

2018 Women's College World Series

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Oklahoma City, Oklahoma



Heather Tarr
Taran Alvelo
Trysten Melhart
Sis Bates
Taylor Van Zee
Washington Huskies

Florida State - 8, Washington - 3

THE MODERATOR: This is the Championship Final Game 2 press conference, featuring the Huskies of the University of Washington, joined by head coach Heather Tarr, student-athletes Taylor Van Zee, Sis Bates, Trysten Melhart, and Taran Alvelo.

Coach, understanding the disappointment of tonight, but you guys spent nine weeks at No. 1 this year, you won over 50 games. You came here to OKC and beat the two-time defending champs twice and knocked out the top seed, the first Pac-12 team to play for the National Championship since 2010. Can you talk a little bit about the journey that these young women took you on this year?

HEATHER TARR: Well, the journey started 2015 with these seniors that we're going to so miss. But it's been a long road getting Washington back here, and we're super proud of the achievement finishing second. You know, you're disappointed because you know what it feels like to win it all, and I think some people started to believe that we could do it, obviously being ranked No. 1 for a lot of the time.

But how we did this and how we got through some of the things we got through this year, specifically Morganne Flores' injury, Taran being injured kind of near the end of our conference, for us to do what we did, it speaks to the leadership of our seniors on down to our team. And they had a mission last year and there was a huge leadership void left by Casey Stangel and Ali Aguilar on how we're going to make this program continue to thrive and prosper. And they one-upped Ali's leadership and Casey's leadership. Obviously they had strength in numbers, six people. But Ali and Casey showed them the way to do it. We're

just so proud. You know?

I remember back to my experience my junior year, and we lost the National Championship to Arizona, and it kind of like leaves you with a bitter feeling. But this feeling is different, and I hope that I can impart that on these women that for what they were able to do throughout our entire journey, they are champions in how they went about it.

Other than us having the gold trophy, we got the silver one. It sucks. But they're champions and they should be celebrated in their own way.

Congrats to Lonni and Florida State. Obviously she's a mentor of mine. Had a lot of experiences as assistant coaches when she was at Stanford and I was at Pacific. She was somebody I always wanted to be like, and it sucks to lose. But I'm so happy for her and her program, she deserves it.

Q. Heather, you talk about athletes that have played in the past and sometimes they have little moments that they regret forever, the ball that got away. But sometimes when it's 8-3 and the team's just on fire and kind of left no doubt, does that make it any easier to swallow and go home like it wasn't one little thing?

HEATHER TARR: Yeah, they obviously got better and better as their postseason run went. I'm sure they probably flipped the switch when they almost lost the ACC Championship to Pitt. You could kind of see that coming. Just knowing that program was knocking on the door several times, moving to LSU and Super Regionals and getting sent home last year, I'm sure that edified what they were trying to do as a group.

But we're unsatisfied. Yesterday sucked. That was hard to not come through when you know you win that game and it obviously becomes a different story. Today, you know it's not something that I'm sure Taran's going to like to go home with, but you know what? Things happen before they happen, and Taran got us here for the last three years. I mean, what she's been able to do.

Now how does she respond and come back next year? She'll speak to that and she'll be great.

I think the only sad part for us is that we don't get to play again. That's the only thing that we're sad about.

Q. Taran, talk about that, a lot of experience has gone through your time in the circle. Talk about your expectations down the road, what are you looking for?

TARAN ALVELO: I'm looking for the fire in my teammates, the will and the want to get back here. I'm going to bring it, and I know they are too. I feel like media has a good way of pointing out one person, but there's 21 people on this team. It's not one person. It's not four people. It's all 21 of us and our coaching staff, and our doctors and our sports psych. It takes every single person.

So next year we're going to come back and we're going to be here and we're going to fight together. That's what I'm looking for.

Q. Sis and Taylor, left side of the infield (indiscernible) no question. Sis, could you talk about what it was like to play with Taylor, and Taylor could you follow up and tell me what it was like to play with Sis?

SIS BATES: Taylor and I have been playing together since my sophomore year of high school. She's been one of the most competitive people I've ever known in my life. Playing with her has been a blessing, just like playing with every other senior on this team. I'm still going to see her. We're still together. We just won't take the field again. You know, it's sad right now, but we'll be fine. We're going to come back next year and we'll be fine.

