

2022 Women's College World Series

Friday, June 3, 2022

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

UCLA Bruins

Coach Kelly Inouye-Perez

Delanie Wisz

Megan Faraimo

Postgame Press Conference



UCLA 6, Northwestern 1

THE MODERATOR: This is the Game 5 press conference featuring the UCLA Bruins.

Questions for our student-athletes first, please.

Q. Megan, bases loaded, two outs, 3-0 count. What is going through your mind? What helped you dial it back in?

MEGAN FARAIMO: I just told myself to throw strikes because I felt like no matter what, whether she gets a hit, whether I get her, my team was going to have my back either way. I just wanted to get us back in the dugout.

Q. Delanie, you had some new catcher's gear out there. Can you tell me the story behind that?

DELANIE WISZ: So the catcher's gear is a gift from Easton and Jen Schroeder. They met with my family and kind of just custom made some gear for me. On the front it has a cross and the line going down is an exact replica of my sister's scar, which is super school, just incredible.

Then on the inside it has some things from my family and a little tribute to my brother who is in heaven. That gear is super special to me. I'm just so beyond blessed to have been able to receive something like that.

Q. Megan, when you hit your home run, we saw that it was just your second this season. We thought that can't be right. We looked at how often you'd come to the plate this season. 60 at-bats coming in. What is the story of not hitting so much, apparently, through the season, but here you are now?

MEGAN FARAIMO: Hitting is so hard. Hitting is hard. But every time I go up to bat, I just try to have a quality at-bat. For me that looks like I'm really going to see the ball in, do whatever I can to get on base. I don't care what it looks like. I just want to be able to do that for my teammates.

Q. Megan, would you prefer the bases-loaded strike-out or the solo home run?

MEGAN FARAIMO: Man, I don't know. I almost want to say bases loaded strike-out because I was kind of lit. Going three strikes in a row, that was tough. I'm not going to lie, I didn't really see that ball when I hit it out. I feel like the strike-out is more satisfying.

Q. There's so many youth softball teams here, so many kids of all ages here who come out to support you guys. What does it mean for you guys to be on this stage and to have so many youth here watching you?

DELANIE WISZ: Yeah, I was one of those kids once, obviously not here. I never came as a kid. But watching on TV. I was the one looking up to all these girls playing on this stage.

To be here as one of those players is just a full-circle moment. Yeah, I'm just so blessed to be here.

MEGAN FARAIMO: Yeah, I feel the same as Delanie, specifically for the Polynesian community. I feel like growing up I had some role models but not a lot. To be able to represent my culture on the biggest stage in the game is pretty cool, and I don't take that lightly.

Q. Megan, clearly a team that had a strategy of working you deep into counts. When you have six, seven pitch battles, a lot of at-bats, does that change your approach? Does it take more attention to hone in on pitches?

MEGAN FARAIMO: I don't know that I'd say I try to focus more in that at-bat. I try to make sure I'm keeping the same spin on the ball, doing everything I can to throw my best pitch at that moment.

Q. Delanie, what was it like working with Megan today, kind of seeing her in that zone, that fire come out of her?

DELANIE WISZ: I've said it before. When Megan's back is against the wall, that's when the fiercest competitor comes out. She's just a straight dog, I'm so happy and blessed to be able to catch her. I'm just excited to see her continue to grow throughout this whole tournament and the rest of her career.

Q. Are Megan, obviously yesterday not your best day. What did you do to refocus mentally to be able to come back and have this performance?

MEGAN FARAIMO: Yeah, I mean, the best thing you can do after a game like that is learn from it and come back. I said this earlier, but you have two choices after failure: to crumble or come back. If you decide to come back, that's all you can really do.

Q. I know this is a pretty politically active school. Has a rich history of activism among athletes. With the recent decision it looks like Roe v. Wade is going to be overturned, I'm wondering if that's anything that's come up in conversations amongst you guys as teammates and if you expect it to in the future and if you see it in the same light as mental health issues, Black Lives Matter, some of the things that have been brought up, LGBTQ rights?

