

2022 Women's College World Series

Wednesday, June 1, 2022
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

UCLA Bruins

Coach Kelly Inouye-Perez

Briana Perez

Megan Faraimo

Postgame Press Conference



guys' eyes as you start the tournament?

BRIANA PEREZ: Yeah, I definitely think we learned from when we played them and take that into consideration just watching film and stuff, but at this point of the season anything can happen. We kind of like to say it's a new season, so anything can happen and just going to try to play our game.

Q. After missing last year with an injury, I know the World Series is nothing new to you, but after missing last year with an injury, does coming back this year feel a little more special to you personally?

MEGAN FARAIMO: I think it does feel a little more special. I have always been hungry to get here, but not being able to be with my team last year, I just feel very blessed and honored to be here now.

Q. Division I softball has become a lot more diverse in the last ten years. I wanted to know your team has always been diverse, but the sport overall is becoming more so. What are you seeing there? How did that happen? I know that's a broad question, but -- and how important is it?

KELLY INOUEY-PEREZ: Well, I can only speak -- you're right. I think across the board I think softball has grown, and it is a sport that you can now see from coast-to-coast. There are quality players all around the country.

It is also provided -- I think a big part of this is this big stage and ESPN and getting into the living rooms of a lot of homes for people to fall in love with the sport and to be able to see that there's truly an opportunity for females to be able to not only compete on a big stage, but also get a great education.

So softball has provided that opportunity to inspire so many more to be able to have the opportunity to play, so diversity in general, I can speak to my team. I'm so proud.

If you look at us, if you look at my staff, my team, and I say this to my team all the time. You know, we can come from all different parts of the country and the world, but your

THE MODERATOR: This is the pre-tournament press conference featuring the UCLA Bruins. The Bruins are making their 31st Women's College World Series appearance after having defeated Duke in the Los Angeles Super Regional. We are joined by head coach Kelly Inouye-Perez, Megan Faraimo and Briana Perez. Coach, if you could just start us off and tell us about the Bruins' journey to the Women's College World Series once again.

KELLY INOUEY-PEREZ: I always like to give shout-outs and to be able to thank the NCAA, the city of Oklahoma, and ESPN for really being able to provide this opportunity for us to be on such a big stage. Just very fortunate to be back here, and I never take it for granted.

As far as my Bruins, I couldn't be more proud. I think this has been a year of adversity, as always, but our culture, our ability to work together as a team has really allowed us to be able to get through those bumps and get back to Oklahoma.

A big part of why we're here is our pitching has been solid. We have had a true one-two with opportunities to throw others that has allowed for our team to come up with timely hits, but I truly believe we're here because we're playing our best ball.

Had some quality opponents in Regionals. Duke was a fierce competitor, and I love that bottom line it's about us, and we're playing great ball together as a team. And getting back to the World Series is our dream, and we have another opportunity to get after a National Championship.

THE MODERATOR: Briana, you've faced Northwestern, Oklahoma, Texas, and obviously, the other two Pac-12 teams are here in Oregon State and Arizona. You guys, does that help you, give you any kind of advantage in you

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ability to come together and be a family and play together as one and understand how we are going to work together I think is one of the greatest tools that collegiate athletics can provide to allow you to prepare for the real world.

We may all not be raised the same, we may not all have the same beliefs, but we're going to come together and work together as a team and respect differences, be able to have difficult conversations to be able to learn and grow, which will allow us to be that much more prepared in the real world to be able to work together with anyone.

Sports is something that is unique. It doesn't really matter where you come from, but your ability to buy into team I think is a really powerful tool that you can use to continue to succeed beyond the white lines.

Q. Kelly, I think three of you coaches in this field have played here, played in the World Series in Oklahoma City. You go back about 30 years. What do you remember about your playing days here and the differences between what you guys experienced and what you experience now?

KELLY INOUE-PEREZ: There are so many stories I can tell you about. That is a big question.

The bottom line is, first, you're right. Nothing replaces my playing opportunities on this stage, and I think the greatest moments were just being on the stage and having great success. My saddest was the last day because it was -- I thought it would be the last time I would be here in Oklahoma. That's me personally.

I think in general what I just walked down these stairs to the stadium to get down to this press room and to see the changes to the stadium, to see the stands, to see just how much the NCAA and the USA Softball, the city of Oklahoma have invested into this stadium to celebrate this championship has been just phenomenal.

