

No. 2 UCLA Opens NCAA Title Defense on Friday

May 07, 2025 | Women's Water Polo

LOS ANGELES – No. 2 UCLA (19-5, 5-1 MPSF) heads to Indianapolis, Ind., for the 2025 NCAA Women's Water Polo Championship this weekend at IU Natatorium (May 9-11). The second-ranked Bruins have earned the No. 2 national seed and will open up with a First Round game against LMU (20-11, 7-0 GCC) on Friday, May 9 at 1:00 p.m. PT. Every game of the Tournament will be streamed live on NCAA.com with the Championship game being televised live on ESPNU at 9:00 a.m. PT on Sunday, May 11.

SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

Opponent: No. 10 LMU (20-11, 7-0 GCC) | [LIVE STATS](#) | [WATCH](#)

Location: IU Natatorium | Indianapolis

Date: Friday, May 9, 2025

Time: 1:00 p.m. PT/4:00 p.m. ET

Series History: UCLA leads 29-1 | **Streak:** Won 14

Last Meeting: W, 15-11 (March 18, 2023 - LMU Invitational - Burns Aquatics Center - Los Angeles)

RECAPPING THE LAST MEETING WITH LMU

The Bruins last faced the LMU Lions on March 18, 2023, in a double-header at the LMU Invitational.

- From Game Recap: No. 4 UCLA (15-4, 2-1 MPSF) posted a pair of wins on March 18, 2023 at the LMU Invitational at Burns Aquatics Center. The Bruins opened with a 9-3 win over No. 11 Princeton and then posted a 15-11 win at No. 16 Loyola Marymount. In the win over the Lions, UCLA was led by graduate student [Val Ayala](#) who scored four goals and added an assist for five total points. Junior [Malia Allen](#) led the Bruins in scoring with seven points (two goals, five assists). A total of 10 Bruins got into the scoring column against LMU. Phillips again played the entire game in goal, tallying another eight saves and adding two steals. The Bruins return to action on Sunday, April 2 when they host Hawai'i at Noon in their first home game in 71 days.

UCLA AT THE NCAA CHAMPIONSHIP

This is UCLA's 23rd appearance in the NCAA Championship and 29th overall Championship appearance. The Bruins have won 12 national titles, including going undefeated a year ago and winning their eighth NCAA Championship. UCLA enters the 2025 NCAA Championship with an all-time record of 45-14 (.763) in NCAA Tournament games. Last year the Bruins opened up the 2024 NCAA Championship with a 17-7 win over Wagner and then defeated Stanford, 10-8, in the semifinals before beating California on the road, 7-4.

RECAPPING THE 2025 MPSF CHAMPIONSHIP

The Bruins finished second at the 2025 MPSF Women's Water Polo Championship hosted by UCLA (April 25-27).

- From Semifinal Recap: No. 1 UCLA (19-4) won its MPSF Semifinal match over No. 4 California (18-5) on Saturday at Dirks Pool at Spieker Aquatics Center. The Bruins won the match 15-14 to advance to the MPSF Championship on Sunday. With their fifth-straight win over the Golden Bears, the Bruins improved to 67-14 in the series history. A total of six Bruins scored in the win over the Golden Bears. Juniors [Bia Mantellato](#) and [Taylor Smith](#) (tied season high) led the team in scoring with four goals apiece. Both players completed their hat tricks in the first half of play. [Molly Renner](#), [Genoa Rossi](#), and [Anna Pearson](#) each notched two goals in the match. [Emma Lineback](#) added a goal to contribute to the Bruins' 15 goals. Sophomore [Lauren Steele](#) was effective in the cage, finishing with 18 saves, tying her season best total and added one steal.
- From Championship Recap: No. 1 UCLA (19-5) battled but fell, 11-9, in overtime in the MPSF Championship against No. 2 Stanford (22-1) on Sunday at Dirks Pool at Spieker Aquatics Center. Sophomore [Lauren Steele](#) was dominant in the cage, finishing with a career-high-tying 21 saves and one steal. The Bruins used a balanced offensive effort, with eight players scoring in the match. Redshirt junior [Emma Lineback](#) led the team in scoring with two goals. The Bruins finished with two scores in the first quarter. [Carly McMurray](#) scored the

