

# 2025 Men's College World Series

Tuesday, June 17, 2025

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

**UCLA Bruins**

**Coach John Savage**

**Roch Cholowsky**

**Payton Brennan**

Postgame Press Conference



**success of that group excite you guys for the future and how does coming up just short in Omaha motivate you for next season?**

PAYTON BRENNAN: Coming off last year no one thought we'd be here. We all talk about coming here. I chose to go to UCLA to play under Coach Savage and to make it to the Omaha. That was the goal.

To be here, it was a long season and we battled and we came together. All the stuff we had to deal with in the fall, losing the field, and I think that just built this team, built us up stronger.

I have, like, 40 best friends from the season, everything we went through. It's been an awesome ride. It sucks the way it ended, but we fought and that's all we can do.

**Q. Roch, it was kind of weird to see -- I've never seen a losing team have so many smiles on their faces after getting eliminated, I should say. What does that say? What was that about, do you think?**

ROCH CHOLOWSKI: I mean, it's a special group of guys. It was tough going through what we did last year. I mean, no one really knows what it feels like besides the guys that were in it.

And just the talks and just talking about what we wanted to do this year and how we wanted to do it. And just getting here and getting to experience, this was super special to us. There was no other way we wanted to go out without a fight.

Just seeing all the guys in the dugout still into it in the ninth, even though we were down by seven runs, it just goes to show you how special of a group that we have and how tight the bond was. It was a special year.

**Q. Roch, for all you guys, obviously getting to Omaha is the goal. And then you win, but you've also, like, the tight turnaround, the continuation game, what's the last week been like for this team?**

Arkansas - 7, UCLA -3

THE MODERATOR: Joining us are UCLA head coach John Savage and student-athletes Payton Brennan and Roch Cholowsky.

JOHN SAVAGE: First off, I just thanked the team for doing what they did all season. The turnaround we had from last year was pretty special in a lot of ways. Like I told them, it's the team that really built this, the cast of characters, remarkable job day in and day out, weight room, classroom, practice, clubhouse, bus, airplane, hotel, the whole deal.

I just was so proud of how they respected the process. That's what you do. That's how you get to Omaha. I told them that. I said, it's a very, very special place. It's the holy grail of college baseball.

It feels somewhat easy when you're here, but I think everybody knows how difficult it is to get here. I'm just so proud of our guys.

Disappointing day for sure. Tough day. Tough circumstances. But at the end of the day, you know, you've got to give credit to LSU and certainly Arkansas.

We can certainly build off this. We've got a bunch of young, young players that love each other and trust their work and trust each other. So it's a really good stepping stone.

**Q. Coach has talked a lot about the sophomore class, even some of the freshmen on this team. Payton, I know you're a redshirt sophomore. Without revealing any potential professional plans, how does the**

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ROCH CHOLOWSKI: I mean, we haven't taken anything for granted. I've told multiple people that have asked how it's been going, this feels like baseball heaven. Just going through the village and getting to see all the little kids with the smiles on their face, and just getting to make their days has been really good the last couple of weeks, the last couple of days.

It's definitely something I'll never take for granted. I'm just really excited to get another chance to come back here next year.

**Q. What kind of a statement does this make maybe for West Coast baseball, that you guys were here and Oregon State and Arizona as well?**

PAYTON BRENNAN: All Pac-12 schools, I feel like everyone doubts the West Coast. I think it was a good showing from us. It's kind of nice to put UCLA back on the map.

I think everyone hyped us up last year. It didn't turn out. Got overlooked this year. And we came out swinging. So, nothing we could do more. We worked hard and just happy to be here.

ROCH CHOLOWSKI: The West can hang with anybody. We're one of the top, one of the last eight teams standing, along with Arizona and Oregon State.

Something I thought was pretty cool today is we were taking BP and Coach Canham of Oregon State came in told us to represent the West well. I thought that was pretty special because just coming from the same conference last year and just really being together.

But the West can play with anybody. We showed that this year. Oregon State showed that, and so did U of A.

**Q. Just between how last year went, losing the ballpark in the fall, navigating a new conference and making it back to Omaha for the first time in 12 years, what will you remember of this team and of this entire experience?**

PAYTON BRENNAN: I think just everyone coming together. Coaches, they all have our back. Everyone's working hard. You've got the parents coming around us. Donors coming through.

It's like everyone came around us during that time. Everyone was helping out, going to Birmingham High School on buses. You couldn't ask for any better support system. It was great.

ROCH CHOLOWSKI: Yeah, just going off that, I think the people really made this year. He said earlier that there was really no one that thought we'd be here right now. I mean, the only people that did think we would be here was our guys and the people around us.

So I mean, it's a great group of people, and I think that that's what really made this year.

