

June 2, 2013



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An interview with:

**TEXAS COACH CONNIE CLARK
TAYLOR HOAGLAND
BLAIRE LUNA
MANDY OGLE
LINDSEY STEPHENS**

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by Texas head coach Connie Clark and student-athletes Taylor Hoagland, Blaire Luna, Mandy Ogle and Lindsey Stephens. We'll start with an opening comment from Coach and go to the floor with questions.

COACH CLARK: Obviously, it's tough to be done with our season a little bit earlier than we would have liked. But we talked to the team. I'm very proud of this group. I thought they had an exceptional year. We had tremendous, tremendous leadership from our captains -- from our senior class specifically -- and they always gave credit to the underclassmen because they said they were great followers. Just tremendous team chemistry. Really one of probably my most enjoyable years coaching, and I'm absolutely proud of the way we battled in this tournament and very proud of this 2013 team.

Q. Blaire, I think you had 280-something pitches, faced 52 batters. Can you talk about how you're feeling right now? Could you have gone longer, I guess?

BLAIRE LUNA: Yeah, I think I could have gone a little bit longer. Only thing that was really bothering me was my forearm was just kind of tightening up and a little blood blister on my finger. But I think I could have gone a couple more innings.

Q. Can you talk about your day as a whole? Like she said, 288 pitches, 26 strikeouts, can you just take us through what it takes to do something like that on a day?

BLAIRE LUNA: You know, it's just about fighting and just staying the course. Like I've said this whole time, my mentality was just really work ahead and spread the zone; and that's kind of what I tried to do. I think that's why I had so many strikeouts. I think it was a struggle and upsetting that we didn't come through offensively, but I'm really proud of our team and the way that we fought this year. Just the fact that we're at the World Series, it's something I wanted to accomplish, and we did it.

Q. Blaire, you've been part of the winningest senior class in school history and the team has been at the World Series for the first time in seven years. What does that mean and how much being short of the championship series is disappointing? And to Mandy, from your perspective, what's it been like from behind the plate catching Blaire Luna?

BLAIRE LUNA: It is upsetting that we came up short, but just being here and so proud of our team and just the fight and not giving up. I've grown so much as a person this year, and I've accomplished a lot. I just really couldn't be any more proud of my team and of myself.

MANDY OGLE: It's been a pleasure catching Blaire. The fact that I've been able to grow as a catcher for the past two years and being her starting catcher has been incredible and a journey in itself. Thankfully she's going to be around Austin so I get to still hang out with her. But to be able to catch one of the top three pitchers in the nation, it's a pretty great thing to say. It's just been great to give her that confidence to make sure that I can do anything in my part to help her.

Q. Coach, you know Oklahoma probably as well as anybody. If they advance, what do you make of the Tennessee-Oklahoma series? I know Oklahoma will be the favorite.

COACH CLARK: I think it would be a great match-up. Tennessee's got a very solid club, a veteran club in many ways. I think Oklahoma has a veteran club as well. So if that ends up being the match-up, I think it would be tremendous. Both have a lot of great athletes on both sides, and that's what you want ultimately, to see the best two match up if you can. There is so much parity in the game right now that I think it was anybody's coming in.

But those two clubs, I think the experience and the veterans that they have on each of those clubs probably makes those two the favorites.

Q. Coach, can you elaborate on the fact that this is the winningest class now that it's over? What they've meant to the program? And Taylor, if you wouldn't mind talking about the end of your four years and what it's been like, this journey for you?

COACH CLARK: When you look back on these four, they've been tremendous from day one and really have contributed from day one. I mean, the best part of our job as coaches is seeing them grow up. That is something that you always think about on Senior Day and when you finish your season. Blaire alluded to it, they've grown up a lot and grown into amazing young women. Obviously, they're tremendous athletes; but more than anything, you feel good about them heading out into the real world, so to speak, and doing great things because of the things that they've accomplished and the challenges and trials and tribulations that they've gone through.