team's first goal of the game in the opening minute of play. Later in the period, [Nicole Struss](#) scored a goal off of a Stanford exclusion to finish the quarter down 2-3. In the second quarter, Lineback scored her first goal on a penalty shot and then [Genoa Rossi](#) capitalized on an exclusion to score the Bruins' second goal of the period. UCLA trailed the Cardinal 4-6 at the half. Both teams scored two goals in the third quarter. [Anna Pearson](#) notched her first goal of the match on a power play while [Molly Renner](#) scored her first goal at the end of the third period to as UCLA trailed 8-6 heading into the final frame. UCLA outscored Stanford 3-1 in the fourth quarter thanks to goals from [Bia Mantellato](#), [Sienna Green](#), and Lineback. Mantellato scored her first goal of the match off of an assist from Renner. Green then scored on an exclusion, and Lineback notched her second to tie the game 9-9 with 2:28 remaining. The Bruins then put on a defensive stand for the final two minutes of regulation, where Steele recorded three consecutive blocks with seconds left to play. The Bruins were outscored 2-0 by the Cardinal in overtime. Steele recorded three blocks in the extra time.

PEARSON NAMED TO MPSF ALL-TOURNAMENT TEAM

Junior utility [Anna Pearson](#) was named the lone Bruin named to the 2025 MPSF Women's Water Polo Championship All-Tournament Team. She scored three goals in the Bruins' two games and drew a tournament-high 13 exclusions.

SEVEN BRUINS EARN MPSF POSTSEASON ACCOLADES

Seven different Bruins received postseason honors from the Mountain Pacific Sports Federation, as announced by the conference office today. The awards were highlighted by Bruin Head Coach [Adam Wright](#) being named the 2025 MPSF Coach of the Year, the second-straight year he has won the award. Wright led the Bruins to their second-straight top seed in the MPSF Tournament. In the regular season finale, third-place UCLA needed to defeat No. 1 USC by at least four goals to leap into the MPSF's top seed, in which it exactly did. That result marked the squad's third top-five win of the year, and ninth over the top-10. UCLA placed a high of three players on the Delfina All-MPSF first team and matched an overall high of five players across each of the all-conference teams. This is Wright's second MPSF Coach of the Year honor on the women's side, repeating his honor from last year. Three Bruins earned Delfina All-MPSF First-Team accolades and all were honored for the second time, which included junior utility [Anna Pearson](#) (Irvine, Calif./Orange Lutheran HS), redshirt junior attacker [Emma Lineback](#) (Laguna Beach, Calif./Laguna Beach HS), and sophomore goalkeeper [Lauren Steele](#) (Old Greenwich, Conn./Orange Lutheran HS). Two Bruins landed on the Delfina All-MPSF Honorable Mention team, which included junior utility [Genoa Rossi](#) (Laguna Beach, Calif./Mater Dei HS) and junior center [Bia Mantellato](#) (Sao Paulo, Brazil/Hawai'i). Freshman attacker [Tali Stryker](#) (Lafayette, Calif./Miramonte HS) was the lone Bruin on the MPSF All-Newcomer Team.

BRUINS SWEEP WEEKLY MPSF AWARDS

Junior utility [Anna Pearson](#) was named the MPSF/Delfina Player of the Week and freshman attacker [Tali Stryker](#) was named the MPSF/S&R Sport Newcomer of the Week as announced by the league office on April 22. Pearson (Irvine, Calif./Orange Lutheran HS) recorded a game-high four goals (on four shots) to lead the Bruins to a 13-9 MPSF home win over No. 1 USC (Apr. 19). She also tallied one field block and one steal, and drew three exclusions (including one penalty). Pearson's efforts helped leap UCLA into a first-place tie as well as the MPSF's No. 1 seed. This is the sixth career MPSF weekly award for Pearson, and the third this year. Stryker (Lafayette, Calif. / Miramonte HS) recorded one goal, one assist, and two field blocks to help the Bruins to a 13-9 MPSF home win over No. 1 USC (Apr. 19). UCLA bumped up to a first-place tie and No. 1 MPSF Tournament seed with the win. This is the first career MPSF weekly award for Stryker.

LINEBACK NAMED MPSF/DELFINA PLAYER OF THE WEEK

UCLA redshirt junior attacker [Emma Lineback](#) was named the MPSF/Delfina Player of the Week as announced by the league office on April 15. Lineback (Laguna Beach, Calif. / Laguna Beach HS) scored a game-high-tying six points with two goals on two shots and four assists, to help fourth-ranked UCLA to an impressive 16-9 home win over No. 3 Hawai'i (Apr. 12). She also drew three exclusions, collected two steals, and added one

field block in the win. This is the third career MPSF weekly award for Lineback, and second this year.

