

2025 Women's College World Series

Saturday, May 31, 2025

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

UCLA Bruins

Coach Kelly Inouye Perez

Taylor Tinsley

Kaniya Bragg

Postgame Press Conference



Texas Tech - 3, UCLA - 1

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by UCLA head Coach Kelly Inouye-Perez and players Taylor Tinsley and Kaniya Bragg.

We'll start with an opening statement from Coach Inouye-Perez.

KELLY INOUE PEREZ: Hard-fought battle, and they played their game. I prepared our girls that they would do whatever it takes to be able to get a run on the board, but didn't prepare them for the opportunity to steal home. With that, gutsy. It worked.

But I'm proud of my team. I'm proud of how they fought. I'm proud of how they played. We did what we do, and the quality at-bats that we had, the ability to put balls in play, and great teams put themselves in a position to win, and we were one swing away from winning that ballgame again.

In the experience game, I have a freshman taking a great pitcher deep. I have a sophomore getting a hit and a freshman getting a hit, just down the line, the experience gained is awesome.

The bottom line is we're not done yet. Now we just have more time to be able to play more games and get really hot. I'm excited. We can't wait to get back out there.

Q. You guys talk a lot about having each other's backs. You had Kaniya hit the home run after Texas Tech stole home, and you had Savannah get the double play after Taylor hit a batter. How is that trust on the team just going to carry you guys through the tournament as you head into the losers bracket.

TAYLOR TINSLEY: I think we all -- we definitely take pride in having each other's backs. Just focusing on our love for the game and our love for each other. I know this loss sucks, but I'm really excited to get back out on the field with my girls. We're all super excited to keep on playing ball with each other.

Yeah, just doing it for each other and doing it for the love of the game.

KANIYA BRAGG: I think just having each other's backs on defense and offense, if someone makes an error, we know the next one is going to be put out by anyone on the field and on offense.

Q. Kaniya, just talk about what you saw in that pitch to be able to hit one out against one of the best pitchers, and now tomorrow going against another good pitcher in Karlyn Pickens and how much of a confidence booster it is for you knowing what you did tonight.

KANIYA BRAGG: I think we prepared really well. We watched a lot of film and had a really good game plan. Just being able to stick to my plan and trust the process is what I was kind of going for.

Q. Taylor, you guys are going to have to play a lot of games to go through the losers bracket. How good is it knowing the trust you have in your staff and the three of you have been really close all year long?

TAYLOR TINSLEY: Yeah, it's been a lot of fun, just getting to play with this staff. Me, KT, Fish, and Jada, we're all going to have each other's backs no matter what. We're super excited to get back out on the field tomorrow and pass the ball and somebody's going to get it done tomorrow.

It's really nice just knowing we have a deep staff.

Q. Kaniya, no one has gone to the Women's College World Series more than UCLA softball, but for you it's your first as a freshman. The emotions of being able



to hit that home run and know that your family got that home run ball, can you walk me through that?

KANIYA BRAGG: It's honestly an honor just to be a part of this team and just being able to play with all these amazing players and also being able to play against them. Just like having the confidence in myself and knowing that somebody else is going to have my back if I don't have my own just gives me the confidence to like be able to know that I can do it, and if I don't, somebody else will.

Q. Just wanted to ask both of you how you were able to -- obviously the steal, like Coach said, gutsy, obviously wasn't expecting it. But to get that home run, how clutch was that kind of to get some momentum back? How are you guys able to do that after such a stunning play like that?

KANIYA BRAGG: It was really unexpected, but we kind of just flushed it down and forget about it. So that way we can kind of find a way to get the momentum back, and we know that whatever is put in front of us, we can do something to get it back.

TAYLOR TINSLEY: I feel like the big thing with this team is we have a really short-term memory. Each play is kind of like in the past. This game is already as old as dirt for us, so we're just ready to get back out there.

Q. Everyone is good here, but to take the task of going from Canady to Pickens, how much does it help that you have seen Karlyn already this season as well with the quick turnaround?

KELLY INOUE PEREZ: I think a lot. I think we had a great opportunity -- it was a lot earlier in the season, but knocked her out of the game. So there's experience there.

Like you said, every team here, they're here to compete. It's balls and strikes, different speeds, different zones. At the end of the day, we're going to set a game plan and do what we do. I have great confidence in our ability to have a plan and adjust. We've got to find a way to win, but the object of the game is to outscore the opponent no matter who's on the mound. That's our goal, and I have a strong belief.