I remember Lisa Fernandez and I played travel ball together on a team called the Panthers. We came here as a travel organization when we were probably 17 or 18 years old, and we were the first travel ball team to win the Hall of Fame Stadium Tournament. I remember there was a picture. I was on Lisa's back on a piggyback, and we thought, oh, my God, that is the biggest scoreboard we've ever seen. It was just huge.

We were travel ball, and we won. At that time there were -- it seemed grand, and it was, but there were grass hills and the kids were rolling down the hills. It was very, very -- the stadium itself was nice, but to see what it's evolved to, the grass knolls to stands to bleachers now on the outfield.

You remember coming back and seeing the bleachers in the outfield and going, Oh, wow, now they're putting them in the outfield; and now I look up and say, They're in the sky in the outfield. To see skyboxes, and it's just the evolution. Just the dugout. The dugout now goes to locker rooms and there are bathrooms in the locker rooms. There's fieldhouses.

It has continued to evolve. I have been so fortunate to be able to see the evolution as a player and assistant and head coach, and I celebrate it every time. Never take it for granted.

The investment in the sport is something I celebrate. It gives all of my student athletes an opportunity to celebrate being a top eight after all the hard work. Every team in the country does it. It's everyone's goal and dream to be here to be able to celebrate this and see the celebration of what's come together, it is literally a dream come true for these athletes.

Q. I actually wanted to ask you another evolution question, but it's more game-related. There's always been strong and powerful players playing this game, but it seems like there are more of them now. I'm wondering how strength and power has evolved in your program and what you have seen, just more line-ups with more players able to pound it now?

KELLY INOUE-PEREZ: Well, first, when you talk about the evolution of the sport, that has changed where literally the ball has changed, the bats have changed, the dynamics, back to 43 feet. I swung a 34.29 ounce bat, and the ball was as ugly. So the ball did not fly.

It's a different sport now. I think as a result combined with the knowledge, you've got information out there. You've got higher-level coaches that are really investing time, effort, energy.

There are stats. There's videos. There's a lot of information. It really comes back, no matter what, to the athletes. And the work ethic that the athletes are putting into the game is unparalleled. We kind of separated ourselves back in the day of having some of the best together. This generation puts work in.

It's not just physical. They put in mental work. They put in their nutrition, their wellness. There is so much invested in just being the elite athlete. So you are seeing a lot more of that: The knowledge, the work, the commitment.

All of those things add up to just a lot more athletes that have -- that are just better technically, physically, mentally.

You get to see it. You get to see it celebrated on this stage.

Another thing is because softball has grown, you are seeing a different type of athlete come into the game. It was a very strong sport, where our sport is unique. You don't have to be the tallest. You don't have to be the fastest. But now you're seeing that triple-threat kind of an athlete, like a Bri Perez that can play soccer, basketball, or other sports. They have the ability to come into softball. You see a different type of athlete. Megan Faraimo was recruited a Division I volleyball player as well. She's just an athlete.

You are seeing a different type of athlete combined with knowledge, information, and commitment. The game has changed. It's exciting now. You have to watch the sport down to the last pitch. You never know what's going to happen.

Q. This question is for Kelly. I want to ask you a little bit about Maya. She had such a great weekend last week. Where have you seen her improve this year the most?

KELLY INOUYE-PEREZ: She had a phenomenal freshman year, and that's always tough to follow for any athlete. The sophomore jinx is what they call it.

What I see in Maya now is just Maya being Maya. She knows she can hit. She's very strong. She's a dangerous hitter. Getting away from the expectations and noise and getting back to just playing softball.

I would put her in any situation at any time because the girl has succeeded under pressure her whole career. That's why she's here.

She's a fierce hitter. She's quieted the noise, and she's ready to do whatever she can to help her team, and it's very fun to watch.

Q. This question is for Megan. Megan, looking ahead to the Texas match-up, what are your impressions of Janae Jefferson and kind of what she brings to this offense. And I'm sure you've faced her before. You probably got to know her with the Team USA stuff. Your impressions on Janae.

MEGAN FARAIMO: I know she's a great athlete. I have to respect her bat as a slapper and a hitter. I think mostly a hitter.

My goal is just to throw the best pitches I can, make the ball move, and hopefully she won't hit one off me.

(Laughing).

