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SUMMER 2021

A Run to

REMEMBER

From the First Four to the Final Four

THE OLYMPIC EXPERIENCE

*Bruin coaches share their
thoughts ahead of this
Summer's Tokyo Games*

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A LIFETIME BOND

ERIC KARROS & sons forge a family
connection with the Bruins

PLUS:

A MAJOR VICTORY

*Featuring Bruin alum and
two-time All-American women's
golf player Patty Tavatanakit*

UCLA MEN'S WATER POLO

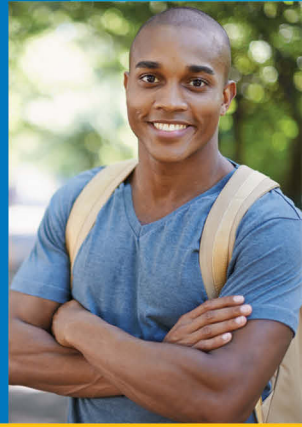
*The Bruins capture their 12th
NCAA Championship*



Johnny Juzang

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UCLA Health

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Bruin coaches share their thoughts ahead of this Summer's Tokyo Games.

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A MAJOR VICTORY

*LPGA major champion at the tender age of 21. It has a nice ring to it. Bruin alum and two-time All-American **PATTY TAVATANAKIT** won for the first time in her LPGA career, and did so in grand style, winning the first major of the 2021 season, the ANA Inspiration, in wire-to-wire fashion.*

Tavatanakit, who turned pro after the 2019 season following seven collegiate victories as a Bruin, won three times on the Symetra Tour in '19 to win Rookie of the Year honors to earn LPGA Tour status for the 2020 season. (Photo: Kelvin Kuo-USA TODAY Sports)



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CHAMPIONS AGAIN

*The No. 3 **UCLA MEN'S WATER POLO TEAM** captured its 12th NCAA Championship on March 21 at the Uytengsu Aquatics Center, posting a thrilling 7-6 win over crosstown rival and host No. 4 USC. The Bruins advanced to the title match after posting a narrow 11-10 upset of No. 1 Stanford in the semifinals. The win marked the 119th NCAA Championship for the UCLA Athletic Department. Adam Wright has now guided UCLA to four NCAA titles in the role of head coach. He also won two as a player and one as an assistant coach. (Photos: Eric Hurd)*



UCLA FOOTBALL 2021 SCHEDULE

H 8.28 HAWAII

LSU 9.4 LSU

F 9.18 FRESNO STATE

S 9.25 AT STANFORD

A 10.2 ARIZONA STATE

A 10.9 AT ARIZONA

W 10.16 AT WASHINGTON

O 10.23 OREGON

U 10.30 AT UTAH

CO 11.13 COLORADO

SC 11.20 AT USC

Cal 11.27 CAL

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LEADERS OF THE PAC

Both the **UCLA WOMEN'S TENNIS** and **WOMEN'S SOCCER** teams managed to take home Pac-12 titles within days of each other in early April. Playing in the Bay Area on April 9, the women's soccer team (bottom) downed Cal, 3-1 to lock up the conference crown outright. UCLA ended the season with a 9-1-1 mark in league play. (Photo: Courtesy Stanford Athletics)

The women's tennis team (top) claimed its second-ever Pac-12 title on April 10, also beating Cal. It marks the first time that the Bruins have taken sole possession of the title, as UCLA shared the championship with Stanford in 2008. UCLA finished the Pac-12 season with a perfect 10-0 record. (Photo: Eric Hurd)

CALLING CAPTAIN PEDRO!

UCLA MEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM ZOOMS WITH PEDRO LOPEZ, WHOSE BOUT WITH LEUKEMIA IS PROVING HIM TO BE A TRUE SUPERHERO.



by CHAYIL CHAMPION

The UCLA Men's Basketball team continued to find success on the court as they battle through the NCAA Championship tournament. Before March Madness began, though, a few members of the team made time to virtually welcome their new Kid Captain, Pedro Lopez, an 8-year-old hero who has been fighting a battle of his own.

Pedro was diagnosed with T-cell acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) in 2018. Despite the challenges Pedro has faced over the past three years, he didn't let it show on his Zoom visit with the team.

He laughed playfully as he sat next to his two younger brothers while waiting for Jaime Jaquez Jr., the Bruins shooting guard, to join the virtual chat.

"Pedro loves superheroes. Katie (Kolbeck), Pedro's Child Life Specialist, knew that. She told Pedro he was a superhero using medicine called chemo to fight bad cells in his body," said Vilma Curiel, Pedro's mother.

Superheroes proved to be the conversation starter for Pedro when Jaquez Jr. joined the Zoom visit. "My favorite superhero is The Flash!" Pedro exclaimed after the Bruins star asked him who was at the top of the list.

After a few minutes getting acquainted with Pedro, Jaquez Jr. led his new friend and his family on a virtual tour of the UCLA athletic facility. Once inside the gym, Pedro was introduced to Cody Riley and Kenneth Nwuba, two other members of the team who were stretching and practicing.

In different times, as Kid Captain, Pedro would have been able to visit

the facility in person and attend a basketball game. Instead, due to COVID-19 restrictions, a cardboard image of Pedro was placed in the stands during UCLA's March 6 game against Arizona State.

The pandemic has made life tougher on Pedro and his family. COVID-19 has limited Pedro's mobility — he only leaves the house to attend treatment, to limit potential exposure to the virus.

"It's been a very tough and long journey," said Curiel. "It's just different. Because of the pandemic, it's safer to stay home. Being that Pedro is still in treatment and having to worry that he's at high risk with COVID is very stressful."

That has compounded the stress of Pedro's diagnosis. "The whole year of 2018 was very hard for us because we didn't know about leukemia," Curiel said. "We didn't know about the treatments. Everything was new to us."

