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Lafayette: 1

An interview with:

## Kentucky

THE MODERATOR: Here with Kentucky, to my right we have head coach, Rachel Lawson, Kelsey Nunley and Lauren Cumbess. We will start with an opening statement by Coach.

COACH LAWSON: First, thank you guys for being here. This is a cool event. You hear about the World Series all the time and you know it's special but to see how it's pulled off firsthand is incredible. The city, everybody who is behind it, the workers, the University of Oklahoma, the staff -- I mean, it's just an incredible venue. I can't say enough about the last two days. I think it's been really special.

Moving forward to the game, I didn't know what to expect because in the middle of the third inning Stokes goes, "Wow, look at all the people." She was on deck and I'm like, "Wow, look at the ball," and she said don't worry, I got that Coach! (Laughter.)

I didn't know what to expect. We came out and fought from the first inning. Obviously our offense did a great job and I thought Nunley was great on the mound and our defense made all the plays they needed to make. Good day for Kentucky softball.

**Q. We've heard a lot today from some of the other teams who had players not having been here before talking about nerves. You guys seemed to play like poised veterans. Was that the case?**

COACH LAWSON: Well, you'll have to answer that.

LAUREN CUMBESS: There definitely are nerves but it's more excitement. I think in the SEC we play on a big stage all the time. Being out there is really cool for us and with a big crowd and being on TV, I think we played better.

KELSEY NUNLEY: I think that the nerves we had were good nerves and they just kept us calm and ready to play.

COACH LAWSON: The thing I would say is when my staff and I went out recruiting and we hand-picked this team, our number one criteria was that they were winners. The only way you can know that is if they pitch in championship games, play in them -- whether it's state high school championships or travel ball. So that was the major criteria, because we wanted to turn this program into a championship program. So I know they were a little bit nervous and ESPN helped lighten the load with all the media stuff. I think that helped and didn't distract them. So I actually think that's what happened.

**Q. Lauren, I wanted to ask you, almost as a follow-up to a first question about nerves, can you talk about the**

**team being opportunistic when they gave you daylight with 2 outs in the first inning?**

LAUREN CUMBESS: Um, yeah, we don't really ever think about outs as an inning is over. With two outs we put our heads down and try to make something happen with two outs. We always try to get a runner on. We scored so many times this season with two outs whether it's by a walk or hit. We don't give up with two outs. I think they play better under pressure when an inning is about to be over. I think we like to make things happen.

**Q. Lauren when you signed with this program it had barely been to a tournament let alone a World Series. Why did you believe you could win at Kentucky?**

LAUREN CUMBESS: I loved the coaches and their philosophy about softball. Obviously going on your visits you want to meet the players. I loved all of them. I really wanted to go somewhere where I thought I could make a difference and help build a program, and I felt like at Kentucky I could do that. I knew they were out recruiting and getting other players that wanted to do the same thing.

**Q. Kelsey, this is one of the best offenses the Ragin' Cajuns' have throughout the country and they've come back many times this season. What kept you comfortable out there and being able to keep them at bay?**

KELSEY NUNLEY: Stay calm, stay confident, and keep throwing hard and go at 'em.

COACH LAWSON: From somebody who has watched every pitch she has thrown this year, she threw hard today. She threw very hard. Her pitches

had a lot of bite to them. It was spinning tight and I don't think they were ready for that tight spin. I think overall it was just her legs and her pitch speed was really high. I think that's what helped push her over the edge today.

**Q. Lauren, what was your mentality going to your first at-bat? Obviously this is a moment you've worked hard for and the senior class in general to produce after working so long, can you talk about that?**

LAUREN CUMBESS: Absolutely. We just love being here. We talked about it amongst ourselves and we want to enjoy every moment.

No one plays well under pressure, so we're not playing with any pressure on ourselves. We're going out there and trusting what we worked on in practice. We think we're prepared to face anybody, just like all the other teams here. They have been preparing for this day, the World Series.

We're just trusting ourselves and what happens, happens. We're just goin' for it.

**Q. Lauren, aside from you all not showing any nerves, do y'all put pressure on them throughout the night, making their short game do work and stuff like that. What was the approach to stress the defense?**

LAUREN CUMBESS: I think whenever you get runs on the board, you're able to do more stuff anyway, so I think that helped. Without the runs that we had, it might have been different, maybe not. But Coach Himes, our third base coach, we like to mix things up sometimes and she was just making some good calls.

