

**It was a fight to the finish.** After losing their first game of the Women's College World Series to the James Madison Dukes, the top-seeded Oklahoma Sooners slugged, pitched, leapt and slid their way to their fifth national championship, staying alive in the face of elimination through four straight games.

No wonder the team has adopted the movie "Gladiator" as its inspiration.

The Sooners thumped the Florida State Seminoles 5-1 to win their third national title in five years while setting multiple single-season NCAA records in team batting average, team slugging percentage, on-base percentage, home runs and runs scored, among others.

"I knew we were good," said Coach Patty Gasso after the championship game June 10 at Oklahoma City's USA Softball Hall of Fame Stadium. "What got us here was really good leadership, a great staff, great strength coach, great hitting coach, great pitching coach . . . I think these hardworking people had so much belief in this team and they felt it daily. We practiced hard daily. They'll tell you that. That's how it all pays off. It's just a lot of hard work and a lot of belief in our culture and our championship mindset and all that we put to work there."

Much of the credit for the Sooners' never-say-die attitude goes to senior lefthander Giselle Juarez, who took home WCWS Most Outstanding Player honors for allowing just one run on two hits, striking out seven and walking two for her second complete game in roughly 20 hours.

The cherry on the championship was Juarez catching a short popup after striking out two Seminole batters in the top of the seventh, sealing a Sooners win.

The conquest began with Jocelyn Alo, the NCAA Player of the Year for the 2021 college softball season, adding to her single-season school record by hitting her 34th home run of the season with a solo shot to left field in the bottom of the first inning.

Freshman center fielder Jayda Coleman followed with a solo blast of her own to left in the second inning. OU pushed its lead to 5-1 on a passed ball and a two-run double off the top of the wall from Coleman that was inches away from being her second straight home run.

In addition to Juarez capturing the MOP award, Alo, Mackenzie Donihoo, Kinzie Hansen, Nicole Mendes and Tiare Jennings were named to the all-tournament team.

Seconds after Juarez caught the last fly of the game, she was knocked off her feet in a rush of jubilant teammates, and the persistent question of the season, "Are you not entertained?" was answered by the deafening roar of Sooner fans.



**BATTLING BACK FROM THE  
LOSERS' BRACKET,  
SOONERS WIN THEIR FIFTH  
NATIONAL SOFTBALL TITLE.**

**WE ARE THE**

**BY LYNETTE LOBBAN AND JOHN ROHDE/OU ATHLETICS**  
Photos by OU Athletics



**Clockwise from lower left:**

- Oklahoma's Jocelyn Alo shows why she was named 2021 USA Softball Collegiate Player of the Year by hitting .407 with four home runs in the WCWS. Against Florida State in the Championship Series, Alo went 7 for 10 with a pair of homers and five runs scored.

- Jayda Coleman celebrates a home run in the second inning of the championship game. The center fielder hit .444 as a true freshman, which earned her NFCA First Team All-America honors.

- Fifth-year senior ace Giselle Juarez saves her best performances for last by posting a 5-0 record in the WCWS, including consecutive victories over Florida State in the Championship Series.

- After hitting just .145 as a freshman last season, Mackenzie Donihoo blossomed into one of OU's most reliable players in 2021, capping it off in the WCWS by hitting an eye-popping .478 while playing a flawless left field. Her larger-than-life leaps earned her the nickname "Air Donihoo."

- Enthusiastic teammates knock pitcher Giselle Juarez off her feet after she catches a fly ball in the top of the seventh, bringing OU its fifth national championship, its third in five years under Coach Patty Gasso.

# CHAMPIONS