

June 1, 2014



Alabama: 2
Oregon: 0

An interview with:

Oregon

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by Oregon Head Coach Mike White, Kailee Cuico, Courtney Ceo, Cheridan Hawkins and Alexa Peterson. We will start with a statement from Coach White.

COACH WHITE: Thank you. A tough loss for us today. Played an excellent team in Alabama. They pitch well, played some good defense, had timely hitting. That's what it takes to win those big games. I'm so proud of my team, the way we battled right through to the end.

Secondly, I would like to thank our administration for providing us all the people that we need to make this a successful season, especially on the road, having the managers to help out, you know, press, everything that goes along. So many people work behind the scenes and I want to take the time to thank them for that. I want to thank the City of Oklahoma and ASA Softball, USA Softball, NFCA and everyone associated with that. The NCAA as well. Of course the umpires, thank you for your time.

And right now it's back to the drawing board for us. It's always hard to end your season, but there is only one team that's going to leave this tournament happy -- well, what I consider happy.

But it is what it is. It's a tough loss, and hopefully in taking that next step I think we've got better each year we've competed. Hopefully we've taken that next step and we've learned something from this experience to compete next year and make it back and make it into the finals. We were just short of our goal. To my seniors -- Courtney Ceo, Alexa Peterson, Kailee Cuico -- what a

tremendous leadership role they were this year, really a great blend of talent, fun, leadership.

They kept it "real" so to speak, and, you know, I couldn't ask for any more. I think the classes below them learned so much from them on the way to run things and, you know, because we're only coaches and we can only be there so long. It's really what we do off the field, when we're not around or not looking that makes a big difference. The ownership of this crew, the three of them had, was tremendous. Thank you.

Q. Mike and Cheridan, can you tell us what you saw on the play at the plate on the missed tag or what was ruled a missed tag?

COACH WHITE: I had a pretty good view, obviously, I was in the camera well right there, and the ball clearly beat her by a long way. Got the tag on her. So if it was 50/50, it should be out, in my opinion. That's the way -- whenever the ball beats you, you should be out. I don't care how close it was, and I consider her out. That's just my opinion. Of course it doesn't matter what my opinion is; it matters what the umpire calls. It's just a shame it couldn't have been a 1-run game going into the last inning but, you know, he's got to call it the way he sees it, and that's the end of it.

CHERIDAN HAWKINS: Pretty much the same thing. I, as well, thought it was a really close play. Obviously that's his call.

Q. Coach, can you talk about the factors behind your mound or circle decision today?

COACH WHITE: Yeah. I think you could say, hey, let's get to the next game, let's get to the next game, but we're here to win the tournament and if we're going to win the tournament we can't just rely on Cheridan Hawkins. We've got to have our other players play and make contributions and if we're going to do that. Karissa has always pitched well in the heat and she did well. She gave me exactly what I wanted out of her -- to get me at least once, twice through the order. And then if it's close, bring in Cheridan and we'll see if

we can get to that next game.

She did exactly what I wanted from her; tremendous job by her. And for Cheridan to come in after that lead-off hit and getting out of that inning -- I can't be any more proud of what my team did. We just didn't put the numbers up on the board and a lot of it has to do with Jackie Traina. What a tremendous career, so far; of course it's still going. One of them is going to win a World Series. I'm not sure which one, they're both equally talented, and it comes down to inches. If you look at this game, how many line drives did we hit in the game? Home run, maybe 3 feet foul. That's this game. That's the way it goes. That pitch to Haylie McCleney, three inches further inside, that's a jam job to right field. Again, that's part of the game. That's why we play it, and that's what makes it a tremendous game -- the unknowns and the factors there when you play in the big limelight.

Q. Mike, Kailee and Alexa, can you tell us more especially Mike from your perspective with your background, what makes Traina so effective? We can all see the 70 or 71 on the board, but I would assume there is more to it than that.

COACH WHITE: She just challenges you around the plate, and sometimes you've got to get going, and you've got to be good at stopping your swing. She didn't really use the changeup, which was surprising; maybe she thought I was going to pick it or something, I don't know. But she just flat out blew it by us. Gotta give her props for that.

She is able to throw different pitches out there. She can throw the low curveball, the screw, the drop, so it's hard to sit on any one pitch. Truthfully, I've got to look at the tape. I don't know if we made enough adjustments. We might have given up too much of the outside corner, and against good pitching, I've been telling the ladies all year they're going to take advantage of anything you give 'em. And I think she took advantage of them.

ALEXA PETERSON: I think she did a really good job controlling what she could control, so whatever the umpire was giving her she was using that towards her advantage. She would make a curveball outside and if she got us to swing at it, she would move it two more inches out and she was doing a good job of controlling what she wanted to control and made it tough on us hitters.

