

2026 Women's College World Series

Friday, May 29, 2026

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA

UCLA Bruins

Coach Kelly Inouye-Perez

Megan Grant

Aleena Garcia

Soo-Jin Berry

Postgame Press Conference



UCLA 11, Arkansas 0

THE MODERATOR: We are joined by UCLA. We'll start with an opening statement from Coach.

KELLY INOUEY-PEREZ: First I'd like to congratulate Arkansas. They had a phenomenal year. With that, I'm going to say this, thank God it's double elimination. We got an opportunity to get another chance to get out here and play our game. That's all we talked about. We're a contagious hitting team. When they're loose and have discipline at the plate, great things can happen. I'm very proud that UCLA softball showed up tonight.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for the players.

Q. Megan, how did the 91st feel there?

Megan Grant: Like a dream honestly. I'm just incredibly honored. Stacey Nuveman was a powerhouse when she played. To be able to say my name is next to hers, I'm truly grateful for it.

Q. Your coach said it can be contagious to begin hitting the way you did. What did it feel like in the dugout?

SOO-JIN BERRY: Yeah, I think it feels real awesome to know our entire team has trust in us. I think going up to bat when you have all these players backing you up, I don't know, it's awesome to feel so supported.

ALEENA GARCIA: Yeah, we always say nine on one. In our dugout it's all of us against them. Coach I always preaches that, we're a contagious team. We know if I don't

do it, the next person well. We're always in the dugout working together.

MEGAN GRANT: I want to shout out Aleena because she started it for us tonight.

Just sticking to our game plan. We always say loosen the pickle jar, too. That goes on to what Aleena said. It's not just any one person. It could be all of us. Today was Aleena.

So proud of you. Honestly, I just wanted to say that.

Q. When Grant hit the home run, what were your reactions?

ALEENA GARCIA: When Megan hits home runs, I back up. Megan is different. I mean, when she hits home runs, oh, my gosh, her energy. She's a big energy starter for us. Megan has the biggest energy. She's the biggest killer up to bat. She just starts a lot of things for us. Really proud of her every time I see her step on home plate.

SOO-JIN BERRY: I'd say obviously she's a beast. You do have to steer clear of her. It's so awesome to be a part of a team where you have so many great people. Then Megan, whoa, she murders the ball every time she hits it.

It's awesome to see her up close. I don't know, I love it.

Q. Soo-Jin, I think a lot of your home runs have come since the Big Ten tournament. What have you been seeing, why do you think it's clicked in this back half?

SOO-JIN BERRY: I think I've just been trusting my process, like a lot more than I was before. I feel like before I was really, like, anxious and just trying to force something to happen.

After I, like, let loose and leaned a little bit more on my teammates to just trust me, I think that kind of helped me to just relax and just do what I do.

Q. Aleena, seeing Kaniya out there today, what has her fight said to you?

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ALEENA GARCIA: Yeah, a lot. Every time after she makes a play or every time she gets on base, or even a quality at-bat, I always give her a hug and tell her I'm so proud of you, just to remind her. I know what it was like last year to go through an injury, and I know how hard it can be.

I just put myself in her shoes and just remind her. Because I know it can be hard. And being on the biggest stage, it can be even harder. So just reminding her how proud of her I am and how happy I am to see what she's doing.

Q. Megan, do you appreciate your teammates pointing to home plate when you're coming around third base?

Megan Grant: I love this question (laughter).

Yes, I'm truly grateful. Like they were saying, I'm kind of a train wreck when I hit a home run for some reason, especially at the World Series, especially last year. Shout-out Appendix G. Sorry for any profane things that I said probably today. I'm so sorry for that.

I black out a little bit. I'm just really glad that my teammates are able to guide me to the direction I need to step on. No more stomps at home plate. After last year, I was like that will never happen again. The longest 15 minutes of my life. I did that to myself. But yeah, I'm truly grateful for them.

