



2011 NCAA GYMNASTICS CHAMPIONSHIPS WOLSTEIN CENTER • CLEVELAND, OHIO

SATURDAY, APRIL 16 • Super Six Post-Meet Press Conference
... Alabama ...



Alabama Head Coach Sarah Patterson

Coach's opening statement:

"First of all, I would like to say that this myself and my husband's 29th consecutive NCAA Championship. I want you to know that the competition has never been any tighter or any tougher. There were a lot of great teams on the floor tonight and I think the biggest difference was that people were not perfect, but we left nothing out on the floor. I cannot say enough about the unity that this team has had. 'Enjoy the Ride' was their slogan for this season and I think we are enjoying the ride right now."

On the pressure with the top two teams finishing at the same time:

"I am not really sure, but I don't think that the kids really knew where we were. They knew that we had done well and we just tried to focus on one landing at a time. As I was watching each routine, I wasn't even paying attention to what was going on, but I knew kind of where we stood. I felt that if we gave it our best, and I knew that these two (Hoffman & Stack-Eaton) in the end we needed their big scores, to propel us over the top. It was a little tense, but I can tell you that it was such a great feeling watching them and watching them do the best that they possibly could in the end when it counted."

On the feeling of finally getting over the hump and winning the championship again:

"There was a time when we finished second three years in a row and I would return from nationals and receive sympathy cards from several fans. I think it is the expectations. At the University of Alabama, we compete for the national championship. We have great teams in all our sports and I feel like it is an expectation. When you say, 'get over the hump', this is a totally different team than we had last year. We lost four All-Americans to graduation, we lost an All-American to surgery this season and we had eight freshmen come in this fall. For us, I think that 13 of our 24 routines were different from last year's NCAA Championship so truly this was a learning experience, every week of the season. Once we got to SEC's and they did that (won the title), I think they knew that we were in a position to do what we could (this week)."

On the appropriateness that the only senior (Kayla Hoffman) competing last:

"Kayla has been an anchor for us all year. I will tell you the moment that I think made the difference was when Kayla made the mistake on the balance beam and came off, freshman Sarah DeMeo was standing there and Geralen (Stack-Eaton) was next. She came off -- and these two here (Hoffman & Stack-Eaton) can be pretty hard on themselves -- but she just smiled and told Sarah, 'I know we've got this.' We've talked about team work and that you don't have to be perfect but you just step up when somebody needs you. That's what they did. I think the way Kayla handled that situation set the tone for the entire night."

On where this championship ranks:

"This has probably been a long time coming. I think that for the last nine years, those teams have been so close. They are all special. I will tell a little story tonight. Our first national champion, Penny Hauschild, she won four individual titles with us but she never won a team title. She always told me that she'd give up all of those individual titles to have a team championship. Her house burned down this fall and she lost everything, (including) her championship ring. Tonight, when we were done, in front of the girls, I was able to give her her national championship ring. It couldn't have come at a more fitting moment because she would have done anything to be on a team like this and I think that is what college gymnastics is all about."

On the growth of this team:

"It has been taken one step at a time. Where we were in September isn't near where we were in November. At the beginning of the season, the coaches in the coaches poll voted us No. 2 and when I saw it, I thought, 'are you kidding me.' I think that is what people expect us to do that by the end of the season some how, some way with 13 new routines, eight freshmen, people who haven't competed before, that we would find a way to be competitive. I guess my peers were off by one."

Alabama Senior Kayla Hoffman

On going into last event for Alabama:

"Definitely pressure you know, so many emotions going through my head. I really just kind of just took a deep breath and knew that I had to do this for my team, nothing else but the team. I just tried to relax and let it happen. I have been doing this for a long time and sometimes its better if you don't over think it and just let it happen. It was just a great way to end my senior year, i just couldn't think of a better way to end it."

On how the experience of the team helped this year:

"I think honestly from a statistics standpoint, you would say this is a very inexperienced team. We have eight freshmen, a lot them are in lineups, we have new people on new events, people who are alternates and thrown in the alternate. From a standpoint it's a very inexperienced team. However, I don't think it affected us at all, this is just a special team and if you know how to compete you know how to compete, no matter if they have been here for one year or five years. It's just about how you feel inside and if you have confidence in yourself."

On mindset during final passes in the floor routine:

"Just one step at a time. One running step at a time. One round-off at a time. Because you can't get ahead of yourself, that's where I have gotten myself in trouble in the past. I knew I had to take it once step at a time and just be there for my team and stay really confident for them."

Alabama Junior GERALD Stack-Eaton

On her beam routine:

"I was very nervous. I have never been that nervous since I think my freshman year. And when I missed my connection and nailed that handspring, I just took a deep breath and went for it, and I made it thankfully, and I kept the team going and kept the energy going."

On how much fun the team has among itself:

"Yeah, we really do have a lot of fun. Chemistry is probably the best I have been on since being a freshman. We just have fun in the locker room, we dance, we play charades, catch phrase. Even in our corrals we stay loose and within ourselves and not look at any other teams because we can't get distracted by any of them."