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Alabama: 2
Oregon: 0

An interview with:

Alabama

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Alabama Head Coach Patrick Murphy, Jaclyn Traina, Molly Fichtner, Kaila Hunt, Haylie McCleney. We will start with an opening statement from Coach Murphy.

COACH MURPHY: First, congrats to Coach White and Oregon, they're a heck of a good team. This is similar to 2012 when we had to beat the Pac-12 champion today, Cal, and they were just as tough as Cal was that day; just a really, really good team. Again, for Jaclyn to shut out that offense, it's just incredible.

So you've got to tip your hat to Jac and our defense. And then we got a couple key hits. Usually in the postseason, you have to have the great starting pitcher, you have to have the great defense. And then the third ingredient is you have to have the key RBIs, and we were 3 for 3.

Q. Kaila, wondering what happened on that play, if you ever scored on a play like that, what was that move called?

KAILA HUNT: It was 3-2 and two outs and I was running on the pitch, and I took a peek and saw the ball was hit, but I didn't hesitate. Because there are two outs so it doesn't matter if she catches it or not I'm going to go to third, even if she flies and does catch the ball. I'm still going to go to third base. There was no hesitation and the catcher started to come across the plate, so I just tried to go to the inside. It was kind of awkward, because I usually try to go to the outside part of the plate. So I don't know, I haven't seen the replay but it felt pretty awkward.

Q. Safe?

KAILA HUNT: I thought I was. Of course.

Q. Haylie can you talk about the home run? It looked like y'all were expecting to see the left hander Hawkins from the start. What was the mental preparation for that and what did you see on that?

HAYLIE MCCLENEY: Just to stay on top of the ball I think was our main thing going in. The at-bat, she started out with two pitches outside and she came in the third pitch. Just trust in my swing and trust in the preparation that we put in to face Hawkins, who is a phenomenal pitcher. You saw her; she made some of our hitters chase. But just trust in the preparation that she was going to come in at some point in the at-bat and just taking a hack.

Q. Jaclyn, your thoughts on playing Florida again?

JACLYN TRAINA: They're a great team. We saw them once this year and we're just going to go into it like any other team. They're a good -- they're very good and we have to make quick adjustments during the game and play Alabama softball.

Q. Jackie, again, the 7th inning, the go-ahead run comes to the plate. Does it feel familiar?

JACLYN TRAINA: I mean it always feels familiar. I feel like it's always like that! (Laughter.) So I just pulled from those different times that I have been in those situations. I know that I can trust my defense, which makes it a lot easier. I know they're behind me so I didn't have any doubt.

Q. Molly two things. Can you talk about the hit that brought Kaila home and did you have any idea that she would try to score on that? And also talk about what Jaclyn looked like, what kind of velocity she had and everything else.

MOLLY FICHTNER: Yeah well, like Hunt said it was a 3-2, 2 out so I didn't want to do too much. I just wanted to put the ball in play; just see it long and get on top of it. I did see her come

around. It was exciting. And Jackie, she is throwing awesome. She is hitting her spots, doing everything we need her to. We're mixing it up, great hitting team. We're going to face another great hitting team tomorrow, but she looks great.

Q. As a catcher, what would you do if you saw someone coming at you and then back off like that, the move that Kaila made?

MOLLY FICHTNER: I would just try to tag her.

Q. You've never seen anything like that before?

MOLLY FICHTNER: I would have to watch it in slow motion. I was running, so I didn't really see it.

Q. Questions for Kaila about Haylie. Lead-off hitters in the past have been people like Kayla Braud or Jen Fenton, slap hitters, not necessarily home run threats. Is that safe to say? Haylie is kind of an epitome of a five-tool player. What does it mean for you as a veteran player to have a player at the top of the lineup that can do so much with her speed and bat control and give you a home run like this? I don't know if you have anything on that, Coach, as well?

KAILA HUNT: Obviously it's great to have someone who -- she has so many tools, I mean she can slap. If she needs to make an adjustment she's popping up, she can hit home runs, like you just saw. Having that in the top of the lineup is huge for us, especially down the lineup. You know that she can get the key hit and she can get the RBIs, you know? And she can also get on base if she needs to. She can bunt if she has to get on. She can hit the double in the gap to score a runner, if we have second and third. So having those tools is huge for our lineup to turn it over and pass it down and start it off. Having all those tools is huge for our lineup.

COACH MURPHY: I think she reminds me of a female Ichiro. That's the best way I can describe her because he can do all those things and so can she.

Q. Patrick, two-part question. One, did Haylie follow all your base-running instructions in the first? And secondly, did the early opportunities give you the feeling that your team was going to break through against them?

COACH MURPHY: One, the rule is at you or behind you, so she did follow the rules. She didn't get in front of it, so she couldn't advance. Then I think she didn't -- I can't speak for her, but I think she thought that the girl made a great play.

So she did follow the rules. I forgot the other question, what was it?

