

# 2024 Women's College World Series

Sunday, June 2, 2024

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

**UCLA Bruins**

**Coach Kelly Inouye-Perez**

**Maya Brady**

**Megan Grant**

**Taylor Tinsley**

Postgame Press Conference



Stanford 3, UCLA 1

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by UCLA.

We'll start with an opening statement by coach.

**KELLY INOUE-PEREZ:** Just want to say, congratulate Stanford. They're tough. Although we got them in the regular season, that weekend was a turning point for us where we knew we battled.

But they're tough. NiJaree is tough. They showed up and executed tonight. I wish them well as they represent the last of the Pac.

I don't even know how to sum up in a short opening statement of just how proud I am of this team. I told them to keep it together (smiling). I'm just going to say this. I'm proud. Wow (tearing up). I've said this, I've never been so proud of a team. I've coached a long time. It was hard. This season was hard. Nobody expected us, I was telling the team, not even us, that we were going to get here.

Our coaches, our players, our staff, the support, the belief, the trust, the work to get us back here is something that I am proud of. I am proud. I'm more just emotional. I wasn't even emotional when I was talking to the team. I was matter of fact, I'm proud of you. You can cry all you want, I'm proud of you.

When I put it all together, this is the greatest year of coaching I've experienced. Man, building belief, building trust, building a team that could fight. We were right where we needed to be, and we ran out of time. But we were prepared.

I know that everyone knew at any moment this team could win a ballgame. I'm proud of my young pitching staff. I'm proud of Maya Brady. In February we looked at each other. It was like, Do you believe? We looked at each other with, Wow, is this really happening?

To be able to be here today and have this opportunity to be able to have a conference at the World Series, I really say thank you to your leadership. As a player, she's so much more than that. She goes down in history as literally the second most home runs in the history of UCLA. I've been there a long time. There's been amazing athletes there. But she's clearly a player, but her leadership is what she's going to be remembered for.

I built a relationship with her beyond the sport. I love you to death. I'm so proud of you. I can't wait to see how your leadership has bled into the Bruins that are coming back. You loved them, kicked them in the butt, but you showed up and you got us here.

Sorry that took so long. I can't sum it up in one sentence just how proud I am of my team.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the players.

**Q. Maya, what has it been like wearing the four letters across your chest?**

**MAYA BRADY:** Yeah, it's been -- I don't even know. Just a dream. I mean, this was my dream. I feel like as a little girl you always look at the program, the coaching staff, the players. You think that they're untouchable. Just to get the opportunity to wear this jersey, get my degree, be close to my family. My family at every game has just been perfect. I knew that's why I was coming to UCLA anyway. But it surpassed my expectations.

We never got to win, but trust me, I'm winning in life. You graduate from UCLA, got my master's, and I feel like just so blessed. I can't even put it into words.

Truly it's been a dream, so yeah.



**Q. Maya, can you put into words what it meant to hear what Kelly had to say?**

MAYA BRADY: Yeah, I mean, we have just such a special relationship. I play for an amazing coach. One thing about her is she's so quick to praise others. So we talk all the time. She's just very open with how she feels about me and my leadership. I can't thank her enough because in the hardest moments, it can be tough to have a coach that just knocks you down.

I think for us, we've built a great relationship, like she said. Little eight-year-old me is screaming that she even probably said my name. The fact she thinks about me like that is truly special.

**Q. Your first time on this stage. What do you take away from this experience?**

MEGAN GRANT: I mean, just learning from last year, to never, never take any moment for granted. I feel like coming here, that's exactly what I did. Just the extra deep breaths, just really soaking in every single moment, honestly playing every single time with a smile on my face.

TAYLOR TINSLEY: Yeah, it was really special to be here. I've been watching the World Series since I was really little with my dad every year. Just being able to, like, pitch, soak up the environment. There's a lot of people watching you.

But I honestly love it. That's why I wanted to be a pitcher in the first place, having everybody's eyes on me. It's just honestly the best.

KELLY INOUYE-PEREZ: That's a good answer. That's crazy (laughter).

**Q. This wasn't the outcome y'all wanted. Could you talk about what it means to be in the last game between two Pac-12 softball teams.**

MAYA BRADY: I think it's truly a great opportunity just to go down as part of the last game. They're a tough opponent, they're a great team. I think it was a battle all year facing them three times. Obviously was a battle tonight.

Obviously it's super sad because in the Pac, we're very proud of our conference, the conference of champions. Obviously to go up against your fellow Pac-12 team in the World Series, obviously one of us had to go home, but yeah.

TAYLOR TINSLEY: Yeah, what Maya said honestly

(smiling).

MEGAN GRANT: I would say it was bittersweet feeling.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, players. We'll continue with questions for coach.

**Q. Coming in, Maya had sky-high expectations. You could say she's met them. What does that speak to her character?**

KELLY INOUYE-PEREZ: You were talking about just there's types of players, players that can hit, pitch, run, all these things. There's players that separate themselves out with the ability to come through in big moments.

I know everybody could walk away saying we just wanted to see Maya do great things just in this tournament. What she did to get us here in those big, critical moments, will be remembered. This was a tough year.