Curiel attributes the extraordinary care of UCLA Health's medical staff for why Pedro's condition has improved. "Pedro's doctor, Dr. William May, is great," she said. "He's always answering my questions, and he's so good with Pedro."

Pedro has been undergoing treatment since his diagnosis at age 5. He and his Mom are counting the days until he's finally done.

"He's almost finished with treatment. He should be done by the end of May," Curiel said. "That's very exciting for us all. Pedro's journey wasn't just tough on him, but it's been tough on us all, his two little brothers and me."

Pedro's condition forced Curiel to become a stay-at-home parent, but seeing her son's perseverance through it all, she says, has allowed her to stay positive.



THE LOPEZ FAMILY had front row cardboard cutouts in Pauley Pavilion presented by Wescom for the UCLA Basketball games.

UCLA MEN'S BASKETBALL surprised Pedro Lopez with a signed jersey and basketball.

"He's only 8 years old, and it surprises me how kids his age can be so strong after everything they've been through," she said. "Pedro is playful and joyful, but there are days when he gets moody. Sometimes he just needs a hug."

When asked if she wanted her son to be a Kid Captain for the UCLA Men's Basketball team, Curiel said she couldn't say no. It was something Pedro needed, and it made Curiel even more grateful she chose UCLA Health as his place of care.

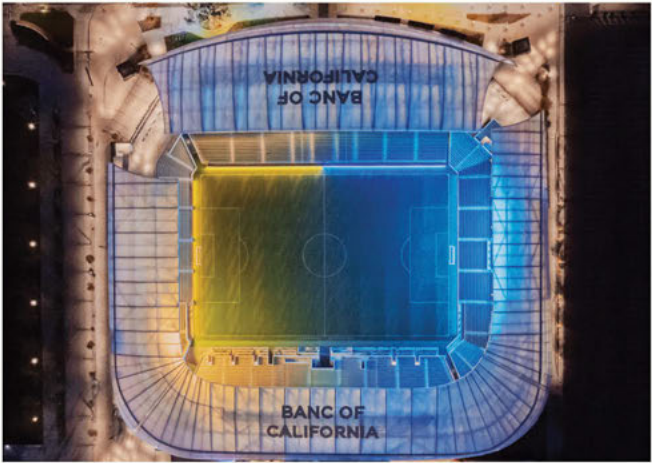
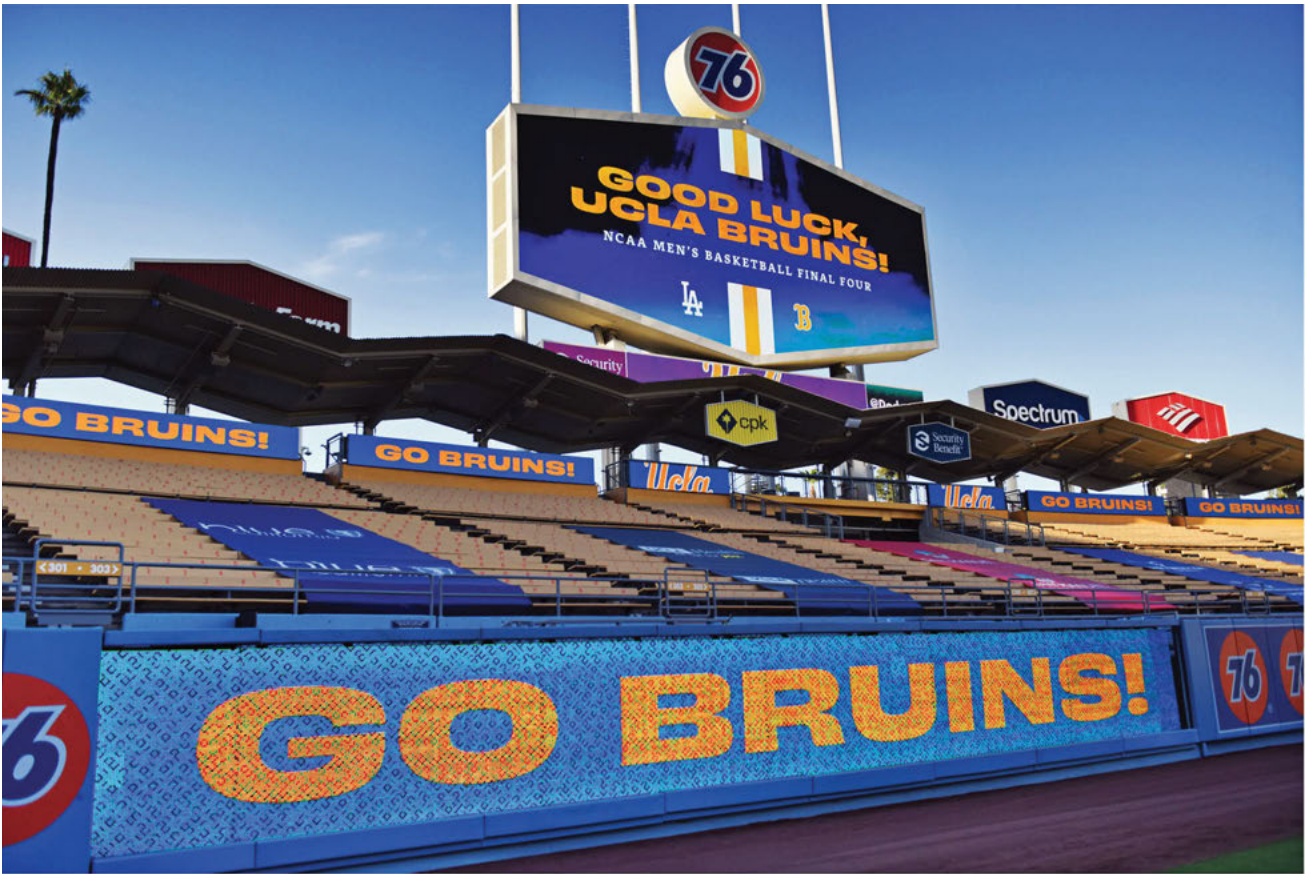
"It was fun, and the guys were cool," said a smiling Pedro as he spoke shyly about his virtual experience.

