**UK ATHLETICS COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS  
NCAA SOFTBALL REGIONALS**

**ILLINOIS-VIRGINIA TECH**

**MAY 17, 2019**

**JOHN CROPP STADIUM – LEXINGTON, KY.**

**Virginia Tech Head Coach Pete D’Amour**

*Opening statement …*“That was a big win for us. I told the girls, (NCAA) Regional games are never easy. This is the 12th regionals I’ve been to, and you never have easy games. I’m proud of the girls, they stuck with it. The last inning was pretty eventful, lots of contributors today. We’re going to enjoy it today, and off until tomorrow.”

*On pinch hitting Sierra Walton in the bottom of the 6th …*“Sierra (Walton) had a really, really good week of practice. I thought that the type of pitcher that (Illinois) had brought in, Sierra matched up really well with. Part of it was gut instinct, I guess. I just felt like (Walton) was going to run into one. She made me look like a genius.”

**Virginia Tech Student-Athletes**

**#20, Sierra Walton, C/IF**

*On her three-run homer in the bottom of the 6th …*“I did not know it was going to go out, I thought she was going to catch it. Coach told me they were bringing in the rise ball pitcher, and that’s particularly who I’m better off hitting. I knew first pitch that was there for me, I was going to hit it, and I ended up putting a good hit on it.”

*On opportunity to make a big play as a senior …*“I would say my role the on the team is our energy person. These girls have worked so hard, and to be able to step up in a game like this as a senior in my final season, that is just something I will cherish forever. I’m super excited for us to play tomorrow.”

**#13, Caitlyn Nolan, IF**

*On first NCAA Tournament experience …*“This is new to everybody, except for (Minnesota transfer) Al (Velazquez). Once you get out there and start playing, it kind of goes away. You’re doing what you’ve been doing the whole time. Whenever you have time outside of the game is usually when you get the nerves. You start thinking too much. But once you get in a game, it’s just go play and do what you’ve been doing. It makes it a little bit easier.”

*On her triple in the bottom of the 5th …*“I was just trying to hit something in the air. I hit it and it felt good. I saw it bounce off the wall, and I immediately turned to Coach (D’Amour). The first thing I said when I got to third was, ‘Hey, that’s my first triple ever!’ It was big time.”

**Illinois Head Coach Tyra Perry**

*Opening statement …*

“I thought we had a good game plan and offensively strayed from it just a little bit early in the game, then started to find our stride. I 100 percent believe that we are a great team, that we deserve to be here and that we had a lot of chances to come out on top in that game. A lot of the reason that we had such a good chance in that game was because of Taylor Edwards and her performance. I thought she really spun the ball and kept us in the game throughout her entire time on the mound. Virginia Tech is a great team, this is just the beginning. We have a chance to fight back tomorrow.”

*On why you change pitchers in sixth inning …*

“Well, Taylor was starting to see the batters a few times and of course the hitter that hit the homerun was a pinch hitter, but I just thought the momentum was shifting a little bit and Sydney Sickels has been great for us all year. She is an excellent pitcher, just a freshman. She may have had a little bit of jitters there, but this is good education for her, the entire team and she’s tough, she’s strong and she’s going to fight back.”

*On if the double play when bases were loaded shifted momentum ….*

“We really didn’t think of that. We tied the game up and then Bella Loya came up behind that play and had a great hit, you know, they caught the ball in the gap on the fence, so I didn’t really think much of it. Would I have like to have had more out of that scenario? Yes of course. But, I feel like we were actually starting to see the ball and starting to threaten runs.”

*On Illinois’ confidence to overcome its deficit…*

“We had a ton of confidence, it just didn’t happen for us. Sometimes you can believe and work and things just don’t come your way. We have a ton of seniors who carry us quite a bit, and we also have a few newcomers and I believe for the most part they played extremely well. But you know, maybe they had to kind of learn a little bit in this game. They had a couple of things that they had to see and I believe they will learn from it and become better players.”

*On approach for Keely Rochard …*

“Early on, it was bad. I think we were not aggressive earlier on in the game and then we started to pick things up. She’s an excellent pitcher, she was throwing high speed, she’s filling the zone. We expected that, and we were a little bit passive I believe. As the game passed I thought we started to swing our bats more and had better at bats.”

*On the homerun pitch that Sydney Sickles gave up …*

“It was not as competitive as she normally is, especially when she comes in, she is a good matchup for Taylor and they’re actually a good matchup for each other. If Sydney starts and Taylor comes in, if Sydney is up, Taylor is down, Taylor throws really hard, Sydney throws a little bit more spin and off speed. So they’re actually a great matchup for each other. Sydney is a little tentative, again, she is a freshman and came up a little bit tentative, so it wasn’t quite as in that competitive and fire mode as she could’ve been, and she’s so smart and a hard worker and she will learn from it.”

*On thoughts on tomorrow …*

“Part of our speech to the team was this is a double elimination tournament and you cannot care about what happened today because its over. We’re going to have our chances again tomorrow and we have learned all year from our losses. We’ve always come back from them and we’ve always grown with each and every game, and I expect nothing less form this team coming out tomorrow.”

**Illinois Student-Athletes**

**#12 Taylor Edwards, IF**

*On what was working for you today …*

“A little bit of everything. I was working a drop, fast and a raise. Defense was behind me to make plays. Tried to change things up and keep them off balance.”

*On what kind of challenges you were facing …*  
“Respecting them enough to know their numbers. They had a lot of power numbers. Still, when I step on the mound, know that my stuff is good enough to beat them especially with the defense behind me. Confidence and a lot of fight, just wanted to win.”

*On the approach for tomorrow* …

“I wish we would’ve won today, but knowing that the next game that we play could be our last allows us to put a lot more fight, a lot more heart behind every pitch. This team is a very close-knit group of girls and we love playing together. Just step on the field knowing it could be our last, I think we will put a lot of special stuff behind each ball that’s thrown or each ball that’s hit.”