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SOUTH **June 2, 2012**
FLORIDA – 0

An Interview With:

**SOUTH FLORIDA
COACH KEN ERIKSEN
SARA NEVINS
JANINE RICHARDSON
KOURTNEY SALVAROLA**

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Head Coach Ken Eriksen and studentathletes Sara Nevins, Janine Richardson and Kourtney Salvarola. Start with a comment from Coach.

COACH ERIKSEN: First thing I'd like to do is thank the Big East. Provided tremendous competition this year. We had five teams in the top 30. I think it prepared us very, very well for the national tournament.

And that conference, maybe it's only fifth in RPI, but the top five, six teams right now in that conference is working to get better, and I think it's a conference to be reckoned with.

People here in Oklahoma City and the NCAA have been phenomenal with our team. Treated us first class. I knew they would, but I didn't realize how first class it would be.

My administration has made tremendous impact on these young ladies' lives and given them an opportunity to play in a brand new stadium.

Our senior class before they graduated, it's a dream come true. So many great things that happened since last February 24th for us.

So I can't thank our athletic director, Doug Ward, and our president, Judy Genshaft, our associate athletic director, Bill McGillis. And I could go on, but you're not here to hear all that stuff, and I understand.

But my team, wow, being the first team to get into a national championship venue, an event, anytime you're the first is a phenomenal accomplishment.

For what this team did this year with all the adversities, injuries, all those type of things that went on, it's incredible.

And lastly, you know, before we get to all the stuff about the game today, tremendous,

tremendous good fortune to the rest of the field that's still here.

This tournament, you find out who the true national champion is. And there's some great kids here on all the teams and some great people coaching.

Really proud to be part of the coaching brethren for softball. You've got some classy, classy people here. And I think good things happen to good people.

THE MODERATOR: Questions?

Q. Ken, you kind of knew it was going to be this kind of game where you had pitchers with such low ERAs this part of the season, where one play either way can go. Can you just talk about the last play there which would be what amounts to an infield sacrifice fly. And you guys had a chance obviously with a runner on third at one point to score, and they kind of made the same kind of bold decision to go for it. Have you seen an infield sacrifice fly like that before?

COACH ERIKSEN: As old as I am, you see everything. And, yes, I have seen that before. And we understand that speed kills and so forth.

You bring up a great point. Our last LSU/Oklahoma/Hofstra/Florida, you're talking about four of the top six, if not four of the top five, including ourselves, ERAs in the country. That's a great battle. I don't know if anybody really thought how good we were until we saw Cal play Oklahoma last night.

And we know, you're in the final eight, you're going to see great pitching. You're going to see 00 games, and that one break is going to happen.

And we were aggressive. Ashli (Goff) got an aggressive baserunning deal. Their catcher made a great play at home plate. We had runners at second and third with some pretty good hitters up. (Brittany) Mack's a bulldog. My goodness, she's a bulldog. Look, the kid was an allAmerican last year. Maybe she was not so good with her stats, but I think she showed today that she's a pretty good damn pitcher.

And that's one of those things that you play and you play and you play. And it's a chess game, and somebody's just going to king it. And they got their break today, and they kinged it.

The leadoff batter on, got hit by a pitch, that was a crucial play. That was a crucial play. And we battled, and I thought our pitchers made some pretty darned good pitches, and they hit one



pretty good to the outfield and we busted our butt. And that's the way it goes.

Like I said, how do you get sad about that game? It was a great game. How do you get sad about the Oklahoma game? That was a great game, too.

The tears that go on in these type of things are because you're leaving people. It's not because you're sad you lost. You know what I mean? You're leaving people. LSU was crying their eyes out today. You know why they were crying their eyes out today? Because of Jess Mouse.

That's pretty impressive to me. That's a classy showing. Jess Mouse is leaving the game and LSU was crying. How could you not be proud as an opposing coach of the other team? That was phenomenal.

Q. Asked Coach Torina the same question, but looking at yesterday, you had the 16 strikeouts from Ricketts and the home run from Locke. Casual observer kind of thing, maybe overlooks the importance of defense, and we've seen it in the Super Regionals. Is that something that you're a veteran coach keeps you up at night, wondering like what's going to be a key play? And how do you approach that and what's your general philosophy on the importance of defense in your game?

COACH ERIKSEN: The only thing that keeps you up at night is: I hope I wake up the next day.