Q. As a coach yourself, do you -- I assume you have to almost respect the steal and just, you know, how that shifted momentum a little. You guys did obviously tie the game, but the impact it had for the rest of the game.

KELLY INOUE PEREZ: Gutsy call, and it worked.

Q. Kelly, your veterans talk a lot about the youth on this team and bringing them along. For that to show up in a game like this and as you talk about wanting to get hot and that there is still games to be played here, does that affirm sort of the culture you have?

KELLY INOUE PEREZ: Absolutely. I think there's one thing to be a veteran and to be able to have a lot of experience on this stage. The best part about the youth on this team is they're just excited to play. There's energy in the dugout. It's a game of softball. It's a big stage.

The memories that they're going to be able to create and the experience, whether you succeed or fail, that's our sport, but the opportunity that they have -- once again, they've been striving for this, and it's a big reason why they came to UCLA is to have this opportunity on this stage.

It's a game. We go back, and we figure out what we could have done better and also hold on to what we did well. Like I said, the ability, again, right there at the end, we had the ability to win that ballgame. That's something that breeds great confidence in the program.

For the youth, it's fun being able to see just how simple it is. I told Kaniya, she was right there behind Megan earlier in the season and came up with some big hits and kind of hit a little bit of a slide. We moved her down, and I stayed with her and said, you're going to come through in the biggest of moments. It's going to be so epic.

I don't know if I would have predicted it would be against -- Kaniya versus -- NiJa -- wow, short-term memory. That's how it works. I'm so proud of her. She stayed committed to the process. She shows up every day. She's got a beautiful smile, and she's a threat. She can take anyone deep. She's a very big power hitter.

But the experience gained to me is gold. I can't wait for her to get back out there. She's going to have a great career. But the freshmen that are playing, it's awesome. It's awesome for us, and it's a big part of our program. Freshmen come in and play, they get stronger and get more experience. It's what's going to allow them to create really great memories as a Bruin.

Q. I'm sure your focus is on tomorrow and Tennessee, but I have to ask, have you noticed the evolution or the ramping up of the props in your dugout over the last few days?

KELLY INOUE PEREZ: I'll be honest with you, they do what they do. I'm in the dugout, and the Bruin bubble is real, and there's tradition, and there's energy and there's buy-in and all those big words. Sometimes they'll throw me



into it, and I'm all in, I'll buy in. But at the end of the day, no, I'm not taping stuff up or doing whatever they're doing, to answer your question.

I let them be them. A big part of it is the energy and the belief and the excitement. This is a fun tournament. It's not about you have to win and you have to clutch up. Yes, we know that, it's captain obvious. Your ability to have fun and enjoy this. You're here. You're celebrating playing on the biggest stage, and they've earned the right to be here. So I let them be them.

That's my goal is getting the team to settle in to play their game. With the youth, it's important to keep them loose and not get caught up in what just happened, what just happened, and we kind of get to the next pitch. When you see that, that gives me great confidence as a coach that we're going to settle in and play our game.

Q. You've had these young pieces in this tournament back against the wall. How big is that experience from supers kind of rolling into tomorrow?

KELLY INOUE PEREZ: I think it's -- yes, a lot of experience. I feel like, whether you're ahead or behind, every inning you want to be able to do your best to be able to score runs. In this tournament, losers bracket, winners bracket, every game is a big game. Every bat is a big at-bat. Your ability to have short-term memory is important. Your ability to adjust knowing the game is going to come back around, it's reality.

What I've taught them is to be able to understand the game is going to happen, but our ability to understand you're going to get more opportunities no matter what. If we worry about, oh, my gosh, if we lose, we're out. We don't live -- I say this very, very seriously. We can only live in one time zone. Past, future, I want them to be present. I want them to enjoy competing. Tomorrow, whoever we play.

I said that even before we came. I don't even look at the bracket. At the end of the day, every team is a new team coming here to postseason. Somebody asked about February. That was February. We're all different teams at this point.

But to answer your question, we are playing for the opportunity that every pitch matters, and we're going to play down to our last pitch. We want to be the last team standing. We're going to play a lot more games. I think that could be a great thing for us to get hot. I've got a pitching staff that can go deep, and I've got a lot of youth that loves to play, and they're gaining more experience understanding how fun this is with a big crowd, big

moments, big opportunities.

Once again, I want them to create more memories, and we're going to have a longer path to do that.

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