

# 2018 Women's College World Series

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Oklahoma City, Oklahoma



## Kelly Inouye-Perez

## Rachel Garcia

## Kylee Perez

UCLA Bruins

UCLA - 7, Florida State - 4

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Coach Inouye-Perez and student-athletes Kylee Perez and Rachel Garcia.

Coach, in the sixth inning we were probably looking at a possible frustrating loss for you. And your girls stuck with it and came in and came up with some good at-bats and Kylee delivered the big home run. What does that tell us about your team?

COACH INOUEY-PEREZ: What I told them, it's exactly who I know they are. And I challenged them to be able to say the object is to see how quickly they could settle into their game. You got to see that.

I can tell you this, I tell them a lot: It's not what happens; it's what you do next. We have to tighten things up, straight up. We gave away some runs. And Rachel pitched a great game. But across the board we need to tighten things up. But we don't focus on that.

We have a little saying, things we focus on being able to be in the moment. And they knew. They knew they could rally back. They have each other's backs. There's a strong belief.

I think Kylee does an outstanding job of just keeping the team very loose and being able to back it up and come up with that big three-run home run. But if you felt the energy in the dugout, there was never any doubt. And we had time.

I'm so proud of their ability to have each other's backs. And for Rachel to be able to close it out, it's icing on the cake. I'll take it tonight.

What I thought is I hope my team shows up, and they did. And I'm proud of them for that.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach and the

student-athletes.

**Q. Kylee, can you take us through the at-bat and the swing of emotions from before and after.**

KYLEE PEREZ: Yes. So I had a few players come up to me, basically tell me: She's right there, put your best cut on it.

And being a senior, I've been here for the past three years. So, I mean, I'm not going down looking. I'm not going down without a bang. I was doing my best, honestly, I was going for it. I don't do that much. I'm more trying just to get base hits. I was going for it.

But, yeah, I was just trying to put a big swing on the ball and trying to have her (Rachel Garcia) back.

**Q. Kylee, that home run was also your 300th career hit. What does it mean to you? You're the third person in UCLA program history to have 300 hits.**

KYLEE PEREZ: Yeah, I mean, it's pretty awesome. But I think what means more to me is that I could do it and have their back and get the win. So I'd take that any day.

**Q. Rachel, what was the swing of emotions like for you, grinding through the game; you were pitching well, but you were behind and then things turned very quickly, what did that feel like?**

RACHEL GARCIA: I couldn't have done it without my teammates behind me, being able to turn around and always make eye contact with, at least, especially Ky, her telling me to take a deep breath before each pitch, that's what got me focused and made sure I was staying in the zone.

**Q. What does it feel like out there? It was obviously a hot, humid night. What was it like enduring through that and going the whole game?**

RACHEL GARCIA: It's great. This weather makes my body feel great, actually.

**Q. Coach, what is it about this team that just seems to find the one inning each game where they just kick it to a whole 'nother level?**

COACH INOUEY-PEREZ: I told them, I believe they're contagious. We've been like that this year. But once again, it comes from their ability to slow the game down. And they're committed to being the best

athletes themselves for the team. And I think that's the difference. Because if everybody tries to take it on individually, that becomes big: Now I've got to get a hit. You actually saw some of the at-bats earlier in the game.

I talked to Aaliyah Jordan, who has been a consistent force all year and it's her first time on the College World Series stage and she was swinging big. And she came back. And we talked about that, your ability, it's not you, those swings are not you. I get it, though, hello. Welcome to the World Series and now look at the field. It's softball.

I told them all it comes back around. There's no failure. Just opportunities. Kylee got up there. And she loves the stage. She's done it for us all year. But she loves the stage. And it's awesome to be able to see her be just Kylee Perez.

And it's so true: She doesn't do that often. In fact, that at-bat before, you should have heard what. She said we're down by four, you want me to drop a bunt and move them? No, Kylee, we're not giving up any outs. I want you to swing it.

But she's so committed to doing whatever she can to help move this team forward. That's what defines, which is why she's the leader of this group. She can slow them down. They all say when she's smiling and when she's big, she's going to go down as one of those Bruins. It's not just about her play; it's how she impacts others. That's why. Because there's the belief they have each other's backs. They play for each other. And they've been committed to that from the start of the season before it even started.

