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BIG 12 CONFERENCE TOURNAMENT

MEDIA KIT

OKLAHOMA STATE



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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 11, 2023

FOR MORE INFORMATION
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Oklahoma State Looking to Reclaim Big 12 Tournament Champion Title

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla.—Oklahoma State will battle Oklahoma to begin the 2023 Big 12 Conference Softball Tournament this afternoon.

After what will be one of the last Bedlam Softball Battles ended in a sweep of OU, OSU is looking to keep their record against the Sooners 4-0 for the 2023 season.

“They’re the standard,” said OSU head coach Kenny Gajewski. “The recipe to beating (Sooners) is not to play that jersey. You got to play softball. You can’t give them free stuff. They will punish you with free stuff, that’s what good teams do.”

OSU’s record under Gajewski against OU was 2-20 entering the 2023 season. Having bumped the record to 5-20 during conference play this season, OSU topped OU as the No. 1 seed in The Big 12 going into tournament play.



Oklahoma State won the Big 12 Tournament in May, 2022 after 8 innings against Oklahoma. The 2022 title was the first Big 12 Conference Tournament title in softball program history for OSU. Despite placing second overall in the conference to end the season, the tournament was history making for the Cowgirls, and they are looking to do it again as back-to-back champions.

Photo credit: Abby Cage/USA Softball

Redshirt senior Kelly Maxwell has been named the starting pitcher for OSU. Maxwell came in second with 10 strikeouts at last year’s tournament to OU’s Hope Trautwein’s 14 in the tournament. Maxwell was also the only pitcher other than Trautwein to shut-out the first team they faced in the tournament last year. With Trautwein gone, junior Nicole May is expected to be starting pitcher for OU.

Other notable players looking to repeat success from last year's tournament are Kiley Naomi, Taylor Tuck and Chelsea Alexander. Last year's tournament saw three stolen bases from Alexander and two from Naomi leading the tournament with most stolen bases. Tuck not only split catcher duties with Julia Cottrill, but she also helped aid two RBIs for the Cowgirls, one of which helped in their win against the Sooners.

For the Sooners, this is a chance to reclaim what has been known as their dynasty as they prepare to leave for the SEC in 2024. After a drop in rankings from previous seasons, OU is currently not the favored Oklahoma school to win the Women's College World Series.

For the Cowgirls, this is the first step to a national championship to cap off the season. Early in the season, players were asked about their expectation for the season, that is what they replied—win a national championship.

“This is probably the closest team what we've ever had,” Gajewski said.

“We call it a family,” said starting pitcher Kelly Maxwell.

After a full tournament is played and completed over the next three days, the Cowgirls will continue into their post season where they are slated to host a regional site as bracket play begins for the WCWS. The Cowgirls will need to win five more games after this tournament to return to the Hall of Fame complex to compete for that national championship title.

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Fact Sheet

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Big 12 Conference Tournament for Oklahoma State

WHO

- Oklahoma State Cowgirl Softball Team is competing against Oklahoma Sooners Softball team in the opening round.
- The winner will advance to the winners bracket and play the winner of the Texas Longhorns v. Baylor Bears game.

WHAT

- The tournament takes place over three days, and is double elimination.
- The winner of the tournament will be the new Big 12 Conference Tournament Champion.
- Winning the tournament does not mean winning regular season conference play.
- Outcomes of this tournament will help determine seeding going into the Women's College World Series bracket.

WHERE

- All games will be played at the USA Softball Hall of Fame complex in Oklahoma City.

WHEN

- The three day tournament will take place from May 11 – May 13.
- Games will start at 10:30 a.m., 2:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. respectively each day.
- The championship game will be May 13 at 6:30 p.m.

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Backgrounder

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Oklahoma State Previous 2022 Season

Oklahoma State Softball often gets overlooked when looking at The Sooner State collegiate softball. They are among only four teams to appear in the last three Women's College World Series, which brings their total number of appearances in the WCWS to 14.

The 2022 team was ranked in the top five for preseason polls in Softball America, the Big 12 Conference, D1Softball, ESPN and the National Fastpitch Coaches Association. They were predicted to be one of the last teams standing in the end before the season even started.

Three pitchers contributed to their success, two seniors Morgan Day and Miranda Elish and returning redshirt senior Kelly Maxwell. The three women combined totaled 557 strikeouts for the season, the second highest single-season total in program history. Elish and Maxwell also were named All-Americans, along with infielder Sydney Pennington and outfielder Katelynn Carwile. Their two most consistent starters from the 2022 season are returning for their final year, both Kiley Naomi and Chyenne Factor.

Overall ending the season with a 48-14 record they finished second in the conference standings with a 14-4 record in the Big 12. After winning the conference tournament OSU was slated No. 7 in the 2022 NCAA Tournament on the road to the WCWS.

The team ended the year with a batting average of .291 and a pitching ERA of 1.86. The fielding percentage was a new program high of .980, beating the 2010 season of .978. The 2022 team was third overall in most wins in program history, and their pitchers amassed a 9.57 strikeouts per inning average which is second overall in program history to the 2003 team at 10.11.

The standard for OSU softball continues to reach new heights. With 14 new players on the roster OSU has the potential to take this team all the way combining old tactics with the new to succeed in this 2023 season.

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Kelly Maxwell: Oklahoma State's starting pitcher, Kelly Maxwell, is in her final year as a Cowgirl as a Redshirt Senior. Maxwell was named Big 12 pitcher of the week to start off the 2023 softball season. She has continued to make prove she deserves to be recognized as a top-ranked pitcher around the NCAA.



Head coach Kenny Gajewski: Oklahoma State head softball coach Kenny Gajewski is in his eighth year as the Cowgirls head coach. His overall record as a head coach at the end of 2022 was 269-121. Gajewski is hoping to take the Cowgirls to their fourth WCWS and back-to-back Big 12 Tournament Champions.



Team Huddle: At the end of last years tournament, both the Sooners and Cowgirls gathered at the pitchers mound for a final prayer before continuing with celebrations. This has become a tradition to end every Bedlam softball match-up, and it spread across other sports as well.



Patty Gasso: Oklahoma head softball coach Patty Gasso is in her 28th year as the Sooners head coach. Gasso's overall record as a head coach is 1,395-344-2. 2022 was the first time since 2016 when years prior the tournament was not held, the Sooners lost the Big 12 Tournament title.

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