SMITH NAMED MPSF/DELFINA PLAYER OF THE WEEK

Junior attacker [Taylor Smith](#) was named the MPSF/Delfina Player of the Week as announced by the league office (March 11). Smith (Newport Beach, Calif. / Newport Harbor HS) scored a season-high-tying four goals in back-to-back MPSF home games, helping the Bruins defeat No. 5 California 12-7 (March 8) and No. 15 Indiana 19-9 (March 9). She added two assists for a game-high six points, to go with two steals, one field block, one earned exclusion, and won her only sprint of the game against Cal. In the win over the Hoosiers, she also finished as the game-high scorer with five points, adding one assist. Smith added a field block and won a sprint against IU. This is the fourth career MPSF weekly award for Smith.

LINEBACK, WALTERS SWEEP WEEKLY MPSF AWARDS

Redshirt junior attacker [Emma Lineback](#) was named the MPSF/Delfina Player of the Week and freshman attacker [Jojo Walters](#) was named the MPSF/S&R Sport Newcomer of the Week as announced by the league office (March 4). Lineback (Laguna Beach, Calif.) scored in every quarter, finishing with a career-high-tying five goals on six shots to lead the No. 4 Bruins to an impressive 24-11 win over No. 6 Fresno State (March 1). She added an assist for a game-high-tying six points, picked up one steal, and won her only sprint of the game. This is the second career MPSF weekly award for Lineback, and first as player of the week. Walters (Dallas, Texas) scored multiple goals in a game for just the second time in her young career, netting two scores on three shots to help the Bruins snap a two-game losing streak and remain undefeated against the Bulldogs (9-0) in the series history in UCLA's home opener. She scored on a power play in the first period and on a strike from the front court in the second period against the Bulldogs. This is the first career MPSF weekly award for Walters.

PEARSON NAMED MPSF/DELFINA PLAYER OF THE WEEK, AGAIN

Junior utility [Anna Pearson](#) was named the MPSF/Delfina Player of the Week as announced by the league office (Feb. 18). Pearson (Irvine, Calif. / Orange Lutheran HS) was at her best when it was needed, leading UCLA to a 16-15 come-from-behind win at No. 6 UC Irvine with a team-high-tying and season-high-tying four goals (on five shots). She added an assist to score five total points and also registered a career-high nine drawn exclusions to go with one steal and one field block. She had a hand in three of the Bruins' four goals in the fourth quarter. Pearson drew a penalty (her second of the game) that UCLA converted to tie the match at 13-13 at the 7:44 mark of the fourth period. Then she drew an exclusion and scored on the ensuing power play (2:58) to tie the game at 14-14. On the next possession, she recorded a field block and turned it into her fourth goal of the contest on a counter attack to give UCLA its first lead of the game at 15-14 with 2:35 to go. She recorded a steal on the next possession (2:08) to provide a defensive stop. UCLA called timeout and she drew her third exclusion of the fourth (1:42), but the Anteaters got a stop on the power play. UCLA would add an insurance goal to go up 16-14 with 0:38 seconds remaining. UC Irvine scored with seven seconds left to provide the 16-15 final. This is Pearson's fifth career MPSF award and the third time she has been named Player of the Week (Jan. 30, 2024, Jan. 18, 2025), and the second time this season.

PEARSON NAMED MPSF/DELFINA PLAYER OF THE WEEK

Junior utility [Anna Pearson](#) was named the MPSF/Delfina Player of the Week as announced by the league office (Jan. 28). UCLA went 3-0 this past week at the California Cup with a 17-8 win over No. 15 UC Davis and a 12-7 win over No. 8 Long Beach State on Saturday (Jan. 25) and an 18-14 win over No. 9 Fresno State on Sunday (Jan. 26). The three wins to open the season extended the Bruins' winning streak to 29 games. Pearson (Irvine, Calif. / Orange Lutheran HS) led the team in scoring on the weekend with 11 goals. She scored a hat trick and drew five exclusions and added one steal in the win over the Aggies and then tallied two goals, two earned exclusions, and one steal against the Beach. She closed out the tournament with a career-high six goals (on six shots) to go with three earned exclusions and one assist. For the weekend, she shot 11-for-12 (.917), drew 10 exclusions, had two steals, and tallied one assist. This is Pearson's fourth career MPSF award and the

second time she has been named Player of the Week (Jan. 30, 2024).