KAILEE CUICO: I agree, I think she thought we were being maybe a little too aggressive, and she moved a couple inches off

and we were going for some big swings when maybe we needed to "short up" a little bit. But she did a good job at placing it, I think.

Q. Courtney, could you talk about the environment and being on the big stage and what the fan support has meant to you and your teammates?

COURTNEY CEO: The big stage is what we live for. This is what we've worked for since we were young and what we worked for all year. Being out here and being able to play in front of all these fans and little kids and our parents and all the people back home, it's just an amazing feeling.

It definitely lives up to everything that everyone has ever told us that it was going to be. It just means a lot to us to be able to represent our school and our family here as a team and our families back home as well.

Q. Coach, you've seen both Alabama and Florida this week. How do you see those two matching up in that championship?

COACH WHITE: Great question, I'm not sure. It's going to be whoever gets most of their breaks. They're both pitching very well. Obviously Hannah Rogers has given up her first runs in I don't know how many innings, and there are no secrets between those two. They know each other pretty well. Defensively, Florida, I think may have a little bit of an edge. The way they play the middle infield there is pretty tight. Not to say that anybody is bad, but I'm just (saying) who's got the edge there. And offensively, possibly Florida may have a little bit of an edge there; but they're very equal. It's going to be a great series. I wish I could stick around to watch it, but I've got to get on a flight tomorrow morning at 6:00. It's going to be a good series, yeah.

Q. Coach, we were talking to Coach Murphy about McCleney and what a unique lead-off hitter she is with all the tools she has -- with her speed, game, and bat control -- and then to get the big home run. How would you assess her play in the college game right now?

COACH WHITE: What is she, a freshman? Sophomore? It's early in her career yet. She's got a way to go but typically what happens is people make adjustments and we see how they handle those types of things. But she is a very talented player, obviously, to come up on the

big stage and hit the big home run and take advantage of the few times we came inside on her. That's a player. You take the most of an opportunity given to you. Hats off to her. She is a great outfielder, does a good job out there; great all-around ballplayer. Props to her. I think we may have a lead-off hitter a little bit better, but I might be biased.

Q. Coach, you had talked about -- actually, this is the farthest that the Ducks have been here at the World Series. Can you address the degree of difficulty of getting to the championship series?

COACH WHITE: I think you got to win both of those first two games; that's the big hurdle we've got to get to. We keep making steps, going forward. That's the good news. Obviously we took a little step back last year but I tell you what, it's hard just to get here let alone to the championship series. Things gotta go your way. You gotta get some breaks and even some little things -- there are no little things when you get here. You have to have everything. That includes getting good umpire calls, the luck. There is so much to it, but you have to have a talented team, and this year I had an excellent team.

The big factor for us was could we pick up from Jess Moore leaving and Sam Pappas and Allie Burger and Kaylan Howard, and I think we answered that. You know as much I said yesterday about Oklahoma having some question marks (entering the year), I think there were a lot of question marks surrounding this team. We started out the season ranked 15th or 16th, I believe -- I could be wrong on that one -- and picked to finish third in the Pac-12. But we repeated as champions, and that's not easy. I don't care what you say about the Pac-12, it's not that bad of a conference. To win that back-to-back, tremendous. To get back to the College World Series, tremendous, from where people were picking us and what we did.

Cheridan Hawkins stepped up like the champion she is. Karissa Hovinga stepped up on the big stage. My corners, Ceo and Cuico, with a tremendous leadership job. Nikki Udria as a freshman -- I mean, wow, did you see her glove out there, the way she handles balls and attacks it? Tremendous. Karine Shaver, a kid who didn't even play shortstop. This is a talented team and I'm excited because next year we have four more kids coming in that will be able to do the job for us. They'll never replace these guys; they can't do

that, but we're ready to build on top of what we have achieved so far.

Q. Courtney, I know your sister played college softball so you probably have perspective about different programs within the Pac-12, Big 12, what have you. How would you assess what Oregon softball stands for now? Not so much the mission statement, but what you guys want to be known as, you as seniors, what you want your legacy to be and helping the program move forward?

COURTNEY CEO: I think in general just from our freshman year we wanted to be looked at as one of the top teams in the nation and throughout the four years that we've been here, we've absolutely accomplished that, getting better each year and setting a standard for our upper classmen as well as our lower classmen. We do things right and do things with class. We help each other out. We're a family here. We use that word a lot and it's not -- we're just not throwing it around, we really are a family. We care about each other on and off the field. We care about our staff; not just our coaches, but everyone else involved. Our managers, our equipment people, our administration, everyone. We care about them as a family.

Just the standard that we set, you take care of people, and you use manners, and you be morally correct people. It's more about our personalities. And then we also have talented people on the field, so just all around good people and that's what our team brings.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you guys.

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