**Q. Kelsey, home run in the first inning, then you seemed to settle down after that. What were you telling yourself? What was your perspective then from after the first inning?**

KELSEY NUNLEY: Well, I kind of expected at least, them to hit at least one good ball. I knew that they were a good hitting team and I know that home runs happen all the time. I just tried to stay calm and relax and kept throwing.

**Q. Rachel, you had a good number one pitcher in Shana Bell before Kelsey got here but what did she bring to you guys?**

COACH LAWSON: Well, there are a few things that have changed. I think our offense from top to bottom is a lot better now and I do think it's easier to pitch when you have more runs.

This team broke a school record in home runs and doubles and free passes, so there are a couple of contributing things. But I think the thing that makes Kelsey special is she puts the ball exactly where she wants to, and she is able to command all four of the zones. She can go up, down, in and out, and I think because of that she is able to game plan against specific batters. She doesn't have to give the same look every single day. Anytime a pitcher can mix it up like that in all the zones and go off speed they're tough to hit because it's hard for a hitter to sit on a pitch. I think that's why you're seeing Kelsey do such a good job in the postseason because she is able to adapt to the hitter's game plan and then she actually goes on the attack.

**Q. Lauren, you mentioned when you guys got a couple of runs on the board you changed the focus there. Was it after you guys got 2, 3? When**

**did you change the emphasis and when did you feel like you need to turn up the pressure?**

LAUREN CUMBESS: I don't know if there was a specific moment. Maybe in coach Hime's mind, maybe there was a moment for her, but our goal is to keep scoring every inning.

**Q. Coach mentioned how when they were assembling the team they were going after winners. What was it about the coaching staff and the program that you guys had the confidence and the trust to join it? What in particular made you envision a day like today?**

KELSEY NUNLEY: Just watching Kentucky, I saw 'em get better every year and I wanted to come and make an impact any way that I could. So Kentucky seemed like the perfect school to go to.

LAUREN CUMBESS: Going with that, same as her. I knew the program was on its way up. When you're being recruited you get to talk about hitting philosophy and defense and their goals as a coach, so I agreed with all that.

**Q. Rachel, as well as the Cajuns hit, can you live with five walks by Kelsey?**

COACH LAWSON: Yeah because we weren't going to pitch to their catcher again. We only (gave up) one hit and it was a home run, so had we not challenged her that first time who knows what would have happened. So a couple of them were intentional-unintentional and she was going to fish. That's fine. But she obviously is incredible so we didn't want to challenge her.

Then I think they do a really good job. I think they're not just a power-hitting

team, they've done a good job with free passes, they do a great job of working the pitcher. So I expected that there would be some walks. I actually felt good. When we played against UCLA in game 1, the lead-off batter was on every single inning. So after that, nothing seems insurmountable because that was tough.

We were able to come through that, so I can live with the five walks, and I'm glad we only gave up one home run. They're pretty good. Right?

KELSEY NUNLEY: Right.

COACH LAWSON: When they hit it, it goes far.

**Q. Rachel, you were here in '92 with UMass, right?**

COACH LAWSON: Yeah, kind of old!

**Q. How different was it then?**

COACH LAWSON: I don't talk about that with my team. It was such a cool experience. At that time, just to show you how much this venue has changed, we had the press box in the stands but there were no grand stands in the outfield and on the sides there weren't bleachers. People sat on the grass.

So first of all, the number of people that are here is just phenomenal, and obviously the video board and the fence -- we had the white fence where you could knock it over and catch the ball and that sorta stuff. And to watch it grow and to see this fan base, to watch ESPN come out every game and film, only the championship and semi finals game was on at that time. And the grass wasn't green. They came out and spray painted the grass. And we thought that was the coolest thing ever, by the way. So to see how far with the attendance and everything that the city of Oklahoma and

ASA has done for it is absolutely incredible.

I remember a couple years ago I was recruiting at a tournament here and I was in the gift shop over there and I saw an Oklahoma shirt and Alabama shirt and Arizona and on and on. And I remember telling myself that is so cool and one day Kentucky is going to be in there. The merchandise, the TV, the hoopla is so different and I for one am so glad that happens for the sport of softball. This is the absolute greatest venue in college athletics.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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