I love to strategize. You can ask these guys right now. They think I'm nuts. But we go out and run a bunch of plays at them all year long and prepare them.

We were prepared for that play. We were prepared for the (A.J.) Andrews at third base type deal and Kourtney (Salvarola) going back. She doesn't go back. We can't look to left field because left field is too deep to catch that ball because Andrews can drive the ball or rather, the batter at the plate can drive the ball, so you're not too far back in that situation or too far forward, rather, in that situation.

So Kourtney is going back, going back, got caught on her heels and threw that ball off her backside, but the kid at third base can flat out fly.

And it's just so tough. That speed is a different level that you're at. And you're trying to catch up with it, throwing it from 92 feet away, you're trying to catch a kid who's already going forward in momentum, and that's why they're there with the leadoff positions. They can run.

But we set it up. We had a good pitch in that situation. It was just a ball hitting a really bad area. A lot of space out there, I don't know if you know. There's only eight people in the defense, and there's a lot of holes. But they found one. We caught it but they found it.

Q. You've had such good instincts with when to change pitchers, when to make changes on the mound. When they had the hitter up there was it rightyrighty, and is that just what you're looking for when you go to Lindsey there on the shot to right center?

COACH ERIKSEN: Sometimes you go rightyrighty. Sometimes we go spin against nonspin hitting kids. You know, leftyleftly sometimes. Drop ball/rise ball. It's a matchup deal. I keep hearing about, yeah, he goes with the rightyrighty. That's not necessarily true.

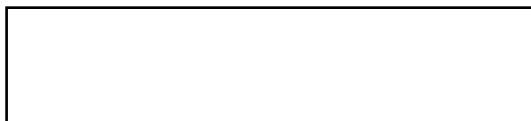
But she got was it (Ashley) Langoni got the ball out there? Yeah, she's a good hitter. Heck, she's batting third for a team in the College World Series. She's a pretty good hitter, and she just got the good part of the bat on the ball and the ball carried a little bit.

But our pitchers weren't really giving up a lot of shots this weekend or over the last two weeks, three weeks. So she got it on the ball and made things happen.

Q. Coach, you were talking big picture for the program getting here, and obviously you have your national team connections and things like that. But give us the sense of how the buzz or the improved visibility for your program right now may be stepping back from this loss, what it's done for your guys' program? And are you hearing from more recruits or hearing from more alumni? What's sort of been the byproduct of that?

COACH ERIKSEN: I've been locked up with these three and the other 19 for two weeks. It was kind of like when I got back from Athens, I didn't realize the impact that the United States program had in 2004 on women's softball in the community until I stepped foot in America. We get wrapped up in a cocoon sometimes. And I know a lot of people outside of media don't understand that.

And there's nothing else going on in my life. Nothing going on. I'm in a dark room listening to Led Zeppelin, got the video on and I'm watching. And they know what I'm doing and I'm helping just to give them a little tip. I could give them all the little tips in the world but those guys go out there to play ball. And it's so much fun to watch them. And



it's like fun to watch LSU and Oklahoma play. It's fun to watch Syracuse play. It's fun to watch Georgetown. It's fun to watch them play and try to execute at the highest level at this game on a national stage.

I've told them all year long, this is the truth, I'm going to hold the rudder, you guys row. I'll let you know when you're not rowing fast enough.

We prepared for the journey in the ocean this year. We prepared in the fall, we prepared in January. We were ready to go. I just held. I had a great seat as the captain. Really, just a great seat watching them row and have fun rowing and singing the whole time.

Q. Kourtney, I know it's hard for the seniors going away, but for the players coming back, just talk about what this does for you guys to have been here and now know that you can play here and expect to be in a tournament like this at the end of the year.

KOURTNEY SALVAROLA: Well, I think obviously we're going to miss our seniors a lot. They're a huge part of who we were this year. And the same respect, we have a great freshman class. We have great girls coming in this year. Their spots are going to be tough to fill, but our freshmen are great players and great athletes, and this experience just helped us learn, get better, and actually prove to ourselves and realize that we can play with these teams.

And I think it was a big thing for our pitchers to know that they could pitch and succeed with these other players and great hitters.

So I think it was just a great experience for us, and hopefully we can make it back next year.

Q. Kourtney, the bases loaded pop, their hitter said she was surprised. Their coach said she was surprised. Seemed like everybody was surprised to have the runner go there. Just talk about the play, if you can.