RETURNING ALL-AMERICANS

A total of seven All-Americans will be suiting up for UCLA in 2025. The Bruins return three of their five All-Americans from the 2024 season, including two first-teamers, and picked up another one from the transfer portal for the 2025 campaign. Sophomore goalkeeper [Lauren Steele](#) (Old Greenwich, Conn./Orange Lutheran HS) and junior utility [Anna Pearson](#) (Irvine, Calif./Orange Lutheran HS) both earned First-Team All-America honors last year and are joined by First-Team All-America transfer from Hawai'i, [Bia Mantellato](#) (São Paulo, Brazil/Newport Harbor HS). Steele, who was named the MVP of both the NCAA and MPSF Championship Tournaments, was also the 2024 ACWPC Player of the Year. The 2024 MPSF Newcomer of the Year, Steele started every game last year in the cage, going 26-0 with 268 saves (ranks fourth on UCLA's single-season charts). Pearson led the team in goals (39) and drawn exclusions (82) in 2024. Mantellato, a two-time Big West Player of the Year (2023 and 2024), led the Rainbow Wahine in goals (64) and drawn exclusions (60). Like Steele, Mantellato was also a Cutino Award finalist (two of the three from 2024 are now Bruins). Junior attacker [Taylor Smith](#) (Newport Beach, Calif./Newport Harbor HS) earned Third-Team All-America accolades a year ago after finishing third on the team in goals (35) and in total points (53) with 18 assists to her credit and returns to the lineup. UCLA is also fortunate to have two Honorable Mention All-Americans from 2023 returning in redshirt sophomore utility [Sienna Green](#) (Mosman, Australia/SCEGGS Darlinghurst) and redshirt junior attacker [Emma Lineback](#) (Laguna Beach, Calif./Laguna Beach HS). Green won a silver medal with Australia at the 2024 Paris Olympic Games and was third on the team in goals (39) in 2023. Lineback paced the Bruins' offense in 2023 with a team-high in goals (52), assists (27), total points (79), and in steals (24). Senior attacker [Molly Renner](#) earned Honorable Mention All-America honors in 2022 and was sixth on the team last year in goals (22) and returns for her final season. The Bruins lost the services of First-Team All-American [Hannah Palmer](#) (26 goals) and Third-Team All-American [Malia Allen](#) (33 goals). UCLA also lost the services of utility [Panni Szegedi](#) (Budapest, Hungary/Kolping Katolikus Iskola), who was the lone Bruin to receive Delfina All-MPSF Honorable Mention accolades a year ago after tying Pearson for the team lead in goals (39).

EXPERIENCE BETWEEN THE POSTS

All four of UCLA's goalkeepers on the 2025 roster saw playing time last season. The Bruins have a wealth of experience in the cage and National Player of the Year, [Lauren Steele](#), headlines a group that includes junior [Izzy Rosensitto](#) (Newport Beach, Calif./Santa Margarita Catholic HS), senior [MJ Bailey](#) (Sarasota, Fla./Pine View School), and sophomore [Joey Niz](#) (Los Alamitos, Calif./Los Alamitos HS). [Sydney Chiang](#) (Temple City, Calif./Temple City HS) was the lone loss (graduation) at this position.

ANOTHER INFLUX OF YOUTH

The Bruins had 11 true freshmen join the ranks in 2024 and welcome in another eight this season. That class is bolstered by two redshirts from last year, putting the total of freshmen and sophomores to 18 on the 2025 roster. That is a total of 18 of the Bruins' 29 student-athletes (62.1 percent) on the roster with only one year or less of collegiate experience. The eight true freshmen include [Kenya Cassidy](#) (Atherton, Calif./Menlo School), [Ryan Chalupnik](#) (Newport Beach, Calif./Newport Harbor HS), [Aubrey Graham](#) (Mountain View, Calif./Mountain View HS), [Jenna Human](#) (El Cajon, Calif./Santana HS), [Ana Pieper](#) (Orinda, Calif./Campolindo HS), [Tali Stryker](#) (Lafayette, Calif./Miramonte HS), [Maile Turner](#) (Danville, Calif./Monte Vista HS), and [Jojo Walters](#) (Dallas, Texas/Southlake Carroll HS). The class is joined by redshirts [Alexsa Gimenez](#) (Commerce, Calif./Downey HS) and [Camille Greenlee](#) (Carlsbad, Calif./The Bishop's School).