Q. I want to ask Kelly a question about Delanie Wisz. If you could just offer a sense of the journey that you have seen her go on. The achievement and the success, does that come as a result of confidence and self-belief? Or is it kind of vice versa, where she's achieving, and that's growing her confidence?

KELLY INOUYE-PEREZ: I think Delanie, before she got into the Bruin uniform, is a very confident female. That's her strength. She is confident.

The evolution of Delanie at her former school, she made a decision where she probably could have not played again. She left and was not sure if she was going to play again, and when Rachel and Bubba made the Olympic team, it provided an opportunity for us to bring in some transfers. Not necessarily at the best time, right? They made the Olympic team in the fall, and Lanie came to us in January.

We already knew about her. She was part of the Wisz family. Her sister was a really big part of our culture. It was a combination of Lanie, the opportunity and her always saying that UCLA is where she wanted to play, combined with being surrounded by just some amazing not only athletes but people.

She has built her confidence not only on the field and off. She is fit. She is healthy. She has fun. She loves her teammates, and she's always been a fierce player. I think surrounded by this group and having the opportunity to be on this stage, she is shining. It's very fun to watch, and she's very, very grateful, which I think really leads into the rest of her teammates.

Q. Megan and Bri, I was checking out UCLA's academic calendar, and it looks like the last day of class is June 10th. What does your student-athlete workload kind of look like at this point where you are really trying to lock in on this portion of the season?

BRIANA PEREZ: It's definitely tough. I'm not sure how many other schools are still in school right now, but specifically for me, I'm in a master's program, and I actually have a 30-page paper due. So I'm working on that. We got study hall put in our schedule.

It's definitely hard to focus, just especially being here, but we kind of -- as a fifth-year senior, I kind of put in the work at the beginning of the quarter because I was hoping that we would be here, and that's exactly where we are.

Just have some more work to do academically, but got to get it done (Laughing).



It will get done, Coach. I promise. I will graduate from UCLA.

KELLY INOUYE-PEREZ: It's okay if you don't and you want to come back for another year. (Laughing.)

MEGAN FARAIMO: I definitely have a final due tomorrow at, like, noon. So the workload for me personally is not ideal, but it's something you learn as a student-athlete to balance all these responsibilities, and I think it's something that's going to help us in the real world.

My best advice is to compartmentalize everything and be where your feet are. When you are watching video, watch video, scout, do what you have to do. When you are in study hall, really do what you have to do because you're not going to get much time to work on your schoolwork after that.

BRIANA PEREZ: I'll definitely say in those two hours of study hall there are a few tears from a lot of us, but we're all in it together, so I think --

MEGAN FARAIMO: Exactly.

BRIANA PEREZ: Two years ago Megan had a paper due, and we literally sat down, we were like: All right, Megan, we're going to do this. We are going to do this for you.

So we all step in.

MEGAN FARAIMO: Yeah. It's great for the camaraderie.

Q. Kelly, when you meet as Pac-12 coaches and offseason meetings, whatever, do you guys talk about the RPI and how to schedule for that and crack the code? It seems like there is at least one conference I can name where they have figured it out, no matter what a team does, it makes the NCAA Tournament. Is that something you guys talk about or strategize for?

KELLY INOUYE-PEREZ: To answer your question, first and foremost, I'm really proud to be a part of our Pac-12 coach just, you know -- we have camaraderie within our Pac-12 coaches. All females. Six of the nine have played at their university. Yes, we have a strong culture.

We can get together, and I'm very proud that we can pick up the phone or get on a Zoom at any time and be able to communicate. I think that is unique.

Also, yes, we've had strong conversations about what it takes for us to be able to have as many teams represent at the World Series, and this year in 2022 it was the first -- it

was the first time that all nine teams were over .500, and that to me is a big testament to our planning in the preseason.

Your ability to be able to have a solid preseason knowing we're all going to beat each other up in Pac, but gives us an opportunity to be selected for postseason.

To your question, yes, we do have conversations. Yes, we are trying to get as many teams, and I still believe there could have been more. That's the best thing about it is the representation at the World Series or Regionals, Supers, and here at the World Series is showing that the Pac-12 is doing what it needs to do, and we need to show it on the field. And I think I'm really proud. I'm really proud of what the Pac-12 is doing in representing right now in 2022.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much for your time. We appreciate it. Best of luck.

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