**Q. Payton, I believe you were at-bat at the end of the first inning. Could you walk me through that perspective of Dean, he had a great lead, halfway down the third baseline, attempts to steal home. It's so marginal. But that could have been a big inning, right?**

PAYTON BRENNAN: It's been so long ago, I don't even really remember. I'm just inning by inning, pitch by pitch, that's it.

I trust Dean to do his thing, and I'm trying to do my thing. I trust what he was thinking, and that's all you can really do is trust each other.

**Q. What I was asking Roch, I'll ask you the same thing. I've never seen a team -- there were a couple of tears but I've never seen a team more happy it seemed like at the end of getting eliminated. In a way there was joy. What do you think explains that joy in what they had for this season and how it manifests at the end?**

JOHN SAVAGE: I don't know if "happy" is the right word. But I think just togetherness and they didn't want it to end. They just responded in a way that they've kind of responded all year, win, lose or draw. It just goes to show you, again, the team and how much they thought of each other.

Payton said it and Roch said it, and nobody's making it up. You don't need to remember something that you're saying because it's genuine every time you're going through this thing.

I just think, at the end of the day, it's a really special group of guys that went through some really hard times and I think appreciate, they appreciate Omaha. They appreciate being here.

Going out the way we did, nobody was happy in terms of how that ended. But at the same time just in terms of what they accomplished as a group, I think they just felt like almost staying out on the field.

Like you said, I haven't seen that either. That was a pretty special moment for a bunch of young people to get together on the same team, enjoy this unbelievable place.



**Q. We asked you about this before the College World Series started, but how did you feel like the former Pac-12 schools represented the West Coast? And what does this say maybe for you guys moving forward?**

JOHN SAVAGE: It's a tough tournament. I thought they represented themselves well. Oregon State beat Florida State. Arizona went to North Carolina and won that. We beat a really good UTSA team that beat up Texas pretty well, pretty good.

This was a hard tournament. To be still playing on Tuesday, I guess -- the rain, that was a tough situation. I mean, to play last night and play this morning and come back, you wouldn't draw that up for anybody. But at the same time I'm not making any sort of excuses.

But I think the West -- a lot of good players on the West, a lot of good coaches on the West. I think it has a bright future.

Bright future is maybe not the right word, because you look at the national championships and you look at the history of Omaha and West Coast teams. But things have changed. Everybody knows things have changed in terms of the facilities and the power. And the SEC clearly had a huge day, right, with Arkansas and LSU.

But at the same time, you know, I think we can certainly build off this. And this team wants to be back.

**Q. Talking about things that have changed, first year in the Big Ten. As you kind of reflect but also look ahead, what makes you excited about the future of Big Ten baseball? On the other hand, how does the league get more teams in the NCAA Tournament, eventually more teams in Omaha?**

JOHN SAVAGE: I think everybody just has to schedule better, at the end of the day. RPI, it has a chance to have a really good RPI because a lot of the Big Ten teams from the other part of the country have to play a lot of road games. So their RPI does get pretty good.

There were some good teams -- Indiana was good, Penn State was good, Iowa was good, clearly Oregon was good, USC was very good.

It's hard. It's hard to get into the tournament, just the way it's set up.

But I just think us coaches have to get together and make sure we build these schedules out to where everybody's

RPI is relatively high.

You've got to win games. You can build a schedule, but you've got to win games. So, I mean, you've got to win games. But I think you should have to play the right people in the right spots.

So it's going to take I think the whole conference to get together and make sure that people are doing their part to build their RPI, to build their schedules outside of conference, because inside of conference it is what it is.

But I have extremely high hopes for the Big Ten. Just being through it, like I've said several times, I think it has a chance to have a really good future in baseball.

**Q. Your players talked and you mentioned getting back here, and then in your opening statement you talked about just building on it and a stepping stone. Could you elaborate on what that next step looks like in your imagination or what that will look like next year, especially with taking such a big leap?**

JOHN SAVAGE: You've got to evaluate everything. You've got to evaluate what you do. You've got to evaluate how you go about each and every day. You've got to evaluate the talent. You've got to evaluate the balance of the roster. You've got to evaluate the portal. You've got to look at the draft. You've got to look at what's coming in from high school. You've got to build out academics.

There's just so much that makes a team, that makes a program strength. That's the one thing I would say that I walked away from this thing, is we've got to get a lot stronger physically.

Now, you know, some of these guys are 23 and some of us are 18. That just alone and in itself makes a difference, but at the same time, you know, we've got to get stronger physically. I could walk away saying that as a group.

I think our starting pitching has to get better. Clearly we've had really good starting pitching, but we have to make sure that we have a couple frontline 1s and 2s that will carry the freight over the weekend.

We have a chance, several guys have a chance to be those guys. So there's a lot of things that you have to still look at and say, you know what, we've got to get better in those areas.

I love doing that. That's part of my job. And certainly we'll be looking at a lot of different things.

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