**Q. The ball that fell down the left field line, what did you see on that play and did Kinsley take that hard?**

COACH INOUE-PEREZ: I saw a really high fly ball, that's what I saw. And Kinsley Washington, I give her a lot of credit. I told her there's no way she's going to ever fail out there, because she hasn't been out there all year.

Aaliyah Jordan is not out in the outfield for us here in the last fourth of the season, less than that.

Kinsley hasn't had a lot of experience. She's a shortstop by nature who transitioned to a first baseman. And has been our first baseman all year. And I just put her in left. If anything, I should have had her three steps deeper. But that ball was high. And she straightened it, played it. That was out number three. They shouldn't have scored the three runs, but it happened.

I think the most important thing that I told her is not just her at-bat, it's going to come back around. She flipped her at-bat right there because she could have dumped it, but this team had her back. And that for a freshman, that could have been just the end of it right there. That's tough.

Rachel got herself out of that situation. And it didn't happen. But what the team did, you should have seen them, they were loose. But they had each other's backs. And that's what it takes at this tournament.

Things are going to happen. I wish we could say that every championship that I've been a part of at UCLA has been perfect. And I can tell you straight up it hasn't.

But what makes UCLA so great is our ability to be able to bounce back and be resilient. When things don't go well, if plan A doesn't happen, plan B kicks into place. And you have to have experience in that. I'll be straight up with you, we've been ugly sometimes.

But our ability to bounce back is something that is going to allow us to keep moving forward every day. Tonight was a big W. Credit to Florida State. They have a great pitching staff. Their coaches, I have a lot of respect for, and they swing it big. But we threw more punches and we got the final punch tonight. And I'm proud of our team for that.

**Q. Looking ahead, you have Florida next. How do you approach this next game? Do you even -- have you even had time to think about it?**

COACH INOUE-PEREZ: I can't wait to play Florida. I can't wait to play Florida. Because it's about my team. It's not about who we're playing. I have a lot of respect for every team here. Everybody's found a way to get here.

But I can't wait to play them. They're a great team. Anytime -- Coach Wooden said competitive excellence is, you want to take the hardest path because then it really challenges bringing your best to the field. And that's what I look forward to. I look forward to a good battle.

They're going to throw punches. We're going to throw punches. But I'm really excited about that. That's what we're here for. But it's really not about who we play. I have a strong belief that if we play our game, then great things can happen. So I look forward to it. I look forward to being in the winner's bracket and getting after a game tomorrow night.

**Q. Rachel, given your workload and your conditions tonight, do you feel like you'll be ready**

**to go again tomorrow?**

RACHEL GARCIA: I think if I treat my body the way I should and be prepared for tomorrow, yeah.

after it and get ready for Game 2 tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

**Q. Rachel, over the course of this whole season, what have you enjoyed about having those two sisters behind you and just seeing them interact on the field together?**

RACHEL GARCIA: Everything, I mean, when I see them having a good time and relaxing and throwing dirt at each other like I saw today, it keeps me in the game as well. Keeps it fun for me.

KYLEE PEREZ: I'd throw it at you but I have to keep you a little more focused (laughter).

**Q. Coach, when Florida State made that pitching change went from King to Hanson, what went through your mind and how did your game plan change for that?**

COACH INOUYE-PEREZ: We planned for both pitchers. I credit -- I'm biased. What I love about our team, we adjust to pitching very, very well. And it doesn't always -- it's not an easy thing to do. But if you heard how they talk, we planned for both. I can tell you the third pitcher I didn't know anything about.

But the first two we had planned for. So they kind of just huddle up and start talking the game. I'm proud of them because they're high-level hitters. When they get emotional, they can be like anyone else. When they're high level, they can make adjustments.

We had plans for her and we were ready for her. And I think, with that being said, once again credit Florida State. Both those pitchers are great pitchers. But I'm proud of our hitters' ability to make adjustments in that situation. That was the big one.

**Q. We talked all day long about the winners and winning that first game and how important that is for your push for a championship. What do you think it means for your team to win this first game?**

COACH INOUYE-PEREZ: I'm proud of this team because we're here on a mission and taking that path of being in the winner's bracket is big. We didn't get an opportunity to be in the winner's bracket last year, and it made for a longer path.

So this is obviously the ideal path for us to be able to stay in it. Also we had the luxury of being able to play at night, which I think is a good thing for us, to be able to have that opportunity.

Game 1 is a big one in playoffs in every tournament. So I'm proud of the girls and I said tonight we celebrate. They earned it. And then we're going to get