



# Queen *of the* Long Ball

Jocelyn Alo slugged her way to the career NCAA home-run record, helping power OU to consecutive national titles.

BY JAY C. UPCHURCH

**A** pair of singles serve as bookends to Jocelyn Alo's time at the University of Oklahoma: A sharp grounder to centerfield in her very first at-bat as a Sooner in the 2018 season-opener, and a hard line-drive off the shortstop's glove in her final plate appearance at the 2022 Women's College World Series.

Not a bad way for any player to start and finish their respective careers.

But it's what Alo did in between those two base hits that will forever etch her name alongside the greats of collegiate softball.

In five seasons with the Sooners, Alo became known for her majestic swing, infectious smile and for the passion and intensity she put on display every time she stepped into the batter's box to stare down an opposing pitcher.

Along the way, Alo developed into the most prolific power-hitter in the history of the sport. She became the leader of the best college softball program in the country and recognized nationally as the face of the game, inspiring little girls and young players everywhere to strive for greatness.

"I've watched Jocelyn since our travel-ball days, to our college playing days, and now coaching days—and there isn't another swing out there like Jocelyn Alo's," says Syndey Romero, a former Alo teammate and current OU assistant coach. "She keeps her swing simple and doesn't overanalyze it, which I think makes her very successful. She is also very selective and patient at the plate, but Jocelyn's confidence is what stands out to me most.

"That's why we all know she's the best hitter softball has ever seen."

Statistics back up Romero's claim.

By the time Alo played her final college game, she had rewritten the record books for hitting, not only at OU but for all of Division I softball. Her 122 home runs established a new NCAA career record, 27 better than former OU star Lauren Chamberlain's 95, which had stood as the high-water mark since 2015. ▶

**I**n addition to the new home-run standard, Alo also ranks first in NCAA Division I history in slugging percentage (.987) and total bases (761). As a senior, she became the first player to ever hit 30 home runs and bat .500 in the same season—finishing the 2022 campaign with a nation-leading 34 homers and .515 batting average, to go along with 85 runs batted in and a 1.212 slugging percentage.

The Hauula, Hawaii, native earned NFCA All-America honors four times as a Sooner, including three as a First Team selection. She was twice voted Big 12 Conference player of the year (2020-21) and twice honored as the USA Softball Collegiate player of the year.

“I’ve been blessed to be in this position and extremely proud of everything I have been able to accomplish here at OU. I feel like I definitely left my mark,” says Alo, reflecting on her time with coach Patty Gasso’s program. “But what I am most proud of is going out on top with this [2022] team and with my amazing teammates. To be a part of back-to-back national championships teams—to me, that’s the ultimate achievement.

### **“I could not have imagined a better ending.”**

Alo finished off her career by helping lead Oklahoma to the 2022 WCWS title, taking down Big 12 rival Texas 16-1 and 10-5 in the decisive best-of-three series.

The No. 1-ranked Sooners went 5-1 in the WCWS to finish Alo’s final season 59-3, successfully defending the national title they captured a year earlier with consecutive wins over Florida State in the 2021 champ series.

“It’s difficult to put into words exactly what Jocelyn has meant to this program during her time here. She’s just a special, special player who’s had an enormously positive impact on our success and on everyone around her,” says Gasso, whose program produced a 249-22 record and four WCWS appearances during Alo’s five seasons (the 2020 WCWS was canceled due to COVID-19).

“Jocelyn has such a dynamic presence when she’s at the plate—she’s the type of hitter who can change the complexion of a game with one powerful swing of her bat. It’s something she’s basically done over and over the entire course of her career.”

While Alo’s power is off the charts and her home runs are what often make headlines, she’s anything but a one-trick pony.

“If the situation called for a single or a double, Jocy would deliver. Whatever we needed. She thrives in those moments,” says Gasso.

Beyond the eye-popping power numbers, Alo ranks first at OU in career hits (343), runs scored (281), on-base percentage (.557), RBI (323), extra base hits (173), total bases, slugging percentage and batting average (.445).



Hauula, Hawaii, native Jocelyn Alo signs a ball for young fans when she returns to her home state to play in front of an enthusiastic crowd of family and friends.

“I love hitting. I love the challenge of going up against the best pitchers,” says Alo. “That’s kind of the way it’s been since I was little and my dad used to take me to hit balls every single day. That’s really where all of this success kind of started.”