THE MODERATOR: Players, thank you. We'll continue with questions for Coach.

Q. You have obviously flashed big-time power all year. What did that second inning show about what kind of threat you can be?

KELLY INOUYE-PEREZ: A lot. I think with that, the experience we say here at the World Series is priceless. It's tough. It's tough getting out here in front of a big crowd, being on a big stage. You've been waiting for it your whole life. I have a lot of young Bruins that are experiencing it for the first time. It's a big strength of our program that freshmen come in and play.

Everybody got sped up a little bit yesterday. We made a commitment to be able to come in and slow the game down, stick to our training of having discipline at the plate so you can get a good cut on a pitch.

They have simplified it to that point, which is why the home runs have come, and I've reminded them of that. We're not trying to hit home runs, we're trying to have quality at-bats. And as Coach Lisa always tells all of them, if you swing at

strikes, you increase your chances of getting a good hit and squaring a ball up greatly. Sounds sarcastic, but Lisa is not sarcastic. She's very direct with what the game plan is.

Very proud to be able to see them. I think that's one of the best things as a coach to be able to see your team settle in. I always say that. The team that settles in gives themselves the best chance to win.

Day two we definitely were ourselves. That rally was what we do. Hitting is contagious. It's awesome to see a redshirt freshman that got to be in the dugout and watch and feel it last year, to be able to be that firestarter. And then you see it going. Because I was telling them yesterday Rylee hit that home run, and then you saw Megan come to bat, Jordan come to bat, and it changed the whole energy. We are contagious, and that's when we're at our best.

Q. You faced Arkansas last year. How much, if any, did you and staff look at that game?

KELLY INOUYE-PEREZ: I looked at that game. But them, that was so long ago, they have new players, they picked up some transfers. With that, that's my job, is to be able to kind of come up with a game plan with them to be able to figure out how we're going to approach them now. Even last year their hitters are different than what they are now.

I did. But for us, we really focus on even the present or even just what's happening in the last two or three weeks to be able to kind of set up a game plan.

Q. The fact that the offense came out and did that so early, how does that help Taylor so much?

KELLY INOUYE-PEREZ: Huge. I think everything. We know that -- it's funny, in the beginning of the year I always set out all these balls, literally mark the entire journey of every game we're going to play to show them. I get to the end and say you can take the short path, there's this many balls, or the longer path. Bottom line, and the more games you can play, it could be a good thing. We never want to be here, but it could be a good thing.

We knew that, that knowing we're going to have a longer road, with the goal being the last team standing, we have to conserve our energy. So that was huge.

For Taylor to be able to come in and pound the strike zone, limit her pitch count, all of it was talked about on how we are going to be able to be our best. Great to have an off day tomorrow, but it was huge for them to be able to shorten that game today.

Q. We talked in L.A. about how in Clearwater this team didn't know who they were. They got to know each other. We saw an example of that. When did that click during the season? That clearly showed tonight, helped you in this game.

KELLY INOUE-PEREZ: So funny that you say that because today in pregame -- we journal every day. A big part of what I believe is the journey of an athlete is not always what the coaches say, but the conversations they have with themselves. I have them journal every day.

I told them to go back to February 15th today. They went back to February 15th, which was the day after Saturday where we lost both those ball games. I said I want you to read. We have a saying, we want to level up. The saying is don't go back to a level that you've already leveled up from. They've been through this before.

With it, the good news is they haven't had a lot, but their ability to respond is to me is the biggest part of collegiate athletics. Things are going to happen, but how you respond is ultimately your defining moment.

We did that. I had them read it. We had a saying with all arrows pointing in the same direction, we were committed and won the game on Sunday after those two losses.

Credit them because the experience gained is something that is needed here at the season. I like challenges. I wouldn't necessarily say I like failure, but I like challenges. It gives them that strength that we call Bruin armor.

They build it, they build it, they build it so when they get to this point they're a little more prepared to figure out how they're going to respond. They've got to make a choice.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

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