They've been very, very good leaders. They grew into that, obviously, through their four years. They're all very, very different. I think Torie and Blaire are a little bit quiet, and you've got Taylor Hoagland with her intensity and passion. Kim Bruins with always wanting to keep everybody loose but one of our captains and leading by example. I'm just proud of them to see them reach the pinnacle of our sport and go out on a high note at the Women's College World Series.

TAYLOR HOAGLAND: These last four years have been a crazy, crazy ride with a lot of ups and downs. As much as this hurts, ending our season like this, just being here I wouldn't wanted to have ended it anywhere else in any other fashion, really. Being a part of the senior class as

well has given me a lot of things, three great friends, three great teammates. We've laughed; we've cried. So just being on the field with them for the last time and in this uniform with them was the best feeling that I could have imagined in this situation.

Q. Mandy or Taylor, on the game itself, you all looked to be having a lot of problems with Ivy Renfroe. Were you all expecting her to pitch? What was she doing that was so effective?

MANDY OGLE: She's a lot quicker than what we've seen. In order to catch up to that, it's just another adjustment you have to make. But she is one of the top pitchers and she's not here just to be here. She's here to win, and she came out fighting. It's just a battle between a pitcher and a hitter.

TAYLOR HOAGLAND: Yeah, just to elaborate on what Mandy said, she did have some good speed on the ball and she just came right at us. I think that took us by surprise a little bit, and we had to make adjustments. Unfortunately, we didn't make those adjustments quick enough. I think we had great hits, and we just weren't getting the breaks that we needed to at the right time and things happen.

Q. To follow up on that, you did have runners in scoring position. How would you characterize the offensive approach tonight?

COACH CLARK: Well, with this group it's usually a matter of time. They do a nice job as they progress through a game and usually make adjustments. I'd have to go back and look. But the fifth inning is usually a really good inning for us. I think there is something to be said for the fact that we end up making adjustments after we've seen a pitcher once or twice. She did a nice job. Ivy did a nice job, and obviously they made the pitching change as well. That gave us then a little bit of a different look. But good velocity, good movement; and yeah, she absolutely attacked the strike zone. When they made the change and they were mixing speeds a little bit more, obviously you want to get the timely hitting. We didn't necessarily get it in the early innings tonight.

But I think the confidence and the approach and the discussion in the dugout stayed very positive. We just kept saying it's a matter of time. Let's get them on, get them over and actually

push them across. But just weren't able to quite come up with enough tonight.

Q. Lindsey, you got the offense going, you got a home run in the seventh that made things really interesting. What does this experience hitting a home run in your freshman year at the College World Series do for the future of this team and yourself?

LINDSEY STEPHENS: I believe it definitely shows how I have grown from when I first got here in August to where I am now to hope I'm where these seniors and juniors are when I'm in their shoes. I just went up there trying to get the job done. I wasn't ready to stop. I knew these girls weren't ready to stop. I just had one goal in my mind, and that was to hit the ball. So hopefully I can get better and continue to mature and grow as the years go.

Q. Coach, it took seven years for you to get back here. Is it harder to get here or to win once you're here?

COACH CLARK: I think it's both. All of the coaches talked about it in the press conference before the tournament even started. At least in the one I was in with the other three coaches. Everybody talked about it. It's just tough now. It's great for the sport because there is so much parity and so many good athletes.

You know, I remember back in the day you felt like you could schedule a W, and you can't do that any more. Everybody's tough. Early recruiting has contributed to that a little bit, and these athletes are spreading out.

Once you get here, I do think that it's the first team that can relax a little bit. I thought we did a great job with that, to be quite honest. I think we did the things that we needed to do to at least give ourselves a chance to continue to advance and move forward. That's all you can ask. So I think once you are here, you just have to get some breaks and some things have to happen and you just control what you can, and that's compete hard. I think we can walk away with our heads held high knowing that we did that.

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