared to get here.

Q. Sandra Simmons, not known as a big power hitter. But, so were you surprised at that lead off home run and how tough is that when the opening at bath is a score and you're immediately down?

PATRICK MURPHY: She's had a heck of a good year. When Beth (Torina) moved her to the lead off that's when they took off. And I've seen her on film hit home runs. I think it was the sixth maybe this year. But it's kind of a little bit of a shocker, it's full count and you don't kind of expect a leadoff home run. But she got a hold of a pitch that she could hit and but I thought Sydney kind of responded well the next inning. It's just a big momentum boost for them, for sure.

THE MODERATOR: All right. Thank you.