"We're glad we're at UCLA," said Curiel. "We could have gone to any other hospital, but we chose UCLA and we've had a really great experience with everybody. The doctors and nurses at both hospitals, Ronald Reagan and Santa Monica, were great. They treat us like family."

As Pedro continues to power forward toward the end of his treatment, Curiel sings praises for her son's super team of Child Life Specialists that have helped him along the way.

"Pedro's had many visits to the hospital and sometimes had to stay many days. Thanks to Child Life, our stay wasn't boring, and Pedro didn't have a difficult time in the hospital even when he didn't feel good."







LIGHT UP L.A.

*With support from the Mayor's Office, several prominent sports venues and landmarks throughout the **LOS ANGELES** area got in on the fun during UCLA's thrilling run in the NCAA Tournament, adopting Blue & Gold themes for the Bruins' Final Four game against Gonzaga on April 3.*

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A RUN TO REMEMBER

From the First Four to the Final Four



MARCH
18

**UCLA DEFEATS
MICHIGAN STATE
IN OVERTIME, 86-80,
IN THE FIRST FOUR**

at Purdue's Mackey Arena

UCLA trailed Michigan State, 77-72, with under 1:20 to play in regulation. Jaime Jaquez Jr. scored a career-high 27 points and played all 45 minutes in the overtime win.

"IT'S JUST A BIG STAGE. AS A KID, EVERYONE DREAMS ABOUT PLAYING IN THIS TOURNAMENT. THIS IS MARCH MADNESS ... YOU CAN FEEL THE MADNESS WHEN YOU'RE IN THE GYM ... THE ENERGY WAS THERE. IT WAS LIVE. WE WERE PLAYING IN JOHN WOODEN'S HOME COURT. THAT DEFINITELY MEANT SOMETHING TO US, TO COME IN HERE AND GET THE WIN FOR HIM. BUT THIS IS THE GREATEST TIME OF YEAR FOR A COLLEGE BASKETBALL PLAYER."

- JAIME JAQUEZ JR.



MARCH
20

**UCLA TAKES DOWN
BYU, 73-62**

at Butler's Hinkle Fieldhouse

Johnny Juzang scored 19 of his team-leading 27 points in the first half ... Juzang made 8 of 11 shots in the first half (and 3 of 4 attempts from 3-point range).

"TREMENDOUS EFFORT BY OUR PLAYERS TONIGHT. IT'S NOT EASY TO DEFEND BYU. IT'S ACTUALLY EXTREMELY HARD ... THE WAY THEY SHOOT THE BALL, PASS THE BALL AND SPACE YOU. TOOK EVERYTHING OUR GUYS HAD ON THE DEFENSIVE END TONIGHT. THAT'S WHERE OUR FOCUS WAS ... I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW HARD THAT WAS FOR OUR GUYS AND HOW PROUD I AM OF HOW HARD THEY PLAYED. PLAYED WITH A LOT OF PRIDE."

- COACH CRONIN



MARCH
22

**UCLA CRUISES PAST
ABILENE CHRISTIAN, 67-47**

at Bankers Life Fieldhouse (Indianapolis)

Johnny Juzang scored a team-leading 17 points ... Cody Riley finished with 12 points and 12 rebounds.





MARCH
23

The team headed to the nearby Indianapolis Zoo, marking the first true opportunity to spend some time outdoors since entering Indianapolis on March 16. Under cloudy skies, players and coaches toured various wildlife exhibits and outdoor pavilions.



MARCH
28

UCLA DEFEATS ALABAMA, 88-78, IN OVERTIME IN THE SWEET 16

at Butler's Hinkle Fieldhouse

Jaime Jaquez Jr. and Jules Bernard each scored 17 points in the overtime victory ... UCLA outscored Alabama by a 23-13 margin in the five-minute overtime session.

"THESE GUYS HAVE BEEN RESILIENT ALL YEAR ... THERE WERE MANY TIMES WE COULD HAVE PACKED IT IN. BUT I TOLD THEM, THEY'VE BEEN PUTTING UP WITH ME FOR TWO YEARS NOW TRYING TO BEAT INTO THEM COMPETITIVE SPIRIT AND TOUGHNESS BECAUSE, WHEN YOU COMBINE THAT WITH TALENT, YOU HAVE A CHANCE TO DO GREAT THINGS. THEY'VE ALLOWED ME TO DO IT, AND YOU'RE SEEING THE RESULTS OF IT RIGHT NOW."

- COACH CRONIN



MARCH 24

The team traveled out to Fishers, Indiana, to hit the driving range at "Top Golf" ... players had the opportunity to enjoy some time away from the team hotel in downtown Indianapolis and refine their golf swing. UCLA's hour-long excursion at Top Golf followed three games in a five-day span to open the NCAA Tournament. This took place prior to the Sweet 16 games that began on March 27 and 28.



"THAT WAS KIND OF HIS [COACH CRONIN] WHOLE ATTITUDE COMING INTO UCLA IS THAT, NO MATTER WHAT HAPPENS, WE'RE GOING TO BE THE TOUGHEST TEAM TO GO OUT THERE AND PLAY."

- JAIME JAQUEZ JR.



**UCLA EDGES MICHIGAN,
51-49, IN THE ELITE EIGHT**

at Lucas Oil Stadium (Indianapolis)

The two-point win helped UCLA secure a spot in the Final Four for the first time since 2008 ... UCLA earned its 19th trip to the Final Four ... UCLA became just the second team to have advanced to the Final Four after having played in the First Four (the current 68-team bracket format began in 2011). Johnny Juzang scored a team-leading 28 points, connecting on 11 of 19 shots from the field.