Alo’s parents, Levi and Andrea, have been her most staunch supporters over the years, making financial sacrifices to help her find opportunities that eventually led to landing an OU scholarship.

Their loyalty has been repaid many times over, according to Levi, but never more emphatically than during the Sooners’ midseason trip to Honolulu and the 2022 Aloha Rainbow Classic. Chasing the NCAA career home run record at the time, Alo was one shy of breaking the mark (95), having gone a careerlong stretch of nine games without a homer.

But on March 11 against host Hawaii—playing in front of almost her entire family and thousands of enthusiastic onlookers and friends—Alo cracked a two-run, sixth-inning blast that sent the home crowd into a frenzy.

“That was an unforgettable moment for everyone who has been watching Jocelyn and following her all these years,” says Levi. “We could not be more proud of her and everything she has accomplished so far.”

Gasso, who has been witness to more than her share of big moments during a 33-year coaching career, expected nothing less from her star slugger.

“To be able to hit it in Hawaii, against Hawaii, on the field where she won the high school state championship, and all of her family who can’t ever get to Norman—her sisters, her mother, a huge, huge, huge family—were all there to witness this. It truly could not have been scripted any better,” says Gasso. “It was just the most emotional, tremendous moment. One of the best I’ve ever had as a coach.”



OU Athletics

Alo was named winner of the 2022 ESPY for Best College Athlete in Women's Sports July 19. In five seasons with the Sooners, she was known for her majestic swing, infectious smile, passion and energy.

Big moments highlight Alo's collegiate résumé. In fact, Alo seemed most comfortable on college softball's biggest stage.

In 24 career WCWS games, she hit .471 with 13 homers and 28 RBIs. The Sooners went 16-8 in those contests, including 11-3 in 2021 and '22 when they captured the program's fifth and sixth national titles.

One of Alo's biggest supporters has been Chamberlain, who wore the crown of college softball home-run queen for seven seasons. The two have developed a close relationship, and Chamberlain was more than happy to see a fellow Sooner break her all-time mark.

"I knew the first time I saw Jocelyn play in Palm Springs her freshman year that she had a chance to be a special player. And it's been so much fun to see her grow and develop as a player and come into her own," says Chamberlain, who currently serves as commissioner of the Women's Professional Fastpitch (WPF) league. "We have become good friends, and to see her chase the record and then break it was the perfect passing of the torch, and I'm extremely happy for her."

Alo believes Chamberlain's support was a positive factor during her pursuit of the record.

"Lauren gave me a lot of great advice on how to stay within myself and handle certain things that really made a difference," she says. "That's pretty generous when you consider I was going after her record."

Looking back on her time at OU, Alo can't help but point to Gasso as a major influence, both on and off the field.



OU Athletics

Jocelyn Alo was one of five OU seniors who earned their degrees this spring. Pictured here at Marita Hynes Field are Taylon Snow (left), Jana Johns, Alo, Lynnsie Elam and Grace Lyons, accompanied by OU Director of Athletics Joe Castiglione.


"It's been an amazing ride. I've had so much fun being a part of this program. I've made lifelong friends with so many wonderful teammates and coaches," she says. "Patty has basically been like a second mom to me the past five years. She's always wanting what's best for me and working to get the best out of me. She's played a huge part not only as my coach, but in life in general."

It was Gasso who pushed Alo to excel as a student-athlete and stay focused on finishing school. In May, Alo graduated from OU with a degree in human relations.

"School has never been my strong suit, but Coach Gasso was always very encouraging. So to earn my degree is a big accomplishment, and one that I am proud of and thankful for," says Alo.

Two weeks after donning her cap and gown, Alo led the Sooners to a second straight national championship, earning WCWS most outstanding player honors with five homers, 13 RBIs and a .667 batting average.

On June 14, Alo joined former great Keilani Ricketts (2012 and '13) as only the second OU player to earn the Honda Sport Award for Softball, presented annually to the top women athletes in 12 NCAA-sanctioned sports. That same day, Alo announced she would be starting the next chapter of her softball career this summer with the Smash It Sports Vipers of the WPF.

"I'm excited about playing at the pro level, for sure," says Alo, who was taken by the Vipers with the No. 1 overall pick in the 2022 WPF Draft. "Looking at more long-term goals, I would love the opportunity to play for Team USA and potentially win an Olympic gold medal. That would be amazing." 

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