KOURTNEY SALVAROLA: I mean, honestly, I was just trying to make the catch. I was in a little bit too far, I guess, for where I should have been.

Like Coach said, she hit it in a good spot, and I was going back. Yeah, I was obviously pretty shocked that she went. But I made a bad throw, and she beat me. So things happen, I guess.

Q. Sara, if you could just address this, just what your thoughts are on your two years at USF have been like and how it's exceeded your expectations, just kind of a summary how your two seasons have gone.

SARA NEVINS: Well, I couldn't have done it as a team, we all made it this far and we've been successful both years.

So I mean I just love it. I can't really say much about it. Just we're going to get keep getting better and hopefully be here next year.

Q. Ken, their leadoff hitter, Andrews, is a Countryside grad. I think she committed to LSU early on in the process, but were you aware of her, if you guys had recruited her at all coming out of the Tampa area?

COACH ERIKSEN: She's a really good player and she committed to LSU early.

We knew her. She actually played with Sugar, played on the same travel ball team.

Recruiting is a twoway street. I tell parents this: Not only do we go out and recruit the players, but the players go out and recruit the schools they want to go to. And I think A.J. ended up where she wanted to go. And that's important.

There's a lot of good players. There's a lot of good players in our backyard. I mean, we've got Sara Nevins decided to stay home. All the Chamberlain kids decided to stay home. I'm so proud of the fact that they wanted to get their hometown school into the College World Series, and they did. That's the greatest part for us.

But you can't get them all. And make no bones about it, I got 22 people on our team and they're the only 22 kids in the country that get to wear USF on their chest.

And we said earlier in the year when we played some really good teams in the SEC, Big Ten, I wouldn't trade anybody on my team for anybody. Period. No way. No how. Because you've got to win it in the locker room first. And if you win it in the locker room, you win on the ball field. And that team won in the locker room. And that was a big situation for us.

Q. Follow up on the Big East, what specifically about the league has improved in the past couple of years, some specific factors that helped prepare you guys for getting here?

COACH ERIKSEN: I think the advent obviously of football a few years back and being a driving force financially and exposure nationally on television has opened up other avenues for us in recruiting.

And so that whole college experience now, not just basketball, but also football, there's a commitment by the athletic directors in the women's athletic positioning, the aggressiveness now in promotion of our women's teams in the Big East, the coaches being hired and paid decent



enough salaries to make it a really good situation for them to want to aspire to be better.

Money and recruiting is huge. But you take a look, and you have DePaul has been here before, UConn has been here before, and Syracuse right now is a nationally relevant program. Louisville is a nationally relevant program. Notre Dame, nationally relevant program. Some of the high exposure programs are getting good kids in. And not only good kids that can play, but the Big East obviously is an academic-oriented conference. So the kids that we get in our conference, usually not having problems with. And they're going to be there for four, five years.

So I think that whole package is really getting promoted very well right now.

Q. You talked about the Big East having five teams in the top 30 this year. But you guys are just the third Big East team ever to get here to Oklahoma City. I think second in the last 19 years. Can you just talk about what that means to be able to be someone that's so early for the league to be here?

COACH ERIKSEN: USF has a unique recruiting situation. Not only do we recruit against our brethren in the Big East, which is very, very tough, but being in Tampa, you recruit in the SEC and you recruit in the ACC.

So more than anything else, to me, it says even more about the loyalty that these young ladies had. If you ask all three of these guys right here who they're getting recruited by, they'll give you ten schools, and probably half of them were here.

So we're fortunate that they've trusted our athletic department to take care of them. They've trusted our coaching staff to hopefully make them better ball players, but it means a lot, Greg, to represent our conference. That's never really looked upon because of whatever you want to call the West Coast bias or this and that or the SEC bias.

But for us to come out this year and do things to SEC schools and Big Ten schools and schools from out west, I mean, I think there's so much parity right now that I don't think you could just say: That's a given. You know?

Who is the No. 1 team in the country right now? Knocked off pretty good by maybe the No. 1 team in the country right now. That team is hot. I think it says a lot about softball in general. Says a lot about college athletics in general. The parity is great, and whatever the NCAA is doing to make that happen, whether it's the APR, the grade point

averages, this and that, making sure there's no rules broken, I think we're moving in a really, really good direction.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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