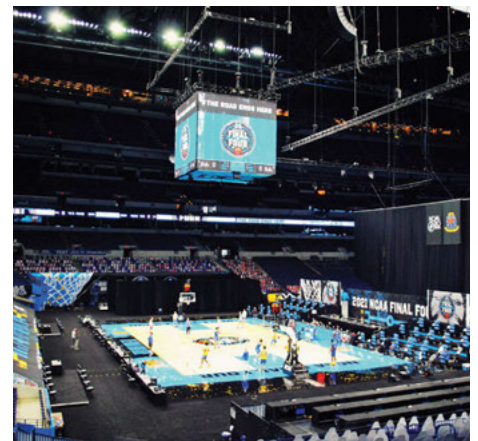


"WE JUST APPROACHED IT LIKE ANOTHER GAME. WE'VE BEEN SUPER LOCKED INTO THIS TOURNAMENT. AS A PLAYER, YOU DON'T LIKE TO ADD PRESSURE TO YOURSELF. I KNOW THE WHOLE TEAM WAS JUST WORRIED ABOUT, 'WE'RE GOING TO LEAVE IT OUT THERE ON THE FLOOR AND WE'RE GOING TO GIVE IT EVERYTHING WE'VE GOT.' I MEAN, THE SHOT JUST HAPPENED TO GO IN AND TEAMMATES ARE FINDING ME. I WOULDN'T SAY ANYTHING DIFFERENT."

- JOHNNY JUZANG



Several of UCLA's student-athletes took part in a green screen videoshoot with CBS, prior to the Final Four, at Lucas Oil Stadium. While the majority of the tournament's media-related opportunities took place via Zoom this season, CBS utilized a controlled environment for pre-Final Four video and photoshoots.



APRIL

2

After a morning workout at the nearby Indiana Convention Center, UCLA's team headed over to Lucas Oil Stadium for a 90-minute open practice in front of fans and media members. Junior guard Russell Stong was honored with the Elite 90 award, which is presented to the student-athlete with the highest cumulative grade-point average participating at the finals site for each of the NCAA's championships.



APRIL

3

UCLA LOSES TO GONZAGA, 93-90, IN OVERTIME AT THE FINAL FOUR at Lucas Oil Stadium (Indianapolis)

Johnny Juzang scored a team-leading 29 points, making 12 of 18 shots ... Cody Riley had 14 points, 10 rebounds and five assists.

"OBVIOUSLY, JALEN [SUGGS] MAKES AN INCREDIBLE SHOT. IT DIDN'T GO OUR WAY ... WE WEREN'T GOING TO LET ANYBODY HAVE THEIR HEADS DOWN. EVERYBODY IS SO PROUD TO PLAY WITH EACH OTHER AND TO PLAY FOR THESE COACHES, AND THERE'S NO OTHER WAY WE'D RATHER GO OUT. WE WENT OUT FIGHTING ... THERE'S NO REGRETS. JUST EVERYBODY FOUGHT TO THE LAST PLAY AND THE LAST SHOT IS THE LAST SHOT. BUT SO GRATEFUL TO CALL THESE GUYS TEAMMATES."

- JOHNNY JUZANG



"MY MESSAGE TO OUR FANS IS GET YOUR SEASON TICKETS. LET'S GET THIS PANDEMIC OVER WITH AND PACK PAULEY PAVILION AND MAKE UCLA A YEARLY ELITE PROGRAM. THAT'S WHAT I CAME TO UCLA FOR. FANS WERE AWESOME TOWARDS THE END OF LAST YEAR WITH OUR LATE GAMES. AND TO THEM, KEEP THEIR HEAD UP. WE'RE JUST GETTING STARTED."

- COACH CRONIN



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former UCLA & Los Angeles Dodgers star



KYLE KARROS

Freshman Infielder



JARED KARROS

Sophomore Pitcher



A LIFETIME BOND

Eric Karros & sons forge a family connection with the Bruins.

by JON GOLD

Under normal circumstances, it would have been a somber event, a memorial service to bid goodbye to a beloved friend.

But this was Tommy Lasorda we're talking about, the long-time Los Angeles Dodgers manager and prodigious liver of life, never without a smile on his face. So instead, there were laughs and smiles and hugs — if not socially-distanced fist bumps — during Lasorda's mid-January Dodger Stadium memorial service. Pallbearers included former Dodgers catcher and Los Angeles Angels manager Mike Scioscia, retired player and major league manager Bobby Valentine, retired player and coach Mickey Hatcher, former Dodgers pitcher Charlie Hough and former NBA coach Mike Fratello.

And, of course, Eric Karros, one of the great Dodgers of all time, and one of Lasorda's personal favorites. Karros brought along his two boys, Jared and Kyle — Lasorda's godsons. Tommy constantly would tell the two boys they would be successful, if they would just listen to him. They were small back then, young, just a couple of kids immersed in the game of baseball.

Imagine, Tommy Lasorda as a godfather.

Sometime after the services, as Dodgers across five decades said their hellos and how-are-yas, Justin Turner strolled up to the Karros boys to say hello. It had been a while since they'd all seen each other. He almost didn't recognize the two youngest of the Karros clan.

"Now, one is 6-foot-7 (Jared) and the other is 6-5, and JT — who hadn't seen them in a while — was just like ... holy s***!" Eric said with a laugh.

Now the only one laughing is John Savage.

Because he brought in the two Karros kids to play for the UCLA baseball team.

And now the family legacy lives on in Westwood.

◇◇◇

"I tried to tell them, this is so not real life," Eric said by phone recently.

But you try telling two young boys that baseball isn't the be-all, end-all. That life doesn't end at the infield dirt.

