

May 29, 2014



An interview with:

Florida

THE MODERATOR: Hello, welcome to the 2014 Women's College World Series. With us is Florida. To my right head coach Tim Walton, Hannah Rogers, Kirsti Merritt and Chelsea Herndon, and to my left is Aubree Munro.

COACH WALTON: First of all congratulations to Baylor, I thought they played a very good super regional. We were watching as we were waiting through rain. Really good team and for our team come out and to get as many runs as we were able to get early off of Whitney Canion, that was the goal -- to get as many runs as we could, because we know what their offense can do and has done. I give Kirsti a huge amount of credit for getting that first hit. Obviously they made a mistake and we were able to capitalize on it, getting that two-out hit by Bailey in the gap. Hannah went out and challenged the strike zone and pitched well with all pitches. Defensively we made some really nice plays. That's what you expect. We practice hard. We changed up our routine from being here as many times as we had. I felt like our players came in confident, calm, under control and we warmed up well. And how about a freshman in her first at-bat at the College World Series hitting a grand slam off one of her former teammates. I thought that was good stuff.

Q. Tim, talk about what your offense is doing lately, with five mercy-rule wins in the postseason. What has gotten this team cranking like that?

COACH WALTON: I think the Georgia loss humbled us. We had to reevaluate our offensive approach. And not just one hitter, but top to bottom. We went back and spent a couple of days evaluating where we were at and what we're capable of. We've done a better job of hitting the ball on the ground.

We have done a better job of hitting line drives. We've got enough bunts; not too many, but enough. We've gone to the slap a lot more; you can see our hitters going to that. I think it's been more of that. Preparation for Washington was probably as good of a job by our coaching staff as we've ever done. We spent hours upon hours, upon hours preparing for them because, to be quite honest, we thought they were maybe a little bit better than we were. They had some tools and players that were really, really good and we needed to figure out how to neutralize that. Give our kids credit for hard work and dedication to a plan.

Q. Hannah, speak to last year. The first inning was not a good first inning for you. Talk about being able to play uphill versus downhill.

HANNAH ROGERS: I think the way I have been pitching lately has given me confidence to go out there and shut it

down. Also, how good our offense is doing right now as well, as long as you can go out and have fun and do what you do.

Q. Aubree, what kind of stuff did she have?

AUBREE MUNRO: Ever since postseason (began) Hannah has had that look in her eye. She's been really focused and getting in really good work in the pen and so she's been bringing it every day. It was no different today.

Q. Hannah, how are you different as a pitcher and how you think about pitching from when you were here that first time as a freshman?

HANNAH ROGERS: I think my freshman year, you're here for the experience and you're just having a good time. Also it's your first time here so there are a lot of nerves there. It's my third time being here, so I'm trying to be confident and be there for my teammates and allow them to feel like they're at home here.

Q. Kirsti, what's gotten into your bat?

KIRSTI MERRITT: I think it has to do with the slapping. It's making my swing very smooth. It's changed everything.

Q. What have you done differently with it?

KIRSTI MERRITT: It changes my mechanics, I guess. I went to the slap and it makes me see the ball better and hit the ball better than when I'm standing in.

Q. Chelsea, you hit a grand slam in the World Series. Is that something you dream about?

CHELSEA HERNDON: Definitely. I went up there with a clear mind and I was

calm. I wasn't going to let the nerves get a hold of me and when I saw a good pitch I took a hack at it.

Q. How many times have you faced that pitcher before?

CHELSEA HERNDON: I used to play with her in high school so I faced her a lot in practice. I wasn't going to let that get to me.

Q. Tim, can you elaborate on your adjustments from before.

COACH WALTON: We changed our routine. We've stayed at the same hotel, done a lot of different things. But this time we got off the plane on Monday night after a long day on Sunday and instead of coming here we went up and had dinner and got everybody out of the hotel room and went and hit. You know, we've kind of got our own thing going at the hotel. They have a nice breakfast station for us and it feels like we're on another SEC road trip, keeping it simple a little bit. And to comment on what Kirsti said, her slap is brand new. That's what she is saying. It's helped her smooth her hands out and feel and see the ball. It's something brand new that she has never done before.

Q. Chelsea, have you known Heather a long time? Have y'all stayed in touch?

CHELSEA HERNDON: Yeah, we stay in touch, congratulate each other on going to the World Series and the successes we have had, but that's about it. I'm in Florida and she is in Waco, but we stay in touch, we communicate.

Q. What kind of a pitch was it you got?

CHELSEA HERNDON: It was down the middle, something that looked good! (Laughter.) Definitely what I was looking for.

Q. Kirsti, can you talk about the team offense and what it's been doing in the postseason? I know there were times during the regular season that you weren't as explosive as a team.

KIRSTI MERRITT: We're working together. Bailey just put down her first squeeze bunt, or maybe one of her first ever bunts. To be able to do that, have a power hitter come and do that to get our offense going, we're really just working together.

Q. Coach, I know you were a college baseball player. I was an SID for many years in college baseball. There are so many differences between the two sports, one of them being how the bracketing is set up. You come back and play tomorrow whereas in college baseball you're rewarded for winning by having a day off. I imagine the way your offense is playing right now you like the concept of coming back and playing? Talk about the differences.

COACH WALTON: Being at the College World Series as a player twice, the first time we were there and won the championship and seemed like we were there forever, enjoyed it, did a lot of cool things. Coming here you know what the expectations are. You play quick and we've done that a lot.

That's the one thing when I do my weekly interviews. Typically in softball you don't have the time to enjoy the successes of your wins. You have to get back and prepare quickly. I wish we would spread

this out longer, but understand that the timing and the demographics of television and the fans themselves.

Just go with it and try to figure out how to make -- if it was over two weeks we would probably find something wrong with that. I think the system we have in place is as good as it can be and gives the athletes a great opportunity to see a lot of people in the stands and themselves on TV. It's our moment. It happens before baseball starts their regionals and super regionals. It's softball's moment and I think it's special.

Q. Earlier they announced the tournament is going to be here until 2035. Your reaction?

COACH WALTON: The dugout that I was in today made me excited it's here until 2035. Been here six times and never had an opportunity to go into a bathroom and change and put sun screen on and do all those things. What they have done, I know it's baby steps but it's awesome. The dugout we had is awesome and it's comfortable. The old dugout, we were all tied up together. You know, it was really tight. I love it. Congratulations for Oklahoma City until 2035.

Q. When Bailey got the double you were animated. Was that about the moment or the kid?

COACH WALTON: About getting funnel cake. Told that kid if we got a hit we were going to give her funnel cake and she got fired up! (Laughter.)

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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