

Kayla and Reid Strain

A FAIRY TALE WEDDING BEFORE THE WORLD CHANGED

PHOTOS: KAITY BRAWLEY PHOTOGRAPHY



The wedding party includes family and friendships created over the course of the couple's life.

TWO YOUNG SOCCER PLAYERS, who met at a Palatine, Illinois soccer training club, both earned contracts to play on two of Sweden's professional leagues—his is Stode, and hers in Lidköping. Between the 24 or more games per season of playing the sport, the couple began dating in person, shuttling between their two Swedish towns, and visiting on Facetime. They spent their summer there exploring Scandinavia. Upon their return to Barrington after the first year there, a big surprise awaited the unexpected future bride.

Kayla Braffet grew up in Carlock, Illinois near Bloomington, and attended South Dakota State majoring in English Education and French. She taught for four years in South Dakota before coaching one year at Concordia College where she also trained to qualify for a professional soccer team. Reid Strain grew up in Fox River Grove and attended Barrington schools, including Station Middle School and Barrington High School. Reid was training to continue his pro career at the same facility where the two met before heading overseas.

Back in Barrington between seasons, it was Reid's birthday. But it was Kayla who was about to receive the present of a lifetime. Both knowing that as a boy he loved dinosaurs, Reid said he'd like to visit The Field Museum for his special day, offering what Kayla calls "bogus facts" about wanting to go there—trying to make the planned adventure seem authentic. But behind the scenes, a one-of-a-kind "rock" was being placed in an exhibit case along with a card with Kayla's name on it in the museum's Grainger Hall of Gems. "I had to nearly drag her over to see this case, and when we got there, she did a double take when she saw the contents," Reid said.

"He got down on one knee, and popped the question," Kayla said. "The whole thing was organized by Reid with help from Christina Currie Events, whose team played a role in Reid's family parties over the years. There were roses, a music duo played, and we were offered a Champagne toast. There was even a photographer there!" After the proposal, the newly engaged couple went to dinner and met up with friends at their hotel to celebrate.

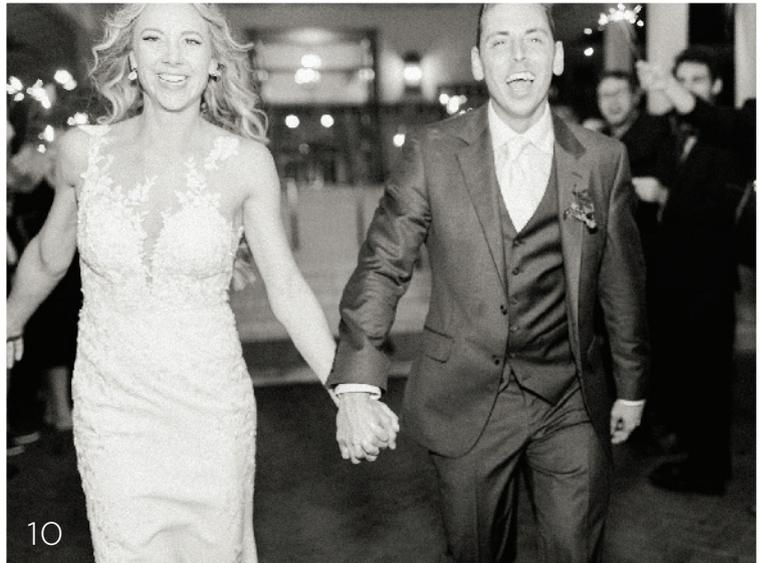
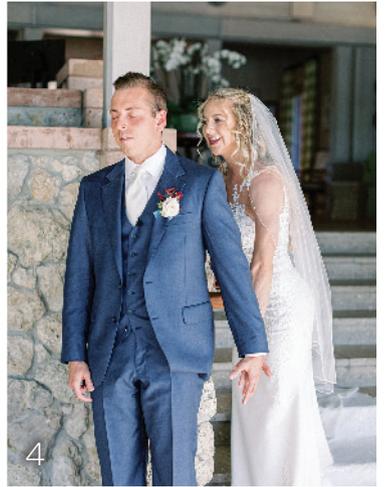
"But there was a huge snowstorm that day, and my parents couldn't join us," Kayla said.

When it was time to return to work in Sweden, the wedding planning was a long-distance effort. Reid's grandmother is a member at the Port Royal Club in Naples, Florida, which would be the wedding and reception destination. Planning a wedding between two continents wasn't easy. "The small details were hard to see in photos," Kayla said. On a trip to Florida before their wedding, the details were seen in person. Christina Currie bridged the distance with expert planning for the event.

Before the wedding on January 25, the couple sought pre-marital counseling, and were connected with "an amazing Christ-centered mentor couple" who led the way. One question was asked, "How do you want your marriage to look and what words will you use to describe your marriage?" Kayla says their words would become the foundation of their union—including friendship, trust, love, security, and Christ. They wrote their vows. Their mentor also suggested they write a love letter to give to each other after they were married. Associate Pastor Steve Carter from Willow Creek Community Church officiated at their wedding in Naples.

"It was a little windy on the beach," Kayla says of their ceremony. "Reid wore shoes. I went barefoot. An aunt sang "Ave Maria", a family tradition. We had 150 family and friends with us."

The reception began with a cocktail hour on the terrace leading to a magical wedding experience. Kayla and Reid who credit their faith as an important approach to their lives on and off the field. "For us, we were lucky," she said. "COVID was not thought about in January, it was just a whisper then. It is heart-wrenching to think about how many amazing couples did not get their fairy tale wedding. It is hard choosing a venue you can only see through a screen; it's hard picking out flowers you cannot smell or touch and even harder to do these things away from family and friends. Although COVID was not our reason for having to plan this way, I felt that other couples could relate in some way to our experience." 



1) Invitations to capture the romantic charm of a beach wedding, featuring the couple's custom design and logo by Charmant. 2) The bride's mother adds finishing touches for the perfect look. 3) The bride's reveal before the ceremony. 4) A private moment of prayer before the ceremony. 5) The beach ceremony captured the romance of the destination wedding. 6) Groomsmen at the beautiful Port Royal Club. 7) Kristen, Curt, Kayla, Peggy, and Meghan Braffet. 8) Bret, Redi, and Vanessa Strain. 9) Celebrating after the ceremony. 10) A Sparkler send-off for the newlyweds.