

5-22-2006 Women's Softball

1 (File: 20060522_Myles_Brand_softball22m16.)

2 JOSH CENTOR: If you ask me, softball is
3 very hard. It boggles my mind that people can hit a ball
4 traveling that fast from that angle from that close. I
5 think some major leaguers might agree with me, as many of
6 them have looked foolish trying to hit off former
7 All-American pitcher Jenny Finch.

8 College softball is emerging into a
9 high-profile game and a popular NCAA championship.

10 Dr. Brand, how and when did this happen?

11 DR. MYLES BRAND: First of all, good to be
12 with you today, Josh.

13 I think it's fascinating about softball.
14 You know, we all play softball for recreation. It's not
15 the same game.

16 I had the opportunity to be on the
17 sidelines for a couple of these softball games. And I'm
18 just overwhelmed at the skill of the players. The speed
19 of that ball coming into the plate, 45 feet, and it's
20 moving all over. Well, it's a bigger ball, you think you
21 can it hit it -- not so. That ball really comes fast,
22 and it moves very quickly.

23 The pitchers are really providing, I think,
24 a high level of skill that's making it difficult for --
25 as you point out, for any batter.

1 JOSH CENTOR: It seems like it's emerged,
2 though, especially in the last few years.

3 Do you attribute that to any of the
4 television coverage.

5 DR. MYLES BRAND: You know, we started off
6 showing that in a delayed action, that we would have
7 tapes that people would watch. And all of a sudden, on
8 ESPN, everyone was watching the tapes. And the news
9 media and the sports media, ESPN in particular, say,
10 Well, there's a lot of interest in this.

11 As a result, we're obviously showing it
12 live now. And it's one of our growth sports. It's a lot
13 like women's basketball. I think there's a greater and
14 greater appreciation over time about the skill of the
15 players. And as a result, I think a lot of people are
16 watching it.

17 JOSH CENTOR: And the Women's College World
18 Series, which is right around the corner in Oklahoma
19 City, people are packing the stands there too.

20 DR. MYLES BRAND: Absolutely. I think
21 that's going to be an exciting event. It'll be very hard
22 fought. I think it'll be quite interesting.

23 And again, we all think, Well, we know how
24 to play softball. Not so.

25 JOSH CENTOR: We don't.

1 DR. MYLES BRAND: It's a different game.
2 It's really quite remarkable to watch, and it's great
3 fun. It's played hard. Skillful players. And of
4 course, we all get to root for our college teams.

5 JOSH CENTOR: Is softball following the
6 path of women's basketball? We've seen an explosion in
7 women's basketball over the past decade or so. Are we
8 going the same way with softball?

9 DR. MYLES BRAND: I think it's one of our
10 growth in women's sports and one of our growth sports
11 all-around. Absolutely. Women's basketball, I think, is
12 clearly gaining momentum. It's on the upswing. Better
13 players all the time because more people playing and
14 they're starting younger.

15 But also the same is true for sports -- for
16 softball. I think we're seeing more young women playing
17 early on. We're seeing the teams attracting better
18 players and more fans.

19 JOSH CENTOR: You know, one of the things
20 that I find remarkable is that last year, Michigan won
21 the College World Series. That's a team from the North
22 dominating teams from the South and from the West. That
23 hasn't happened before.

24 DR. MYLES BRAND: We'll, we've seen
25 baseball migrate to the warm weather climates, mostly so

1 people can play close to all-year long.

2 I think in terms of softball, we probably
3 have enough ability on the pitcher and catcher to
4 practice indoors a little bit, and that helps. And the
5 pitch is very important in softball. So that might be
6 one of the opportunities.

7 I think it is a national game. We will see
8 the northern teams, the Big Ten, for example, and the
9 northern part of the PAC 10, for example, participating
10 and be competitive. And that's great because it gives
11 more opportunity and more competitiveness.

12 JOSH CENTOR: One of the wild things, I
13 think, is that a pitcher can throw hundreds of pitches
14 throughout the course of the tournament. It's totally
15 different than baseball.

16 DR. MYLES BRAND: It's a different
17 movement. You know, I think when you throw a ball
18 overhand, there's a certain limit you can do for your
19 shoulder and elbow.

20 But I think that the motion, the underhand
21 motion, allows the pitchers to continue. In fact,
22 sometimes, the pitcher will pitch two games in a row, and
23 I think you can do that just because the motion is so
24 different.

25 JOSH CENTOR: All right. Well, the Women's

1 College World Series begins on June 1st. So make sure to
2 tune to ESPN to catch some of the games from Oklahoma
3 City. I'll be out there, and we'll be writing updates
4 for the DoubleAZone, so make sure to check those out as
5 well.

6 Dr. Brand, thank you for being with us.

7 DR. MYLES BRAND: Pleasure.

8 JOSH CENTOR: You just listened to "Mondays
9 With Myles", featuring NCAA president Myles Brand. We'll
10 see you next week.

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