Q. About breaking through.

COACH MURPHY: Oh, yeah. You've got to credit Mike for having the guts to start the second kid. We watched her last night against Oklahoma and she made a couple kids look really bad, so -- and hell of a drop ball. But I thought we would eventually score against her and I think he probably did make the right move when he did pull her for Hawkins.

You know, you just never know in this situation. The toughest part, I think, of coaching is when to pull a pitcher. How long do you leave her, when do you pull her? Do you go with your No. 2 kid, or No. 1 in this case. It's just a tough situation for both sides, really.

Q. Patrick, was your lineup set for Hawkins? Was it a left-handed pitcher lineup?

COACH MURPHY: Yeah, because we only had Haylie in the top spot. But I felt good about Jackie hitting either one and then Danny has been our best kid all week in BP. She has been our "Jas" from a couple years ago. Every BP, she has been ripping the ball and all four would agree with me. She went 1 for 2, and Jackie 2 for 3, so it really didn't hurt us.

Q. And Jaclyn and your defense, the top 3 in their lineup has been good all year, one of them gets on twice and never gets to second, and the other two never get on.

COACH MURPHY: That's a scary threesome, Ceo -- other than Kayla Braud, I've never seen another drag bunter like her and we knew it was coming. You saw how far she beat it out. It's incredible. I hope she is wearing a red, white and blue uniform this summer. She is terrific. But Jackie, the key thing was no walks. Eight strikeouts but no walks and she forced them to swing the bat.

Q. What's the scouting report on Florida and how does the dynamic change now that you're going to a series?

COACH MURPHY: They're a really good team. I think it's a respectful rivalry. Everybody up here and everybody on our team respects the heck out of them. I don't think it's a nasty rivalry at all. I would consider Tim and I good friends. And it was such a long time ago, I think it was the middle of March when we went down there. I think three or four of their kids starting now weren't starting then, so they've had some movement in their lineup and so have we. I think both teams are obviously much better right now. That's a long time ago. Two months of hard work and I think it's going to be a heck of a good series.

Q. Patrick, how does the challenge of getting back to a final series these past two seasons compare to trying to get to a final for the first time?

COACH MURPHY: Well, I would have said it was harder to get to the first one, but now I think it's even harder to get to the second one.

There is a huge target on our back. Everybody has seen us throughout the whole year on TV. It makes it very difficult to surprise somebody with Jackie's pitch, or with a Haylie swinging or bunting or whatever. There are no more surprises in our game. It's difficult to surprise somebody with a move or a play or anything like that. So I think it's much more difficult to get there the second time. I kept reading the scoreboard when it introduced the Alabama girls, it said Alabama, the only school in Division I softball that's been to all 10 super regionals. That's difficult itself, but to get back here in a championship series with a team that's been here three times, I believe, Florida, it's a great feeling for all of us involved with the program.

Q. Molly, you transfer in, maybe what you're feeling right now. This ultimate experience that you're going through, give us a sense of that. I used to go to UTSA for baseball tournaments and I have a perspective. Second part of the question is being an Academic All-American, the example someone like Kaila sets for that. I don't know if you realize you have four Academic All-Americans, there are only five in this tournament. The other is Whitney Canyon, so a two-part question there about your transition and the academic.

MOLLY FICHTNER: Oh, yeah, obviously it's an honor to be up here, it's a dream come true. As far as the Academic All-American, when I transferred my goal was to surround myself with

people that want to make me better. Coming to Alabama that's what happened. I stepped up my game because of these girls next to me.

Q. Patrick, Kayla and Haylie, earlier in the postseason your normal big hitters weren't getting as much production. Do you feel going into the final everyone that you will need to start to break through is doing that?

COACH MURPHY: I think so. I think we're hitting on all cylinders. In this tournament alone, and at super regionals, too, we've had a different hero every night. We said it the other day before we played Oklahoma. That's the greatest thing about this team -- 1 through 9 or anybody on the bench can come through in the clutch. It's been Leona, it's been Peyton, it's been Runyon, it's been Jackie, it's been Haylie. That's why it's so much fun to coach this team. There's a different hero every night.

KAILA HUNT: Yeah, I think he hit the nail on the head. Pretty much that's exactly what I was going to say. Throughout this lineup anybody in any part of the lineup can come through for us, and I think that's the biggest thing for us. If we get runners on at second base and it's our 8 hitter, there is no doubt that they can get that hit.

I think that's it is biggest thing for us, is, you know, we have to have that timely hitting and in order to get timely hitting you can't just have two or three people that can only do that. I think that's the special thing about this team is that anybody can get that hit at any time.

HAYLIE MCCLENEY: Yeah, agree with what they said. We're one of those teams that we can attack you 1 through 9 but we can also attack you 1 through 18; it doesn't matter who is up to the plate. In the pressure situation we have the utmost confidence in whoever is up at the plate to get the job done. I think that's really big for us just to get you're attacking 1 through 9 but we can also attack you 1 through 18.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, everyone.

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