In some ways, Eric was the lucky one. For him, baseball was a fun diversion, a pastime, a game to play. There was no pressure. Heck, he

was ready to give the sport up at 17 after his senior year.

It was the spring of 1985, and his father, George, managed to get a hold of then-UCLA head coach Gary Adams. George told Adams that his kid was a talented infielder out of San Diego's Patrick Henry High. He was tall and strong and could always hit. Eric was smart and had already been accepted to UCLA, and George asked Adams if he would meet his son.

The Karros' drove north for a UCLA game and flagged Adams down behind the right-field fence. Adams took one look at the young Karros and made him a lofty promise.

"I won't cut you until the end of fall," was all Adams could offer the boy who would grow into the most prolific home-run hitter in Los Angeles Dodgers history (third in franchise history). For young Karros, that was enough. He could've guaranteed himself a spot on the San Diego State University baseball team, or he could go to UCLA and give himself the smallest of chances. Westwood it would be.

Karros impressed Adams enough in the fall to keep him around, and after a freshman season that included two starts, 20-plus at-bats and a lot of time as bullpen catcher — "at which I was terrible," Karros said — he burst onto the scene as a sophomore, batting .315 in 66 games. He really exploded as a junior, when he hit .415, smashed 17 home runs and had 54 RBIs in 58 games.

All of a sudden, Karros found a calling, even if he didn't expect one.

"The reality of it, pro ball — it just seemed so far away," said Karros, even though he had firsthand experience with the professional game.

He was high school teammates with Casey McKeon, whose dad, Jack,



ERIC KARROS with longtime UCLA baseball coach Gary Adams. (Photo: Jon SooHoo)



ERIC KARROS with sons Kyle (left) and Jared at Dodger Stadium in 2012. (Photo: Jon SooHoo)

was the San Diego Padres General Manager during Karros' youth.

"He was a close friend, so I used to sit in the GM's box watching the Padres," Karros said. "Even so, to play professionally, it just seemed unrealistic. It didn't seem plausible. My thing was, I loved playing, I loved playing in high school, but baseball wasn't everything for me. I'd rather have gone to UCLA and not played, than go to SDSU and played."

Playing with a reckless abandon that could only come from not sweating every single strikeout, Karros turned from a walk-on, into a 6th-round draft pick, the 1992 National League Rookie of the Year and a 14-year Major League veteran.

When Adams co-authored a book on leadership with iconic UCLA men's basketball coach John Wooden, the two legendary leaders picked three guys who embodied the two cornerstone characteristics of Wooden's vaunted "Pyramid of Success," industriousness and enthusiasm.

"Eric was the first guy I thought of," Adams said.

◇◇◇

The Karros boys embody those key traits, as well.

But unlike their father, who was ready to abandon his baseball dreams before getting a chance with the Bruins, the Karros boys have always believed baseball was their destiny.

That's what happens when you grow up in Major League clubhouses, rubbing elbows with the best and brightest, grittiest and gutsiest of professional baseball.

It's also what happens when you have the prep careers that Kyle and Jared Karros had. While Eric went relatively unnoticed at Patrick Henry High, despite playing on a team that was ranked seventh nationally heading into the CIF Finals, Jared and Kyle shined at Mira Costa High and generated some buzz.

Jared was named the Bay League Pitcher of the Year and earned All-CIF

Second Team honors as a senior after sporting a 7-3 record with a miniscule 0.86 ERA. His ERA was even tinier as a junior, when he went 3-1 with a 0.45 ERA. By then, his tall, lanky frame had filled out a bit — he now stands a sturdy 6-foot-7, 200 pounds — and he was able to answer some of the critics who'd wondered if he'd gotten opportunities just because of his prodigious paterfamilias.

"All along, there were doubters," Eric said. "He went into senior year and he didn't have the most accolades, but throughout the season, without question he performed. It would've been very easy for him to say maybe I'm not cut out for this. But it was almost like, maybe not today, but down the road, it will come together. That's the thing I'm most proud of. The constant work and perseverance."

Karros feels that same sense of pride in Kyle, but perhaps for different reasons. While Jared constantly had to prove he belonged, Kyle looked the part from the get-go. His obstacle: crazy ailments and injuries.

He was 13 years old when he took a ball to the eye, the doctor telling him he might need surgery. He'd go on to recover, but it was a traumatic experience. Two years later, he was stung by a bee and had a bad reaction — he was in the hospital for five days ... and going into his senior year he had surgery on his left hand after a head first slide.

He'd go on to recover splendidly from everything, blossoming into the No. 2 third baseman and No. 36 overall prospect in California by Perfect Game. He also played in the 2019 Under Armour All-American Game at Wrigley Field.

But it wasn't an easy road.

Let's just say neither of the Karros clan were treated with kid gloves.

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As if they wouldn't, though.

That's not in the Karros DNA.



Now both are valuable contributors to UCLA, both early in their careers.

As of early May, Kyle had started every game, sporting a .270 batting average and 26 runs scored in his first 39 career games. Jared was a midweek starter for the Bruins last year as a freshman, going 2-0 with a 3.86 ERA and 16 strikeouts in 14 innings before the season was cut short by the COVID-19 pandemic. When the season shut down last year, Jared was rated as the No. 2 freshman pitcher in the country per D1Baseball's analytical rankings, and he was off to a solid start this year — with a 2-1 record and a 3.33 ERA — before being sidelined by a back issue in March.

Both boys have taken the frustration and confusion of playing baseball during a pandemic in stride, keeping a good head on their shoulders. Eric credits the boys' mother, Trish, and sister, Mikah, with helping them stay focused.

"Any time the guys have stuff to talk about or deal with, we're at a huge advantage," Eric said. "What's gone on this last year, the mental part is more profound and more impactful. My daughter and wife have been and continue to be impactful through all of this. We've tried to make things as normal as possible. But it's very real, the everyday frustration, depression, and the anxiety that everyone has had to deal with."

