Head Coach Kevin O'Brien

Opening Statement…
KB: "Congratulations to Samford on a great season. Todd, their head coach, is one of my best friends. We know going into it one another's teams more than you typically would in an NCAA matchup. He's got a fantastic program, and they'll continue to be really, really good and just I want to congratulate them on a great season. Also, just say how proud I am of our team and how we've kind of grown from July to today and improved and worked hard and gotten better, and it's been so impressive with these two leading the way. Man, it makes my job easy when these guys show up the way they do each and every week. It's pretty awesome."

Q: Coach…when you got up early, it felt pretty good. [Did] you know, your defense is gonna bring it home.
KB: "Yeah, but we didn't finish the first half particularly well. I thought Samford was putting us under substantial pressure, and they're really direct. They switched into a 4-4-2, and it caused us some trouble, so glad we got to halftime with a clean sheet. Then we made some adjustments with our shape, and it really felt comfortable in the second half where it didn't feel like they were going to get through us. The girls did a great job again. You know, every time we've thrown a tactical instruction at them, or an adjustment, or a tweak to the shape, man, they're just like, 'All right, Coach, here we go.' And they answer the call every time. They do an incredibly good job. So, really proud of the fact that they're able to do that."

Q: When did Chiara's value on set pieces first show up for you when you were looking at them in training, running through corners?
KB: "Yeah, we saw it pretty early. I mean, she can hit it so purely, and with so much velocity, it's hard for keepers to get to save it. The one I think you're referring to is the Arkansas State game that got canceled. She scored. That would have been her first collegiate goal, and it didn't count, unfortunately. So, you know, I'm glad she was able to get one tonight."

Q: You told us early this week you weren't gonna let your team overlook Samford, and you know, that showed early with two goals in the first 10 minutes. Just kind of talk about how you got your girls ready and prepared for this one tonight.
KB: "It was just preaching that same message. We've got to respect every opponent, regardless of the name across their chest. I knew how good his team was. Most of the lineup that was out there were Power 4 transfers that have gone to his school, and, so I just, you know, just kept communicating to the girls, 'Hey, what you're gonna see is what we saw all season long.' So don't think for a second. 'Cause there were a couple early games in the NCAA Tournament where the Power 4 went up, and they're up 2-3, and, you know, I'm like, guys, we just can't underestimate this team. They're really good. So they came out. I told them, the urgency in the first 10 minutes to kind of set the tone was massive, and they, again, they showed up. It was awesome."

Q: So, were you saying that Chiara, like, Babe Ruth called her shot to the wall?
KB: "If you watch the video, because normally the two, well, I don't want to give away our secrets. But there's normally a play. She basically said, 'We're not doing that because I'm going to score it.' I mean, it was amazing. I had the perfect angle and they basically stepped out of the way and she scored it. It was brilliant. They have the freedom to do that, you know. We talked with our team a lot about giving them the freedom to make the best decision that they can make in the moment."

#24 Chiara Tappe, Defender

Q: Chiara, just talk about the fast start for you personally, and getting your team off to a good start.
CT: "I think it helped us coming into the game, giving us a good push. It was really open, so I was like, 'Take it.' And it went in, so it was good."
KB: "Well, it was cool. I don't know if you saw it. She actually told the wall in front. She could see the opening and she said, 'I'm gonna hit it down.' I mean, it was pretty awesome that she called her own number and then banged it home. That was amazing. But she does that all the time in training. So, it's no surprise to Jenny and I, but, yeah, she's a fantastic ball striker."

Q: Chiara on the free kick. I mean, you took one earlier this season where you really just put your foot through it. Is that just your technique? Is that what you're most comfortable with?
CT: "Yeah, just place it in a corner or hit it as hard as I can."

#0 Jenny Harrison, Goal Keeper

Q: Jenny, can you talk a little bit about Chiara and just what it was like to watch that start and watch your team go up that early?
JH: "It was amazing that we got the result in the first like 10 minutes. It was like one of our ideas before the game to start really strong and having already a goal, I think, in the first five minutes, it just gave us like the energy to continue and to get another one."

Q: Following up on that, it seemed like you were never too uncomfortable. What was it like playing that sort of game and being able to trust your defense and your midfielders to kind of keep the ball up away from you?
JH: "I mean, all season, like trust them. I think we just played like we used to play like all season and we got the result. Of course, it's been a few games that we didn't score, so having like in the first half already the score, we knew like defensively we were gonna be sharp keeping coverage for each other and just like keeping the ball in front of us.."