TAYLOR VAN ZEE: Like Sis said, we've been playing together for a long time, but this is something special. I mean, coming in last year, obviously Sis is more than just a softball player. She's a great human being, and I learned more from her every day than I ever thought I could ever. An amazing shortstop. Some of the plays she makes, it just fires me up so much. She's so good. I'm going to be really -- that's why I'm so sad. Not just leaving Sis, but leaving this team and this program. It's changed me and who I am. I think our seniors can agree with that, and Coach Tarr, it starts with her, and she allows us to be who we are and the type of softball players and people that we want to be.

It hurts so bad knowing that I won't be able to take the field with any of these girls. I've just been so blessed and lucky to even be here, and I think that's something I can hang my hat on as I grow as a person and take the next step in life.

Q. Coach, getting the three runs, that sets you up to do whatever you need to do, make adjustments

and push forward. Talk about those first three runs in the first inning?

HEATHER TARR: Yeah, I mean, that's what this team is about. Unfortunately I think we just kind of ran out of gas. Things happened this day because of things you get to do and you accomplish way beforehand. Whether that's in your off-season or your fall time and that kind of stuff. So you wish you could have held the lead in those kind of things, but it wasn't today that ended up, oh, we lost 8 to 3 or whatever the heck the score was. It was lost before we could win it, does that make sense?

So we'll learn, and these guys will rebound and lead in a way that they're going to lead from this experience, and it will be awesome because they're going to be hungry.

But, yeah, that game last night was tough, and for us to come back and score 3 right away, it says a lot about this team.

Q. Taran, you were emotional when you came out of the game. You're emotional now. Obviously this wasn't the performance you were envisioning. Can you give me the reaction to your performance today and maybe what wasn't right exactly?

TARAN ALVELO: I feel like as softball players you have days that you're on and days that you're not. It's not like I felt like anything was off. I felt like I was going pitch to pitch, and, yeah, I got emotional because it's the championship series and I felt like I didn't give my seniors the best chance to win that game.

They did everything for us in that first inning, and, you know, you learn a lot going through this process, and it's not about one player. To have that many home runs, it sucks. It does. I went out and looked at Gabbie and I said, You get us back in here and you fight, and that's what she did, man.

It's not the end of us, so we'll be back, and I keep saying that because I believe it. I said it last year, and look where we are. And I'm going to say it again.

Q. Talk about this journey that this week has been like for each of you? Obviously didn't end like you wanted, but just the overall experience?

TRYSTEN MELHART: (Indiscernible) obviously, it's been an amazing week. I'm just so happy and proud of my team that we were just able to lay it all on the line and play for each other. These are the experiences that we'll never have again.

TAYLOR VAN ZEE: It's always a dream to play in Oklahoma City, but I think last year there was some fire left in us, but to get back and play Husky softball,

obviously it's an incredible journey. Obviously, we got to play in the championship series which is something a lot of players can't say.

of the sport at this point in time. I guess in the time line of softball, so thanks for asking that.

I don't know. I feel blessed and lucky, and I know that Washington softball has so much more ahead of them despite it being the end of the road for some of us.

TARAN ALVELO: I think in the game Kelly Burdick said it's not about a championship, but it's about the people you meet along the way, the friendships you make, the bond you create, and everything you leave in the past. And I just kept saying, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry. And she's like, Win or lose, you're still going to have me.

And I think that's the best thing that can come out of this. Win or lose, I have met some of the most amazing people, and these people will be a part of my life for as long as I live. It sucks and it hurts right now, but this is bigger than a championship. We're a family.

SIS BATES: This journey has really been a dream come true for all of us. Competing for a National Championship has been awesome. These seniors left a legacy that will live on forever, and I'm so proud of them for leading this team to get here. Like Taran said, I've met some of the best people I've ever met in my life, and these friendships will go on forever. These girls are going to be in my wedding. I mean, we'll be together forever. We really are a family, and it's been such an amazing journey with them.

HEATHER TARR: I just want to comment on that because it's just a good time to thank all the people that put this event on, whether it's the USA Softball folks and just all the support groups that help run these things, I mean, all of you guys, ESPN. When the paratroopers landed yesterday, I don't know why I started to cry, but I was like, dang, look at what this event has come to. You have paratroopers landing on our field. It is so cool. That's like taking it to another level.

And I appreciate you asking that question because for people to actually care so much about the support and care what we do and care what these females and these women actually are probably more exciting to watch than some other things, and it's kind of that point in time where some cool things are going to happen for sport, for women's sport, for college athletics. And what a platform these guys got to showcase themselves. We're really appreciative and recognize how awesome it's been.

The Oklahoman, you got the full page of all the softball stuff. They've always done an awesome job with their newspaper, but it's just we're really proud to be a part