

June 1, 2013



Florida – 9
Nebraska – 8

An interview with:

**NEBRASKA COACH RHONDA
REVELLE
GABBY BANDA
HAILEY DECKER
TATUM EDWARDS
BROOKE THOMASON**

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by Nebraska head coach Rhonda Revelle and student-athletes Gabby Banda, Hailey Decker, Taylor Edwards, and Brooke Thomason. We'll start with an opening comment from Coach and go to questions.

COACH REVELLE: I don't know if you can ask anything more if you're a fan, and I know you couldn't ask for anything more as a coach on either side in either dugout. It's a shame that someone has to lose that, but I don't feel like anybody lost it because both teams just fought tooth and nail. Congratulations to Florida.

I'm just really, really, really proud of this group. I'm proud to be alumna of the University of Nebraska. I think that the alumni that have worn the jersey are very proud of this group as well.

Q. I don't know who to start with. We'll start with Gabby here. Just your thoughts on that game. Did you think it was ever going to end? Are there part that's you don't even remember?

GABBY BANDA: Yeah, probably the first game, and then we played a whole other second game. I don't know. We kind of just stayed with our motto that we've been with all year and it was one pitch at a time. We just battled through every single pitch that we wanted to win.

But we just didn't come out on top this time, but I couldn't have been happier to end my year like this.

Q. My memory -- that game was so long, I can't remember some of the stuff, I think you were the one that scored the tying run in the bottom of the seventh on the play? Can you describe that run and what happened?

GABBY BANDA: Yeah, I thought I was out. I was crying on the plate because I thought I was out. But then I saw Brooke and she was yelling at me, 'You're safe, you're safe.' And I was like, 'Oh my God,' and I just kept crying. So it was a cry-either-way moment, whether the game was over or we had tied it. I don't know. I kind of got caught in a pickle there, but I'm glad it came out the way I wanted.

Q. Rhonda, you've talked about your team having this bounce-back resiliency and everything, and you did it despite the six errors. And on the other hand, how costly were those for you tonight?

COACH REVELLE: Well, yes, the errors certainly allowed some runs to score, especially early in the game when we were getting some groundballs and then some things happened. With that said though, this team has never -- we just keep running. An error, we don't let it be a speed bump. We always work to get better and get fundamentally better.

But I think that's one of the things that has sustained us is the heart of this team, and that's what our motto is, heart and hustle. So even the play that ended the game, that was a hustle play, and it took a great play by Florida to make that play.

Q. Brooke, was there ever a point in the game where -- I mean, obviously, you guys got up and then you were down 6-2. Was there ever a point in an inning where it was like, all right. We've got this. Let's just finish it.

BROOKE THOMASON: Well, we said that multiple times. Like, 'All right, all right, this time.' Then we'd go back out on the field and come back in and be like okay, this time.

But it was a dog fight for both sides. I don't think either team felt comfortable. I think Florida might have gotten on their heels a little bit after they scored those six runs, and we're a team that comes back out fighting. We're not going to turn over and play dead or whatever, we're going to fight hard. We definitely did that tonight, and I couldn't be prouder of my team.

Q. Obviously, Alicia, big reason that you're here have you had a chance to speak to her after the game?

COACH REVELLE: We talked as a team. I haven't talked individually to anybody, no.

Q. Just to follow up, when you do speak to her, what will be the message?

COACH REVELLE: Had a great freshman year, and I know that you're going to be motivated for next year. I just know her. She's competitive. I think that she did a remarkable job this year, just a remarkable job. She had a few tough balls tonight that didn't go her way, but it is what it is.

Q. Brooke, couple years ago you said the walk-off grand slam was something you could just write in a story book. Is this experience kind of up there with that feeling, something that is a storybook ending for you?

BROOKE THOMASON: This is better. Losing is never fun, but losing a 15-inning game where both teams are fighting, it's not like it was scoreless until the 15th inning, you know? It was a dog fight for both sides. This game will be something that we were saying earlier that we're going to be able to talk about years and years and years from now.

Q. Coach, just talk about the mutual respect that the two teams had there on the field after the game. I mean, obviously, I wasn't down there, but it seemed like an incredible thing.

COACH REVELLE: Well, yeah, the last time we played Florida, I think the score was 2-1, but it was the same kind of fight. I just think they're -- the history in their program is well-documented. The history in our program within ourselves is well-documented, maybe not as well-documented on the outside.

