

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



UCLA's Rachel Garcia Wins 2021 Senior CLASS Award for Softball

OVERLAND PARK, Kan. (June 2, 2021) - Three-time PAC-12 Player of the Year Rachel Garcia of UCLA has been selected as the 2021 Senior CLASS Award® winner in NCAA® Division I softball.

The award, chosen by a vote of Division I softball coaches, national softball media and fans, is given annually to the most outstanding senior student-athlete in Division I softball.

An acronym for *Celebrating Loyalty and Achievement for Staying in School*®, the Senior CLASS Award focuses on the total student-athlete and encourages students to use their platform in athletics to make a positive impact as leaders in their communities. To be eligible for the award, a student-athlete must be classified as an NCAA Division I senior and have notable achievements in four areas of excellence: classroom, community, character, and competition.

"I am so honored and humbled to receive this prestigious award and to be recognized amongst all of the senior student-athletes representing softball," said Garcia, who is the first student-athlete from UCLA to win the Senior CLASS Award. "Being a student-athlete at UCLA has prepared me to be the best that I can be beyond the diamond. I knew it was going to be challenging both academically and athletically from the moment I stepped on campus. But I also knew that if I could be successful here, then I could be successful anywhere. At times, it was very tough and I had to find my way through it, but the support system here is amazing. The alumni, the coaches and my teammates have been incredible and they have really helped me to grow into a person that I am truly proud of. I feel so lucky to have been given the opportunity to be a Bruin and it has been the most rewarding experience of my life."

Garcia spent her first year at UCLA using a redshirt season after suffering an injury. Her commitment to recovery paid off the following year, as she was named the 2017 NFCA National Freshman of the Year and a second team All-American. Garcia went 23-9 with a 1.87 ERA and 212 strikeouts in 202.2 innings. She was spectacular in the batter's box as well, hitting .325 with eight home runs and 29 RBIs. Garcia was even better in 2018, being crowned the NFCA, ESPNW, and USA Softball National Player of the Year. She went 29-4 with a 1.31 ERA and 315 strikeouts in 208 innings, leading the PAC-12 in wins, strikeouts, and opposing batting average. Garcia, a consensus first team All-American, also hit .339 with 11 home runs and 54 RBIs. Helping UCLA win the Women's College World Series in 2019, Garcia was again named the National Player of the Year by ESPNW, Softball America, and USA Softball. She was honored as a consensus first team All-American and both the PAC-12 and NFCA National Pitcher of the Year after going 29-1 with a stellar 1.14 ERA and 286 strikeouts in 202 innings. Garcia proved her status as a two-way player once more, batting .343 with 11 home runs and 57 RBIs.

Electing to return for her redshirt-senior season, Garcia has continued to be the driving force of the Bruins. She has gone 17-1 with a 0.95 ERA and 162 strikeouts in 118.1 innings. Garcia has also continued her dominance at the plate, tallying a .351 batting average with 12 home runs and 32 RBIs.

For her career at UCLA, Garcia has tallied a remarkable 98-15 record with a 1.36 ERA and 975 strikeouts in 731 innings. She has been equally as impressive offensively, batting .339 with 42 home runs and 172 RBIs. Garcia is a two-time recipient of both the Honda Sport Award and USA Softball Player of the Year Award.

She has also had the honor of playing with USA Softball for the last three years. In 2018, Garcia helped lead the team to gold medals at the WBSC Women's World Championship and International Cup. She took home three gold medals the following year, winning the USA Softball International Cup, Pan American Games, and the Japan Cup with Team USA in 2019. Events and tournaments were canceled in 2020, but Garcia continued to participate with the team during their 'Stand Beside Her' tour, which was aimed to inspire communities to stand beside the future generation of female athletes.

“I hope to play a little while longer and see where that may take me,” said Garcia, who has been an active volunteer in the Los Angeles community. “Softball has given me so much to be thankful for and it is important for me to give back. I enjoy working with our youth and want to focus on giving back to my community as well as others. I want to be able to mentor and share my experiences and help them through the process of making their dreams come true of being a collegiate athlete. Ultimately, my goal is to work with special needs children as my passion is sign language.”

Garcia has also been recognized on the Dean’s List multiple times in pursuit of a history degree at UCLA. While at Highland High School, Garcia started ‘Golden League Gives Back,’ which raises donations for charities each year. She has returned to her high school on multiple occasions, offering advice to the student body on how to be a collegiate athlete while discussing academics, training, and work ethic. Every November, Garcia and the Bruins spend time handing out turkeys to families that are in need, as well.

“Rachel’s journey to her senior year has been diverse and expansive,” said Kelly Inouye-Perez, who has coached the Bruins to a 46-5 record. “Beyond her athletic achievements and growth, she has probably grown even more as a person and team member. Her leadership manifests in many ways behind the scenes that are often overlooked because of her reserved nature. Her ability to challenge her teammates on and off the field makes her a role model for all.”

“Rachel Garcia has exhibited true courage and dedication at UCLA,” said Erik Miner, Executive Director of the Senior CLASS Award. “She has overcome multiple setbacks in her career but always remained a role model due to her outstanding effort in the classroom, in the community, and on the field. We are proud to offer our congratulations to Rachel Garcia and UCLA for winning this esteemed award.”

For more information on each of the finalists, visit seniorCLASSaward.com.

###

2021 Senior CLASS Award Softball First Team All-Americans

AnaMarie Bruni, South Florida

Rachel Garcia, UCLA

Jessie Harper, Arizona

Bubba Nickles, UCLA

Sami Williams, Iowa State

2021 Senior CLASS Award Softball Second Team All-Americans

Sis Bates, Washington

Amber Fiser, Minnesota

Sydney Fisher, Radford

Kendyl Lindaman, Florida

Kayla Wedl, UIC

CONTACT

Matt Gasper

(913) 563-5415

matt@seniorclassaward.com

ABOUT THE AWARD

An acronym for *Celebrating Loyalty and Achievement for Staying in School*, the Senior CLASS Award honors the attributes of senior student-athletes in four areas: community, classroom, character and competition. The award program is designed exclusively for college seniors who are utilizing their complete athletic eligibility, remaining committed to their university and pursuing the many rewards a senior season can bring. Premier Sports Management manages the award.

*NCAA, Women's College World Series and its marks are licensed by or trademarks of the National Collegiate Athletic Association.