

## L - o - o - o - n - g Weekend! Lady Jays Go 63 Innings NCAA Records

*Omaha World-Herald (NE) - May 13, 1991*

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- Edition: Sunrise
- Section: Sports
- Page: 17
- Readability: 10-12 grade level (Lexile: 1170)

After 56 innings, a sunset and sunrise, there is a WAC tournament winner.

Creighton's Kelly Brookhart battled Utah's Janet Womack and Melissa Halkinrude on the mound into the morning hours on Sunday in the Western Athletic Conference softball tournament championship.

Christina Freeman scored from second base on an error by Creighton first baseman Teir Wilber to give the Lady Utes, 25 - 13, a berth in the 20 - team NCAA softball regional field with an exhaustive and merciful 4 - 3 win in 25 innings in the second game at Seymour Smith Field.

Brookhart flied out to left field in the bottom of the 25th to end it.

Including a seven - inning victory over New Mexico in a noon elimination game, the Lady Jays played 63 innings Saturday and Sunday.

Tracy Rice's one - out sacrifice fly scored Lorrie McGill from third base in the top of the 31st inning of the first game of the championship round, giving Creighton, 38 - 25, a 1 - 0 victory over Utah in what was the longest game in NCAA softball history. That forced the decisive second game, which started at 12:45 a.m.

The previous record for the longest game was in 1984, when Central Michigan and Kent State played 28 innings.

Brookhart and Womack combined to throw 763 pitches. Brookhart tossed 416 and Womack 347. Brookhart, a senior from Des Moines, also finished her career by pitching 91 1/3 innings without allowing an earned run. She had a consecutive scoreless streak of 81 innings, which ranks third in NCAA history.

A crowd of 153 - which dwindled to about 40 in the second game - watched 218 batters come to the plate and saw 41 hits, with neither team able to take advantage of numerous scoring opportunities in the 6 - hour, 21 - minute first - game marathon.

"We say put it all out on the field and leave exhausted," CU Coach Mary Higgins said. "I didn't think it would come quite to this."

If not for the international tie - breaker rule, implemented in the 25th inning, the second game might have gone even longer.

The rule allows the team at bat to place the runner who made the last out in the previous inning on second base at the start of the inning.

In the 22nd inning, both coaches conferred with WAC Deputy Director Margie McDonald and agreed to implement the rule, if the score was still tied 3 - 3 in the 25th. The rule was not used in the first Utah - CU game.

The majority of WAC coaches voted not to use the tie - breaker rule for the tournament. Higgins was not one of them.

"From the word go I am in favor of the tie - breaker rule," she said. "It starts to become unfair to the players and to the fans. I think that they like to see some action. I think that is a totally legitimate rule."

Utah Coach Jo Evans hedged on using the rule.

"I really hesitated doing it," she said. "But when you get to the point where it's light and you play through the night, then you've got to draw the line, I guess."

Ms. McDonald said she did not want to postpone the game because the NCAA selection committee, which announced the regional pairings at 7 p.m. Sunday, needed a winner by noon.

"I was afraid of just what is happening now would happen," she said of the drawn - out games. "We'd be playing right up until the selection committee announces."

In the first game, McGill had reached on a throwing error by shortstop Gaylyn Hoshide to lead off the 31st inning. McGill moved into scoring position by stealing second, then moved to third on an illegal pitch by Utah's Womack.

The violation was called after Womack had released her pitch when shortstop Hoshide had one foot in foul territory along the third - base line, causing the Lady Utes to have only eight players on the field.

"We made a mistake, a really costly mistake and that was the ballgame," said Evans.

"She was standing over here (third - base line) to cover third base, and the third baseman was up in case of a passed ball. It was just a fluke thing."

Rice then brought in the winning run.

Brookhart, 18 - 13, retired the Lady Utes in order in the bottom of the 31st inning, ending Part I of the doubleheader.

"This will go down in Lady Jay history," said CU's Higgins after the first game. "I am so proud at this moment. The effort by Brookhart was unbelievable.

"I have never seen an athlete compete like Kelly competed today. Her performance was absolutely unbelievable and unprecedented."

Was Brookhart tired after tossing 58 1/3 innings Saturday afternoon into Sunday morning?

"Yes, after a while my arm just went numb and I really didn't feel it at all," she said.

"We were trying to think of all sorts of inspirational things. Finally it just ended up we were saying 'peanut butter' because we didn't know what else to say."

Utah, the WAC's regular - season champ stranded 34 runners, and the Lady Jays had failed to bring in 19 of their baserunners.

The Lady Utes loaded the bases in the third, fifth and 23rd innings, only to have the Lady Jays make the defensive plays and get out of the jams.

Utah took a 1 - 0 lead in the fourth inning of the second game on Deb DiMeglio's solo home run off CU starter Jeni Ruzich.

In the fifth, Wendy Stewart led off with a single and moved to second when CU left fielder McGill mishandled the ball. Jennifer Fotheringham bunted her to third. Amy Timmel then lined a shot off CU third baseman Suzanne Pickett for a hit and stole second, putting runners at second and third with one out.

Amy Cowley scored Stewart with a sacrifice fly to left, chasing Ruzich. Charmelle Green singled off Brookhart to score Timmel for a 3 - 0 Utah lead.

Wendy Moon hit a one - out triple down the right - field line in the CU fifth and scored on Wilber's single, cutting the lead to 3 - 1.

The Lady Jays tied it at 3 - 3 in the sixth on a two - out, two - run double by Brookhart. McGill singled and Beth Herod reached on a fielding error to set the stage for Brookhart.

Halkinrude and Brookhart then battled into the morning.

The Lady Utes loaded the bases with two out in the 17th on a single, error and intentional walk. But Brookhart struck out Fotheringham to end the inning.

Creighton loaded the bases with two out in innings 19 through 23 but could not score.

"We had a ton of chances," Higgins said. "We just needed one little bloop single or one just to have eyes to get past the infield. We just could not come up with it, which was incredibly frustrating.

"People were trying, we just could not do it. I guess it wasn't meant to be. It certainly wasn't from a lack of effort."

Moon, Rice, Herod were named to the all - tournament team. Brookhart was named the most valuable player on the all - tourney team.

"It all seem like such a blur to me," Utah's Evans said. "I can't even remember everything that happened. We had so many chances to win the game, as did Creighton. We look over here and feel badly for Creighton. It's a shame that somebody has to lose." NCAA Records  
NCAA records set in the Creighton - Utah doubleheader Saturday and Sunday: Most hits - 7, Charmelle Green, Utah, game 1 (ties record set by Krys Bondarenko of Canisius on May 1, 1985).

Most walks - 6, Wendy Stewart, Utah, game 2 (breaks previous record of 5 set by Deb DiMeglio, Utah, in game 1).

Most innings pitched - 31, Kelly Brookhart, Creighton, and Janet Womack, Utah, game 1 (breaks previous record of 25 set by Shawn

Andaya, Texas A&M, on May 24, 1984).

Most team at - bats - 114, Utah, game 1 (breaks previous record of 99 set by Cent. Michigan on April 21, 1984).

Most individual at - bats - 14, Amy Timmel, Laurel Simmons, Gaylyn Hoshide, Jennifer Fotheringham, Utah (breaks previous record of 12 set by Jacquie Joseph and Kathy Leitke, Cent. Michigan).

Most runners left on base - 34, Utah, game 1 (breaks previous record of 20 set by Arizona on April 21, 1983).

Longest game - 31 innings, breaks previous record of 28 set by Cent. Michigan - Kent State on April 21, 1984. Kelly Brookhart Mary Higgins

• **Caption:** Mugs

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- *Record:* 172435
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