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But I think that there was a recognizing by both teams and both coaching staffs that everybody was giving their all. As a fan, as a fan of the sport, you appreciate that kind of effort. I mean, 27 hits and 15 innings, and we threw 297 pitches on our side. I can do the math here. But I don't know really what more you can ask from two teams.

Q. You've coached a lot of games. Have you ever, ever been a part of anything quite like that?

COACH REVELLE: No, when I played in the World Series with Nebraska, I think we went 18 innings with Creighton one night. Right there until the end, I mean, who knew. It was kind of like the twilight zone. I'm with Brian here. I don't remember what happened in the sixth and seventh.

But I haven't been a part of a game like that so much. We always talk about really trying to detach from the scoreboard and it being about effort and being in this pitch. Even though we'd love to be getting up tomorrow and putting on our uniform, I think everybody has to feel good putting their head on their pillow tonight.

Q. Two of your four seniors up here with you tonight. How much have they meant to you and to the program?

COACH REVELLE: Well, they have been incredible leaders. I take this quote from Coach Tom Osborne because he's been a mentor of mine for many, many years, my whole coaching career, when he said a team goes as far as their seniors lead them, and I really believe that. They have -- from this point a year ago when we finished our season, they started leading and they started being determined to be the very best that they could, the very best role models that they could be.

Brooke even said, 'Coach, I can be that tough gal if I need to be.' And then Gabby did the same thing with the young ones on the infield, and Megan Southworth who didn't play much but had an incredible role in the dugout, that's valuable. People don't realize how valuable that is, and then Courtney Breault, she kind of keeps everybody loose. She's our DP and has done great things for us. They've been a great group. That is one of the things we talked about after is challenging the returners to step up and be as effective leaders as we've just had in our senior class.

Q. Lots of smiles and laughter up here, but I didn't expect that. Is that a sign not necessarily of satisfaction, but are you at peace? I guess I'll start with Taylor, with what happened tonight.

TAYLOR EDWARDS: It was just exciting. I mean, we're still all excited. We just all want to continue playing. Like Brooke said in our meeting just now, we ran out of time. That's it. We all just feel like we're still going to keep playing. I mean, yeah, there are some tears, but that game, 15 innings, I mean, who can ask for more fight than that from both teams? It was all extremely fun.

COACH REVELLE: May I make an unsolicited comment?

Q. Sure.

COACH REVELLE: The thing that I said in the locker room, I'm going to let you be privy to what I said in the locker room. This group of young women has restored and returned Nebraska softball to the national stage, and Nebraska has spent a good many years on the national stage, but not in recent years. I just really feel the motivation, the drive, and the talent to not only put them on the national stage right now, but to continue to grow that, and the motivation to be better and to return here and take it farther.

So when you have that and when you have fifth-year players that played last year like Ashley and Kirby Wright who were helping our team and said I feel so proud to be part of this team, then you feel like you're laying down great layers and your culture and your tradition. Bottom line is these are young people here to get an education. They're here to have an experience of a lifetime and make memories that they can never really have anywhere else. One of the things as a coach that I take great joy in is when they leave and they're happy. They're happy for their experience. That's really important. That's really important for the collegiate experience because you hear a lot of athletes that might win a lot that maybe weren't happy. I know I'm getting off on a tangent, but you're getting Rhonda in full force here.

Q. Gabby, obviously a lot has been made by us the media that this team maybe overachieved a year early. You're a senior and this is your last go around. What's it like to be a part of that team that restores the name Nebraska here to the College World Series?

What's it like to be that team, be that senior class that is part of that?

GABBY BANDA: It's probably one of the best feelings I've ever felt in my life. I couldn't ask for a better group of teammates to play with my last year. I couldn't ask for more memories, more happy memories. There is just so much that you can say about this group and it's just an honor to be a part of it. Just to help them grow in any way that -- like the seniors, like help them grow in any single way that we could. I just had the most fun that I've ever had playing softball in my entire life. That's exactly what I wanted to do when I finished. I wanted to let people -- just let people know who I am and help out my teammates that I was with for my last year. I think that the seniors did a great job of doing that.

Q. You had talked this week about how much this stage has changed since you were here last. I'm just wondering if you were conscious of the crowd and the atmosphere out there on the field tonight and how they were reacting to you guys and to this game?

COACH REVELLE: I think in the first game we were conscious of it because there was a whoa moment, then we settled in. Tonight it was -- I think we felt kind of wrapped, like it was a blanket wrapped around us. That's how I felt anyway. It was really fun. It was really fun.

Taylor gets over to first base in like the 28th inning or something and said, 'Coach, this is really fun.' I was like, 'I know. I know.'

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