Luckily for the Karros kids, baseball has always been put in the right perspective.

"As far as not overselling baseball, (my dad) was very good about that," Jared said. "I was the one who chose baseball. But he's a great example of why you need to focus on school and not just sell out for one sport. If he didn't get good grades, I don't know what my life would be like. If he doesn't walk on at UCLA, who knows?"

UCLA gave Eric the foundation for his Major League experience. The lifetime bond keeps him coming back.

With his two sons in Bruin Blue, Karros has found himself attending almost every game, home and away. He continues to support the program. Eric endowed a full scholarship during his playing days and just recently rounded up a few Bruin baseball greats to collectively make a substantial donation for the new Practice Half Infield to be ready by October.

"Without my experience at UCLA — without Gary Adams, Glen Mickens, (former UCLA assistant coach), and hitting and pitching coach Tip Lefebvre — without them, none of this happens," Karros said. "The fact Jared was recruited by John, and then Kyle ends up here? What UCLA has meant to me and my family and the impact it's had on my life today — it goes without saying.

"I will be forever in debt for my continued experience at UCLA."



JARED KARROS, who stands at a towering 6 feet 7 inches, is a sophomore right-handed pitcher for the Bruins.. (Photo: Jesus Ramirez)



Although only in his first year with the program, freshman **KYLE KARROS** is UCLA's starting third baseman. (Photo: Scott Chandler)



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*UCLA's **JOHN SPERAW** has been the United States National Team head coach since 2016.*



THE OLYMPIC EXPERIENCE

*Bruin coaches share their thoughts ahead
of this Summer's Tokyo Games*

by JON GOLD

They missed it for the pride and the pageantry, the unity and the community.

They missed it for the platform it provided their protégés, knowing what they'd miss out on.

For those UCLA coaches who've experienced the Olympics first-hand, they were counted among the devastated when the 2020 Tokyo Games were postponed.

Coming up on a year later, with the Tokyo Games going ahead as planned — albeit with trepidation among everyone involved — UCLA's Olympics contingent, those who played and those who coached in the games, just hope the Bruin hopefuls get their shot.



Walking the hallowed halls of the UCLA campus, there is a feeling of collective achievement. Bruins know they are among top achievers.

But get to the Olympic Village, and “gifted and talented” takes on a whole new meaning. You're not just surrounded by greatness. There is an air

of accomplishment so thick it looks like a fog. There are legends all around.

When UCLA water polo coach Adam Wright found out Los Angeles Lakers hero Kobe Bryant died tragically last January, he was thrust back to the summer of 2008.

“He was an exceptional person, and I got a first-eye glimpse,” said Wright, who won a silver medal with the Team USA men's water polo team at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. “I went to the gym after practice every day, and there was one guy working on extra shooting. Every day. They were all getting iced down already, and there was one guy on the court.”

It's been almost 18 months now, but Wright remembers exactly where he was on Jan. 26, 2020.

“I was in Michigan with our women's team, and I'll never forget the official said, ‘What if I told you Kobe was in a helicopter crash and died?’”

For Wright, his Olympic experience was colored by the proximity to greatness. It was at times overwhelming.

“I remember being in the pool at the Village, and we had a two-day break and Michael Phelps was there,” he said. “He'd just tied the Olympic gold medal record, and the next day he was going for the record. And you're just watching him swim right next to you.”

Wright knows a thing or two about success. He entered the 2020-21 campaign with an overall record of 267-47, an .850 winning percentage, and three national titles. His Bruins compete for titles on a regular basis.

But being in that village, surrounded by the cream of so many crops, is awe-inspiring.

“It's a thing of beauty because everyone is so committed to their craft,” he said. “This is the best of the best of the best. There's a mutual respect across the board.”



ADAM WRIGHT
Water Polo Coach

ADAM WRIGHT won a silver medal with the Team USA men's water polo team at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. (Photo: Phil Walter/Getty Images).



THE OLYMPIC EXPERIENCE

BRUIN COACHES SHARE THEIR THOUGHTS AHEAD OF THIS SUMMER'S TOKYO GAMES



STEIN METZGER

Beach Volleyball Coach

He'd been dreaming of the Olympics for two decades. In the ninth grade, he said, he remembers going to his buddy Mike Lambert's house and watching VHS recordings of the 1984 Olympics, when the U.S. team won the gold in indoor volleyball.

Metzger's road to the Olympics was a marathon in itself. Late in the training process, he found himself without a partner, as did fellow beach volleyballer Dax Holdren. They teamed up and finished second at the 2003 Beach Volleyball World Championships in Rio de Janeiro before finishing fifth in Athens.

Lambert, Metzger's buddy, also made the Olympics, but as a member of the indoor team.

"There's such a short window in your lifetime, and I can have this perspective now, so if it were to not happen, it's just a shame," Metzger said. "It's a one-in-a-million, once-in-a-lifetime thing. You meet people from all these nations, compete at the highest level; it's really a landmark experience for somebody. There are people who this could be their one chance or their last chance, and for it not to happen would be such a shame."



STEIN METZGER (pictured) and partner Dax Holdren competed on the beach at the 2004 Summer Games in Athens, Greece.

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The 2004 Olympics were one of the most important in the Olympiad's illustrious history. Held in Athens, the site of the original Olympic Games of ancient Greek history, the 2004 Games were of special importance.

Seventeen years later, it's almost a blur to Stein Metzger.

"I'm not sure I have one story," he said. "For me at this point, 17 years later, there a bunch of images I remember."



JOHN SPERAW

Men's Volleyball Coach

"It was mixed emotions," he said. "On the one hand, you've had all this prep time leading up to this one singular event, and to have the disappointment of it not to occur — even though we knew it was coming — when the announcement came, it was deflating. While understanding it was the best decision and probably the only decision."