MEGAN FARAIMO: I'll say that our team does have the important conversations, and we also do a very good job of compartmentalizing. When we're on the field, we're playing ball. I think that's the beautiful part about this sport. We're more than athletes, we're going to have those conversations, but we're also going to play out.

Q. Back to the fan topic, we talked to -- I don't know if you know Royce, in the stands he had the blue hair. Seeing fans like so excited, but also seeing how far they travel not only for UCLA but every single team, how impactful is it to see all these people coming from around the world or United States?

DELANIE WISZ: Royce is a close family friend to my family. I call him my uncle Royce, but he's not blood related at all.

But, yeah, the fan base we have here in Oklahoma, it's incredible to see, to look in the stands full of, you know, other colors, but to see the little square of blue, it's just so incredible.

Yeah, we're blessed to have them here.

Q. Northwestern was a team you obviously faced earlier in the year in February. Leading up to the first pitch, how was the approach different this time?

MEGAN FARAIMO: I mean, to Northwestern in general or just coming to play?

Q. Facing this team.

MEGAN FARAIMO: Well, we always want to compete our hardest. We definitely watched our old video and see what adjustments we can make.

But, again, our backs were against the wall, so we were going to find a way no matter what.

THE MODERATOR: Megan, Delanie, thank you very much.

Questions for Coach, please.

Q. Kelly, the same question I asked Megan about her own batting I'll ask you. I come to this with so little knowledge not having covered you. She's a terrific hitter, but maybe during the regular season you don't want to put that much on her in the circle and batter's box. Anyway, how is she in the batter's box now?

KELLY INOUE-PEREZ: Before I get to your question, I just want to be able to say just a lot of credit to Northwestern, just a really solid club. They compete. For Williams to go out the way that she did, there was so much respect for her in the game. She's done this since her freshman year. She continued.

We can sit here and everyone in the country can sit back and say sit the change. Yeah, you get in the box and try to do that. She's nasty. I just want to be able to give my respect and say she had an amazing career of being able to -- or she just is a competitor. Very, very difficult.

To get to Megan. I've been fortunate to get to coach such great athletes. Megan's focus this year was getting back to being pitching first. We've had a lot of adversity through this season, different players have gone down, Aaliyah Jordan, Kinsley. I can go on and on about how there's been so much adversity.

We put Megan back into the offensive lineup even though she didn't do a whole lot of hitting in fall. At all. She actually didn't hit in fall. So it was by nature that good talent is flexible. You figure out how you're going to get everybody to figure out how they can contribute. Megan

got into the lineup when things started getting a little depleted in our bench, so we went to it. Pitching is her focus. She knows that's why here. She's definitely a two-way player.

But we are in a position where that's why she didn't have a lot of ABs earlier, because I had other players, and her focus was there. She has come in through in some key critical situations. I'm not surprised. She's one of the strongest -- core, measurement, vertical. An elite athlete. I love how honest she is. But she's clutch at the end of the day.

To answer your question...

Q. Is there a series where this is when we started to hit --

KELLY INOUYE-PEREZ: When injuries. Injuries came into play, she kicked in. Aaliyah Jordan went down. We had thoughts about it. Then Kinsley Washington went down. Then Savy Pola went down, then Alyssa Garcia. If you want me to get literal, that's what happened. We started inserting her. I didn't have her in the offensive lineup because pitching was her focus.

Q. You pointed to Delanie's home run to try to get back on track, get some momentum going. Today, RBI to get you going also.

KELLY INOUYE-PEREZ: Huge. I mean, she's dangerous. Once again, there's so many great memories on this stage of just hitters that just thrive in big situations. I've been fortunate to just have a real in my head. We just graduated two of the best with Rachel Garcia and Bubba Nickels. The highlight reels are endless of them.