MORE BRUINS LOOKING TO MAKE AN IMPACT

UCLA also returns nine players from its 2024 roster that all made significant contributions to the Bruins' undefeated NCAA title run last season. That group includes sophomores [Dania Innis](#) (Orinda, Calif./Miramonte HS), [Natasha Kieckhafer](#) (San Juan Capistrano, Calif./Santa Margarita Catholic HS), [Becca](#)

[Melanson](#) (Pittsburgh, Pa./North Allegheny HS), [Olivia Ouellette](#) (Los Alamitos, Calif./Los Alamitos HS), and [Elektra Urbatsch](#) (Brooklyn, N.Y./Poly Prep Country Day School), juniors [Lily Gess](#) (Newport Beach, Calif./Newport Harbor HS), [Carly McMurray](#) (Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif./Santa Margarita Catholic HS), and [Genoa Rossi](#) (Laguna Beach, Calif./Mater Dei HS), and senior [Nicole Struss](#) (Laguna Beach, Calif./Laguna Beach HS),

THE WRIGHT STUFF

[Adam Wright](#) is in his eighth season as UCLA's head women's water polo coach in 2025 with an overall record of 171-41 (.807) and an MPSF mark of 36-13 (.735). He won his 100th game at the helm of the women's program with a 9-8 victory at No. 4 California (Mar. 5, 2022). Top-seeded UCLA won its first league title since 2017 with a 10-4 win over fifth-ranked USC in the semifinals and a 13-10 win over third-ranked California in the finals of the 2024 MPSF Women's Water Polo Championship, which marked the first MPSF Championship for the Bruin women in the Wright era. Wright guided the Bruins to their eighth NCAA Championship and 12th National Championship in program history in 2024 with a perfect 26-0 record. It marked his first NCAA Championship with the women's program and he now has eight total titles, winning two as a player in 1999 and 2000, five as the Head Coach of the UCLA Men's Water Polo team (2014, 2015, 2017, 2020, and 2024) and last year's title with the Bruin women. Wright was named the MPSF and ACWPC National Coach of the year in 2024 and is the first Bruin Head Coach to earn the honor since Adam Krikorian won it in 2009. It is the eighth time a Bruin mentor has been named the national Coach of the Year. Wright guided UCLA to just its third undefeated season in program history, joining the 2005 (33-0) and 2008 (33-0) teams. Just five squads have ever had perfect runs to NCAA Championships, with USC doing it twice (2004 and 2016). Wright was named the 2025 MPSF Women's Water Polo Coach of the Year, marking his second-straight season to garner the honor. On July 20, 2017, then-UCLA Director of Athletics, Dan Guerrero, announced that Wright would guide both the UCLA men's and women's water polo teams.

RECAPPING 2024

Overall Record: 26-0 (1.000) | MPSF Record: 6-0 (1.000) | Final Ranking: 1st | NCAA Finish: 1st | MPSF Tournament Finish: 1st

The UCLA Bruins (26-0) captured their eighth NCAA Championship and 12th National Championship in program history with a 7-4 win at No. 3 California on May 12. UCLA completed just the third undefeated season in program history, joining the 2005 (33-0) and 2008 (33-0) teams. Just five squads have ever had perfect runs to NCAA Championships, with USC doing it twice (2004 and 2016). The Bruins registered the 123rd NCAA title in UCLA athletic department history. UCLA women's water polo has won 12 national championships in all, with four predating the first NCAA title. Head coach [Adam Wright](#), who has guided the UCLA men's water polo program to five NCAA titles (2014, 2015, 2017, 2020, and 2024), did so for the first time at the helm of the women's team.

UCLA IN THE CWPA POLL

The Bruins held steady at No. 2 in the 2025 CWPA National Women's Varsity Top 25 Poll (96points), released on May 7.

Rank	Team	Week 15 Poll	Points
1	Stanford	1	100
2	UCLA	2	96
3	USC	3	92
4	California	4	87

5	Hawai'i	5	85
6	Long Beach State	6	78
7	UC Irvine	7	68
8 (T)	Harvard	10 (T)	65
8 (T)	Fresno State	9	65
10	LMU	8	64
11	Princeton	12	62
12	Arizona State	10 (T)	60
13	UC San Diego	13	54
14	Indiana	14	53
15	San Jose State	15	46
16	Michigan	16	43
17	UC Davis	17	35
18	Wagner	19	33
19	UC Santa Barbara	18	27
20	Pacific	20	22
21	Marist	22	18
22	San Diego State	21	15
23	McKendree	23	12
24	Brown	24 (T)	8
25 (T)	Bucknell	24 (T)	5
25 (T)	Pomona-Pitzer	24 (T)	5
RV	LIU	RV	2
RV	Villanova	NR	2
RV	La Salle	NR	1