

ATHLETICS COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS
SOFTBALL
VIRGINIA TECH VS. ILLINOIS
MAY 18, 2019
JOHN CROPP STADIUM – LEXINGTON, KY.

Virginia Tech Head Coach Pete D'Amour

Opening statement ...

"Well, we made it to Sunday. We played a lot better that game. The thing I told the team was that nobody wants to go out of regionals on a Saturday. So, we made it to Sunday and gave ourselves a chance. I think if we clean up some mistakes against Kentucky, we've got a chance. We didn't play terrible against them in the first game, but I'm proud of the way the kids reacted after the first game and we'll see what happens tomorrow."

On switching up the lineup after the Kentucky game to put Al Velazquez in the lead-off spot ...

"Her previous six at bats she's had this weekend (is why). She's hot right now, so she is swinging the bat really well."

On if Keely Rochard can pitch tomorrow ...

"Yeah. She can go tomorrow. She'll have too. Keely has stamina, and really, I thought she got better in the fifth, sixth and seventh innings tonight. I thought she got better in the end of the game than the beginning. It's all hands on deck for tomorrow."

On where the improvement has to come against UK tomorrow ...

"The first thing is defense. I thought Carrie (Eberle) threw well enough to win. I think we made four errors. You can't beat anybody making four errors, so that's the first thing. And then timely hitting. That's what the postseason is. It's pitching, defense and timely hitting. We just didn't have two of those today."

Virginia Student-Athletes

#9 Al Velazquez, OF, So.

On what she remembers about her home run ...

"I remember that I was mad. I have come in with the approach of anger. I seem to hit better when I'm mad for some reason. It helps me pick better takes and to see the ball better and I zone in more. I was just mad for no reason. I was just, I don't know. It's kind of weird to say, but I was just mad. I was like if it's there, swing as hard as you can, and that's exactly what I did."

On how you make yourself mad ...

"I've had some things happen and I just kind of have to deal with it. Yeah, I can't explain it."

On being back in the NCAA Regionals, this time with Virginia Tech ...

"It feels good. I've trained my whole life for this opportunity. So, last regional I did absolutely terrible and I decided to come in with a better attitude. I kind of know what to expect, I know the atmosphere of it."

On if you were giving your team TV tips for the NCAA Regionals ...

"Mmm, not really. I had confidence in them. Last weekend, when we played at ACCs, it was kind of like the same thing – a lot of cameras, a lot of photographers, huge crowds. It's the same thing coming in to regionals."

On the key to bouncing back after losing to Kentucky earlier in the day ...

"Just to play catch and have better at bats. That's it. I know we can do it, play catch, ground balls, pop flies, have better at bats and it turned out pretty good."

#3 Keely Rochard, P, So.

On adjustments from facing Illinois yesterday ...

"My changeup was a little bit better, better command on that, better command of my high rise, working the ladder."

On her mindset going into the elimination game ...

"Just trust my pitches and know that my offense is going to do it for me and just get easy outs for them."

On how she feels physically after pitching in an elimination game ...

"I didn't really think about the 'do-or-die' part. It's another game. I try not to think about it because I have to play the way I showed, whether it's do-or-die or not. I feel good knowing that we won and that we're moving onto tomorrow because I think we have a very good chance. We're all tired so we better get some good rest. It was a long day."

#13 Caitlyn Nolan, IF, Sr.

On the team's mindset going into the second game ...

"Got to win. Just going into that game, you've just got to flush what happened, you can't think about that because it does no good. Just go, keep playing, forget about game one as much as you can. So now, just come out tomorrow and try to be a little bit better."

On her home run ...

"I was tired of getting jammed and just missing pitches. I was trying to get something and pull it really hard. I just kind of hit it out in front and it went. I guess I could say I was looking for that pitch, but I was just trying not to get jammed."

On if she feels like they have a shot against Kentucky tomorrow ...

"Anybody can beat anybody at any point. But yeah, if we just play catch, have better at bats like Al (Velazquez) said, we'll be in any game against any team."

On what made Grace Baalman so difficult to hit ...

“I felt like we had decent at bats, we hit some balls hard off of her, it was just trying to get hits to fall with runners on base. I feel like that was the big thing, we just had to capitalize when we had runners on base. I think we could be a little bit better, but I don’t think we did terrible, so I’m excited for tomorrow.”

Illinois Head Coach Tyra Perry

Opening statement ...

“Another tough loss to Virginia Tech who has a very good team. Again, kind of to echo what I said in our first game, I really thought we had our chances. Taylor Edwards did a great job to starting us off and Danielle Brochu came in there at the end and did a great job for us as well. We had a great senior class who has shown a lot of leadership throughout our entire season. But in situations like this all you can ask for are opportunities and we had those. So, we talked a lot to our returners about taking the ques that our nine seniors have left us with and expounding on those to make us better and stronger for next season.”

On being in Lexington again in a similar situation ...

“Well, I think the last time we were here we were in the championship on Sunday. So, we did get a step further before. The first season I think we were in this position if I’m not mistaken. Anytime that you can make it into the field of 64, there’s so many teams out there in the NCAA, you’re doing something right overall. A lot of what is going right in our program is just the type of players that we’ve brought in. They come in and they work hard. They buy in. Just having this opportunity has been amazing. Our senior class has been to the NCAA Tournament now three times. So, we’re going to make this a regular thing and we’re going to get better every year.”

On Virginia Tech’s big scoring inning ...

“Honestly, home runs have kind of plagued us all year. I think we kind of started to quell them a little towards the end of the season. But they’ve still been a factor. We also have the ability to hit home runs. We didn’t quite accomplish that in this particular setting. The times where our defense, hitting and pitching have all shown up have been really good for us. We were just a little bit short and shy of that in this particular game.”

On the senior class ...

“We have nine seniors that I absolutely love all nine of them. They bring different things to the table and have different personalities. Sometimes that can be a recipe for disaster, but in their case they’re such professionals. They came into practice ready to go every day. Academic side, they’re excellent students – just really, the living definition of student-athlete and I couldn’t have asked for nine more beautiful, wonderful, great people. So, yeah, I’m going to miss them a lot.”

#1 Danielle Brochu, P, Sr.

On Virginia Tech taking the lead in the fifth inning ...

“It was a tough one, but we all knew our offense was going to come back. The way they’ve been hitting all year there’s no doubt. Like she said, we have given up home runs this year and it’s been a thing, but our offense has always come back. I still had faith in our offense, to be honest, and it just ended up short. We didn’t make plays and take advantage of the opportunities we were given.”

On how the program has grown ...

“Coming in as a transfer my sophomore year, obviously it was a big decision to come in to somewhere that had just made a postseason the year before and I knew I was signing up for something that was growing. We were the underdogs at that point. My goal at the end of this was to not be the underdogs and I fully believe we were not this weekend. We have proven that all year and Coach Perry has built this team to compete and we have and today we were all guts out, we laid it all out.”

#99 Annie Fleming, IF, Sr.

On how hard it was to play against pitcher Keely Rochard ...

“She was a decent pitcher, we just didn’t make adjustments quick enough. We had some really good hits, they just happen to go right to someone. We just needed to make quicker adjustments and hopefully the returners can see that and learn from it for the following seasons.”

On how the softball program has grown...

“I was here under the old coaching staff. So, having Coach Perry come in, she’s been awesome and the whole coaching staff has been amazing. The competitiveness that they bring and the expertise, the trust I have in them is something I can’t explain. This is just going to keep growing and growing and I cannot wait to come back and watch this team in the next few years.”