

## **KYLEE PEREZ**

### **WARRIOR WITH GLOVE AND GRACE**

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There are warriors, and then there are warriors with a glove. There are athletes, and then there are athletes with grace. Kylee Perez, star second baseman and undisputed Senior leader of the historically vaunted UCLA Bruins Women's Softball team, is both a warrior with a glove and an athlete with grace. For Kylee Perez, glove and grace go hand in hand.



KYLEE PEREZ

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In unadulterated sports speak, Kylee Nicole Perez is an absolute stud. Her high school and collegiate careers are a cornucopia of leadership, championship success and achievement – scholastic and athletic. Not only did she earn Scholar Athlete awards all four years at Alhambra High School in Martinez, California, she lettered in both baseball and basketball, was Most Valuable Player for three straight

seasons, helped her team to four Diablo Foothill Athletic League titles and ended her high school career with a gaudy .590 hitting percentage, 42 homers, 139 RBI and 71 steals. Pretty average, right? Wrong! Way wrong!

Kylee's achievements didn't end with high school. As a UCLA standout in her Sophomore and Junior years, she was named All-Pac-12 First Team, as well as National Fastpitch Coaches Association (NFCA) All-West Region First Team in 2017. As a Junior, she was also All-Pac-12 Defensive Team, and when you watch her play you understand why. The girl has a golden glove and the refined mechanics of a pro. Her 2018 season will no doubt reveal more accolades. A fuller description of Kylee's achievements are located on the UCLA Bruins softball roster page: [http://uclabruins.com/roster.aspx?rp\\_id=4032](http://uclabruins.com/roster.aspx?rp_id=4032).

But being a great jock alone is not what makes Kylee Perez an extraordinary human being. Great jocks exist in all sports. The quality that lifts this young woman above the crowd is her grace. Studs abound, but great athletes with grace are rarely found, and for UCLA Kylee Perez was a colossal find.

She doesn't talk about this much, but Kylee Perez has Type 1 Diabetes (T1D). Yet, one never hears her lamenting her health challenges or making excuses for herself in any way. Most people probably never knew this about her. Anyone can complain, but the great ones never do. They just keep on keeping on, refusing to capitulate to the difficulties and hardships of their destiny. Add "quiet hero" to Perez's warrior persona of glove and grace.

Type 1 Diabetes is an autoimmune disease destroying cells in the pancreas and making the individual insulin-dependent. At present, there is no cure for it, thus requiring lifelong treatment of daily insulin injections or the use of an insulin pump to control blood glucose levels. T1D complications can not only be disabling but life-threatening. Hence, constant monitoring and management are necessary 24-7-365 for one's entire life. For safety purposes, Perez has a medical alert tattoo on the inside of her left wrist (see next photo). Yet, as challenging as her daily T1D struggle is, she never talks about the adversity, complains or whines about it. In true warrior fashion she just silently and courageously presses on, undaunted.



Kylee Perez revealing her T1D Medical Alert Tattoo (left wrist)  
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Kylee Perez's success in life, as well as managing her T1D, is revealed in two of her favorite quotes: "Never a failure; always a lesson," and "Every little thing is gonna be alright." With such a positive outlook in life, it's no wonder she is the indisputable leader of the UCLA Bruins softball team. Likewise, she is the exemplar of the 1952 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Dr. Albert Schweitzer's observation: "Example is not the best way to influence others. It is the only way."

It's fun to watch Kylee Perez play, and the quotes she lives by underscore her joy of the game. The ubiquitous smile on her face illuminates her love of what she's doing. It also sends a positive and inspirational message to others of how to manage one's life with T1D.

Kylee Perez doesn't make excuses or draw attention to herself because of the chronic condition she lives with. How refreshing is this for an athlete in this age to be so self-effacing? Answer: exceptionally. Her parents, Sonja and Jeff Perez, obviously have done a terrific job raising not only Kylee but her sister, Briana, the star Freshman shortstop for the UCLA Bruins who is inspired by her older sister. Together, Kylee and Briana, interestingly born on the same day three years apart, make a dynamite infield duo for the nationally #1 ranked UCLA Bruins.

Following is one example of Kylee's classy and gracious character. Christa and Mike Jacob's elder daughter, Paige, became afflicted with T1D when she was seven years old. Christa, a UCLA alum, in an effort to get some inspirational support for her daughter, contacted Kylee through Facebook. Long story short, Kylee not only responded to Christa but said she would love to meet Paige, and so it was. A few weeks later Paige, along with her T1D pal Anna, got to meet the UCLA star at Easton Stadium after a game with the Washington Huskies on Saturday, 21 April 2018. What a thrill for these two young girls! Here was a star female athlete who also had Type 1 Diabetes, was highly successful and extremely positive. What better role model could these two young girls have? You can bet they'll never forget that moment, and it will undoubtedly have an affirmative effect on them for the rest of their lives.



Here's the point. Did Kylee Perez have to take time out of her extremely busy schedule to meet with Paige and Anna? No. She did so because she has grace and compassion. Kylee didn't have to respond to Christa's Facebook message in the first place, let alone meet the girls, but she did. Not only this, but Kylee's father, Jeff Perez, also graciously took the time to meet with Paige and Anna after the game. Obviously, the acorn didn't fall far from the tree.



Kylee Perez in a PAC-12 Network postgame victorious interview against the Washington Huskies

In brief summation, Kylee Perez is a stud on the softball field. No doubt. Her track records prove it. But more than this, far more, she is a star with a heart and a champion with genuine humility, class and compassion; a young woman who constantly leads and inspires others by example and, incontestably, is the epitome of a warrior with a golden glove and even more impressive grace.

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