The whole last year has been a study in patience for Speraw and the rest of the would-be Olympians, in every sport, across the planet.

"Training camp, that didn't work," he said. "And a lot of people had the same experience — make plans, have those plans busted. Spend more time, have those plans busted, and repeat. The challenges were all these decisions to be made. In general, the last year has been really exhausting trying to figure things out. We're still trying to figure it out."

When the men's volleyball training team recently arrived at the national team headquarters in Anaheim, Speraw began talking to team captain Taylor Sander about the long absence, and Sander remarked, "It's so good to see (teammate) Matty (Anderson), I haven't seen them in two years."

That's when it hit Speraw.

"At UCLA, you're here four years, and obviously a bond develops," he said. "If you think about the national team, it goes beyond that. You're continuing in your formative years trying to learn the game, but now you're with the same group for eight years, 12 years. A lot of maturity goes on. Guys get married, have kids. It was really a different experience when all



JOHN SPERAW has been the United States National Team head men's volleyball coach since 2016. (Photo: Sean Haffey/Getty Images)

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Of all UCLA coaches with Olympic experience, one felt the ramifications of last year's postponement the most.

UCLA men's volleyball coach John Speraw has been the United States National Team head coach since 2016, after eight years — and two Games — as an assistant coach.

He knew the decision to delay the Tokyo Games was the right one, but that didn't make it any easier of a pill to swallow.

of a sudden you didn't see these teammates for two years. To come back and to be together has been really energizing."

There are a few missing faces, though.

Something about which all the Olympian-turned-Bruin coaches were worried.

"For us, specifically for Team USA, we had some guys who were injured last summer who are healthy now, and we had some guys who were healthy last summer who are injured now," Speraw said.



AMY FULLER KEARNEY

Rowing Coach

silver in the women's coxless fours competition at the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona.

That wasn't enough for her, though.

"At the end of the day, it was a silver medal," Fuller Kearney said. "I wanted a gold medal, and to hear that national anthem. It was a very easy decision to stick it out and see how much faster I could get and if I could get that goal. What drew me back in was the love for the sport and being able to compete at such a high level."

And so began a more-than-decade-long journey at the top of her sport,

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Speraw has been to three Olympiads as a coach, and Wright and Metzger went once each as athletes, but a pair of UCLA coaches made careers out of the Games.

Softball assistant coach Lisa Fernandez, an iconic Bruin collegiate student-athlete if there ever was one, played in four Olympic Games, winning three gold medals and a silver.

UCLA rowing coach Amy Fuller Kearney was a three-time Olympian herself, winning

and everything that entailed. A strict training schedule. Rigorous attention to diet. Missed wedding after missed wedding.

Eventually it became a routine.

"Your first time there, everything is new to you," she said. "It's incredible. You walk through getting your gear in this huge warehouse. But then experiencing that with new teammates is amazing, too. Certainly, I knew more about what to eat, how much I needed to rest, not getting too excited. It can be so overwhelming. I could focus and help with my younger teammates. I was definitely more prepared for the last one."

This time around, though, no one knows what to expect.

How could you?

"This one is going to be very different, maybe not any fans in the stands, and opening ceremonies, we're not sure how that's going to work," Speraw said. "Even the village itself. To see all the countries, that's the coolest part. And it might not be that way this time. We may be in our rooms. A lot of the pageantry of the games will be different, and the athletes I think understand that."

But at least they'll have something.

And after years of preparation — and an extra year of frustration — that'll be enough.



Head UCLA rowing coach **AMY FULLER KEARNEY** (fourth from left) was a three-time Olympian herself, winning silver in the women's coxless fours competition at the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona. (Gary Prior/Allsport)

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UCLA MEN'S AND WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

SYNERGY: RAISING FUNDS AND RAISING PROGRAMS



by EMILY LERNER

A “chicken-and-egg” situation is defined as: “a metaphoric adjective describing situations where it is not clear which of two events should be considered the cause and which should be considered the effect.”

More simply put, in a chicken and egg situation, it is impossible to decide which of two things caused the other one. “As it concerns collegiate athletics’ fundraising and support, the question becomes: do teams do well because they receive donations and support, or are donations and support bestowed upon them because the teams are doing well?”

The chicken-and-egg scenario is an age-old question that philosophers can debate for all eternity. In the case of UCLA Basketball, both men’s and women’s programs have been supported by a wide swathe of donors, and in turn, these programs’ win percentages continue to rise. During the 2020-21 season, both UCLA men’s and women’s basketball teams went on to success in the postseason. The women’s team danced at the NCAA tournament for the seventh year out of The Michael Price Family UCLA Women’s Head Basketball Coach Cori Close’s 11 seasons as Bruin head coach, while the enormity of what The Michael Price Family UCLA Men’s Head Basketball Coach Mick Cronin’s men’s team was able to do as an 11-seed playing their way into the tournament in the run from “First Four” to the Final Four was, frankly, a modern marvel.

When the Mo Ostin Basketball Center opened in 2017, it immediately became the new home for both UCLA Men’s and Women’s Basketball.

Boasting 35,000 square feet of space, it continues to be a state-of-the-art, comprehensive basketball practice facility that houses practice courts — the Ann Meyers Drysdale Court used by the women’s team, and the Russell Westbrook Court used by the men’s team — as well as state-of-the-art locker rooms, conference/meeting rooms, and a space for student-athletes to relax with their teammates. Additionally, the Center’s Kevin Love Strength and Conditioning Center is a basketball-specific strength and conditioning facility used solely by UCLA Basketball student-athletes, coaches, and trainers.

This building, and the names associated with it, became a recruiting tool for UCLA to recruit not only student-athletes, but to recruit and retain top-notch coaches. Another large-scale factor in support of UCLA Basketball came in 2018, when longtime Bruin fans Jodi and Michael Price (UCLA ’83) made a gift to establish The Michael Price Family UCLA Basketball Excellence Program. This program was designed to provide funds for programs and initiatives that enhance the student-athlete experience and serve the community at large.