Lanie is going down as one of those hitters that has the ability to come through in critical moments. She is a tough out. She even owned it right when we got in, first and second, you know, she kind of got too big. That hasn't been her. Then you see her make an adjustment again and come back. That's just higher level hitting.

She's mature. She's committed. I love how the game is paying her back.

Q. The Bruin bubble seemed a little quiet yesterday. I think they turned on the noise today. Would you say that was a big difference maker for y'all?

KELLY INOUYE-PEREZ: I'm going to be honest. Our Bruin bubble is loyal. We did not give them a lot to be loud about yesterday. It was a tough day for the Bruin bubble, for all of us.

But there was a commitment to no matter what, you know, that's one thing -- I share this with the girls. We have a thing called Bruin Magic. Bruin Magic is real here. A big reason is because there's a belief. There's a belief that we can and we will.

We're fortunate enough to get such strong family support and fans, but also our alumni come back. They bleed into the girls. The girls know they're here. They actually got them fired up. The alumni got them fired up just by being here. There was a strong commitment from everyone that there was only one thing to be today, that was positive and loud. We felt them. We definitely felt them.

Q. Did you know Delanie was debuting the new equipment tonight? How does it feel to have such a sentimental thing for her on a big stage?

KELLY INOUYE-PEREZ: Yeah, it's a great story. A big part of it is, first of all, it's Easton. We have a former alum, Julie Burney, who is our rep for Easton. Then Jen Schroeder, who is also Bruin family. I commended her for doing such a great job of -- such a strong role model for females, for softball players, but mainly in that catching position. She is a rockstar when it comes to that.

She has the attention to detail. It was her idea when she called and said I want to do this for the catchers.

Combined with Julie, with Easton and Jen, they created this opportunity to have such a personal touch. Anyways, came to our hotel last night, I don't know what night, maybe the night before, they came to our hotel and presented it. We were all very emotional because there's meaning behind it.

Jen customizes things to make it fit better. But the personal touch just put everybody over the top. Awesome day. I love that you're covering it. It's a great story. Jen Schroeder, Julie Burney, Easton, but also the meaning behind what's written. There's personal stuff inside. There's things on her helmet, things on her shin guards. I'm a catcher, I'm so jealous. But it's very cool and something that means a lot.

Q. We saw Oklahoma did this the hard way last year, come all the way through the loser's bracket. How much momentum can you get from your performance tonight?

KELLY INOUYE-PEREZ: I can tell you, separate from anyone else, I've been there before. We've lost Game 1, and we've had to come through the loser's bracket to be able to get back to the championship game. We had to



beat Cat Osterman twice, which could seem like an impossible feat. We've done that before, to be able to get back to the championship game.

Clearly the format has changed now. But I'm going to go back to just the word of belief. We got to play the game better. We didn't play great softball yesterday. We own it. We got to show up and play the game one pitch at a time.

We have a strong belief we can, it's just more softball. That's what a whole season does. The girls are fit, strong, prepared. We're a little feisty right now. We got our back against the wall, so we're ready to play more ball.

Q. What does having this extra day do?

KELLY INOUYE-PEREZ: It was really interesting. Right after the World Series last year, we actually brought a lot of coaches together to be able to talk to the format. Especially after the two teams last year battled it out from the loser's bracket, then the weather, then the late. We all kind of came together, because it's been difficult. That was extreme what happened last year. We all got on a call and kind of threw out different ideas.

I credit the NOCA for coming together as an association, to come together with ideas, get everyone's say, come together with what we believe is best. Credit the NCAA for taking care of our sport like they do with baseball to give the opportunity to spread it out and let people recover.

We realized in that championship, nobody was starting their starters. It was last person standing. You should be able to be at your best at the end.

Grateful today, right now, that the format is that because this is one of the worst roads to take in the past, is to go Thursday, Friday, then still have to go through that grind. I'm grateful we were able to have a voice and do what's best. People work too hard to get here to this point to be able to have that type of a finish simply because you're exhausted.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you very much.

KELLY INOUYE-PEREZ: Thank you.

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