So with that, to answer your question, Maya Brady is not just a great athlete and hitter, but she was a clutch hitter because she takes the responsibility to find a way to help the team win. Sometimes she wants it a little too much. As a result, the hard part for her is the whole country is not going to serve it up on a platter for Maya Brady to at this point to watch her what she does.

I put her in the leadoff spot because how she handles success, how she handles failure breeds confidence into the team.

She'll get out, come straight back up, even though she's burning inside, she'll come back and bleed right into her teammates. That is leadership.

She's a fierce ballplayer, but she's such a respected and loved leader on this team. She left her mark on the game. Everybody loved to watch her play because she's one swing away from adding to the numbers.

If you knew her, it's so much more than that. She just wants to find a way to help her team win. She stepped out of character from what she's been able to do in the first three to four years, the COVID year was off, and she was a leader. She had to be a leader for the younger ones. For the first time she was the old one, still had to find a way to compete on the field. That's harder than just playing softball.

I'm proud of her. She have left her mark. I'm going to stay in touch for her forever. I'm proud of her mother and how she raised her. More than that, I hope she continues to play because, man, it's fun watching her compete on that

stage.

**Q. You were chuckling at Taylor's answer. The way your pitchers performed...**

KELLY INOUYE-PEREZ: That's why I say we could hit. We knew we could hit. When you face a pitcher, tough pitching, it's always more difficult. That's just the challenge of the game, which is nothing new.

We knew without pitching, you're not going to be able to get to this World Series. That's why I am so proud. I got a chance to work with them this year. Just what they continue to do, got stronger through a season, it's rewarding as a coach, but I'm so proud for them as players.

I wasn't emotional in the meeting because I just look forward to the future. The experience they gained on this stage is real. They have a fire burning in their guts. They just want to continue to play.

I told the team, some of our leadership guys, mental guys, coaches, if we could get the mojo that our pitchers have, they're young, they don't know better, they just want to play, which I love. That took time to build up. There were a lot of tears this year, frustration. There was a lot of embarrassment because they weren't able to perform what they knew they were capable of.

Part of it is being a Bruin, part of it is the expectations, part is learning to hit pitches and stretch the zone. They did it. They did a great job throughout the year. They got stronger.

When Taylor needed a little bit of a break, KT stepped up. KT had a knee repair in the fall. She didn't pitch from October through right before we opened up the season. She was on a pitch count. I told her straight up, KT, we have a choice. You're either going to stay in the bullpen and ramp up. She pitched, but she had 40 pitches. You could either pitch those 40 in a game or pitch them in the bullpen.

She's like, Put me out there.

She was down by four in the first inning of the first game we played. The team is looking at me like, What is going on? She was like that through February, through the pre-season. For her to be able to gain momentum. When Taylor needed a little bit of a break, we went to ASU, and she was the only one I took. I didn't even take Taylor. I just took KT. She won all three games against ASU by herself. That kind of flipped her into she could for this team. When Taylor did come back, they became a very powerful duo.

Like I said, a lot of tears, injuries, frustration. I'm proud of how they performed. They pitched well last night against Oklahoma, who was obviously the team. They didn't stand down. They held them to four hits. They're going to remember that.

You know what, everybody else will remember that, too, that they had the capability. I said one game doesn't define them. What they did over the season to get us back here was real.

**Q. You said this was the greatest year or experience that you've had in coaching, which is a big statement. You also said throughout the season the theme this year was to level up. How was this team able to do that on and off the field?**

KELLY INOUYE-PEREZ: To answer your question, the goal of coaching, the goal of UCLA, we're so much more than softball. Wins and losses don't define us. It's easy when it's easy. We've had some great seasons where we win, everyone is an All-American. I've been fortunate to experience that. We love to coach and teach everybody what UCLA softball family is all about. That's even when it gets hard.

This team was challenged more than I've ever been challenged. We've had some tough years. The toughness was kind of almost within. We couldn't figure out how to play together. This was straight-up challenging. I lost three starters in weekend one. Our pitchers were down, hurt. We just lost a lot of players.

As we kept on dropping players, different people had to step up. The majority of the season was make a decision, thinks too hard and we quit, or we're going to figure out how we continue to level up.

We kept our eyes on the prize of our goal to get back, which didn't really seem possible. That's why I get emotional. When you think about the whole season, there's no way that we're sitting here talking about this with how we started.

I'm proud. It was rewarding because my coaches leveled up, my players leveled up. We hit rock bottom and we kept on going. We had to show up every day at practice and figure out what we were going to do.

The team got to a point where it was too hard to what do we have to do next. We built trust, momentum, we built the Bruin magic, which is a belief we can do anything. Just tonight here we go in the seventh inning. We're one pitch away from it happening again.

Great teams find a way to win. This team did it again. Everybody in the stadium was like, Oh, here we go, they're doing it again. That comes from a belief, a work ethic, comes from my coaching staff, mental performance guys. I'm surrounded and I'm fortunate because my goal is to teach them what UCLA softball is all about. We are UCLA softball and we find a way to win.

As these guys say, it's more than just this. I wish the teams the best of luck. We would have loved to have more opportunities to just get hot. In the bigger picture of things, I'm proud because they represent UCLA so well.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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