Investments in UCLA Basketball like the Mo Ostin Basketball Center and the Michael Price Family Excellence Program go an extraordinarily long way in boosting a program. Donor support like this can bring a program to the forefront of collegiate athletics, as it raises a program’s ability to recruit and coach at the highest level.

Investments in these teams take many forms. In the era of pandemic uncertainty, it was easy to see why the needs for our student-athletes had



WOMEN'S BASKETBALL posters align the halls of the Mo Ostin Center.

changed. The stress of virtual learning, virtual training, and being alone without ones teammates made for a greater need for life skills and mental strength training.

The effects of pandemic-related changes are not fully known yet, but what became clear was that many were experiencing a heightened sense of anxiety about school, training and social networks. But the UCLA faithful proved again that they, too, could shift in their philanthropy, and contribute to what was of immediate importance to our student-athletes. An anonymous couple, who met while both were attending UCLA in the 1960's, could see that the student-athletes' anxiety was becoming a mental and physical crusher. So they decided to contribute to the women's basketball fund, where their donation went directly to providing items like iPads and software.

"We are confident that Coach Cori would use these tools to further team communications and bring them closer together when they couldn't always physically be together due to the pandemic," they said. "We knew that the women would also make good use of them in their studies. We chose to fund UCLA Women's Basketball because of our confidence and belief in Cori as a teacher and mentor in the mold of Coach Wooden."

Many factors can add up to create a better atmosphere for student-athletes, so that they are free to pursue their studies, training, and practice without distraction. In one situation, a donation made to women's basketball was used for a professional photoshoot of pictures taken with the team as a whole and individually. This made team members feel great about themselves, giving them more confidence on and off the court. More confidence in both mental and physical capacities led to better performances.

Former UCLA Athletics Faculty Representative Don Morrison and his wife, Professor Emeritus Sherie Morrison, have made gifts to different sports at UCLA Athletics. They began to contribute to the women's basketball program by establishing a scholarship in 2005, but in 2010 started making annual gifts to the program.

"Our annual giving [to women's basketball] started when Cori Close became UCLA's Head Coach. We met Cori for breakfast and she showed us a wish list. One item was to have a professional photo shoot of the women on the team, which has proved to be successful," said Don. "These gifts have allowed extra staff, yoga training, state-of-the-art video, and programs for life 'after the ball goes flat.'"

Fundraising has always been a two-way street. Coach Close has been holding virtual events, the most popular of which are her "Coffee with Cori" hours, where she meets, albeit virtually, with donors and season ticket holders. It is a casual and fun way to get to know more about the women's basketball program, and where supporters get the opportunity to be better acquainted with the coach and student-athlete "guests" whose program they support.

Coach Cronin also held events in a virtual setting where he dialoged with supporters and whereby supporters got the opportunity to be better acquainted with him. He was quite visible during the team's run to the Final Four, happily making PSAs regarding the team and asking Bruins to keep supporting and cheering them on. These made him more accessible to Bruin fans who subsequently donated to his program.

When donors support the programs, the programs are able to use these resources to go beyond the norm, and Bruins make it their business to support them. These donations raise coaches' ability to recruit five-star student-athletes as well as recruit and retain top coaches. One such situation was where donations to men's basketball went directly towards chartering planes in which Coach Cronin used to make recruiting trips to other parts of the country.

While it is impossible to gauge how much any one of these items singularly help the mindset of the student-athletes, it is a foregone conclusion that together, they make each team stronger. Stronger teams win games. Winning teams receive more support. And there it is, once again, the conundrum of the chicken-and-egg puzzle.

THE WOODEN ATHLETIC FUND

Ron Takasugi and Nora Kubota Invest in Tomorrow's Champions Today

Ron Takasugi and Nora Kubota are passionately committed to supporting UCLA and Bruin student-athletes through the Wooden Athletic Fund. Ron, retired CFO of real estate development company ET Consultants, Inc., graduated from UCLA in 1978 with a BA degree in Economics. Nora, also a proud Bruin grad, earned her BS degree in Kinesiology in 1979, and currently works in Rehab Therapy Services at Dignity Health Northridge Hospital. Although both attended UCLA at the same time, they didn't meet until many years later; in fact, it was Ron wearing a UCLA cap that grabbed Nora's attention.

Ron began his love for Bruin sports when his father would wake up a six-year-old Ron at 11:30pm on Saturday nights to watch replays of UCLA Men's Basketball games. They would watch Dick Enberg announce the games, and during football season, Bruin games were always playing on the radio of their family business.

Ron's father attended UCLA on a tennis scholarship, playing under legendary coach Bill Ackerman and legendary trainer Ducky Drake. Unfortunately, both his education and athletic career were interrupted when he and his family were sent to an internment camp during WWII. His prized letterman sweater was lost during that time and he was presented with a duplicate sweater in a joint effort by UCLA Athletics and the UCLA Office of Government and Community Relations many years later.

Ron and Nora now add new memories to old as they continue to attend UCLA games together. Ron made a Leadership Gift to the renovation of Pauley Pavilion in 2009, and began contributing to the Wooden Athletic Fund in 1999 at the Bruin All-Conference level, upgrading his membership three levels since.



"Coach Wooden was more than a record-setting basketball coach. He was a developer of men with character, work ethic, skills, and leadership. His Pyramid of Success is followed by many—Bruins and non-Bruins alike. Being a member of the Wooden Athletic Fund is my way of continuing his word and values. I am so proud of the young men and women who represent and wear those four letters on their uniforms."

UCLA and the UCLA Athletic Department thank the 7,949 Wooden Athletic Fund members, including Ron Takasugi and Nora Kubota.

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