

Atlantic Coast Conference Baseball Championship

Saturday, May 28, 2022

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Truist Field

North Carolina Tar Heels

Coach Scott Forbes

Danny Serretti

Mikey Madej

Postgame Press Conference

North Carolina - 7, Notre Dame - 2

THE MODERATOR: We'll get started with North Carolina.

COACH FORBES: Excited for our guys. I mean, to be able to win a ACC championship, 8-13, I believe when we left for Virginia, and I think they're the most important ones who believed the most. They're being rewarded for it.

Awesome group from the start of the fall to right now. I thought sending the guys off to a good start. I thought Gillian was huge for us today. He showed glimpses of how good he was last year, and the rest of our pitchers came in and did their jobs.

And we left some guys on base, but we found a way there, with two outs, Mac and Dave, with a big swing of the back. Mikey was outstanding on base today.

But a great team effort and excited to play tomorrow in the ACC championship.

Q. Danny, second time in your career going for an ACC tournament title. Going back to 2019 year, any comparisons you can make with that team and where this team is right now?

DANNY SERRETTI: I think they're two different teams. Different identities. But we both hitting our stride at around this time. So I'd say that's the biggest thing and just the vibe is very positive. Very confident right now. That's what I would say.

Q. Danny, how would you say you're different now? Obviously you're a freshman back then. You've come through a lot. What mindset are you taking into



tomorrow knowing where you've been and how you got to where you are from 2019?

DANNY SERRETTI: Yeah, I mean, I was -- I hadn't really experienced postseason baseball back then, but been through a few postseason games. And on top of that, as a team. We've just been pretending every game is a postseason. Not pre tending, they actually are, we had to win every single game. I think we're ready for it, and I'm excited to get to work.

Q. Can you take me through that at-bat two RBI double there?

DANNY SERRETTI: Yeah, he got behind. I was fortunate to get into a good hitter's count and had a good feeling he was probably going to throw me a fastball. Just get on time for it and glad it got down.

Q. Scott mentioned 8-13. Now you're at a point where you go to the postseason. This can simulate a Regional or Super Regional. How excited are you for the Tar Heels knowing maybe we can be competitive in the NCAA?

COACH FORBES: 100 percent. Our first team meeting, we talked about what our ultimate goal and we don't talk about it anymore.

We talk about how we're going to reach that goal just through hard work, being consistent. That's exactly what we're playing right now, exactly a Regional almost.

Sometimes you have to play four games. And sometimes you have to play more. But these guys, they know this is the time of year where all that hard work, taking care of your body, getting your sleep and doing the right thing can separate you from other teams because that's when you're trying to be at your best, your bat speed at your best and first step at your best and pitchers throwing their best.

Q. Mikey, I know from you, you had to stay patient and keep working and now you find yourself in this spot where you're a key cog in this lineup. Third year here, I think. Just take us through that journey and what



was the key for you to emerge in this role that you're in now and have the success you're having right now?

MIKEY MADEJ: Yes, so I actually didn't play outfield ever in my life until like maybe a week or two before our season started. But I just put my head down and worked and stuck with it. I knew I was going to have an opportunity. An opportunity came. Just trying to produce.

Q. Danny, you approached part of the season as the postseason to just get you in position, to be able to host a Regional where it looks like you guys have gotten yourself there to be able to do that, would that be sort of a remarkable achievement giving where you guys were in the middle of the year?

DANNY SERRETTI: If you look at where we were a month ago, I don't think anybody would have believed that we have a Super Regional except for us. We've just been putting our head down and we knew we had the talent. We had to get over the hump a little bit. We were able to do that and now we're in the Regional, and we deserve to.

Q. You guys were maybe 0-14 with runners in scoring position going into that at-bat. And Mac, Danny, Johnny got the three hits, ends up being the difference. How huge was that going into those final innings, you guys talked about, what you would do or anything like that?

COACH FORBES: Well, our guys have been -- we had all been pretty bad at the season, we knew how to deal with it when it came to that in this game. We knew it was going to be hard to score off them, different looks. Pitching was strong and good breaking ball, hard to square up. But what we've been talking about in the second half, ever since Virginia, is just keep getting them on base, keep getting them on base and not trying to do too much. Just having a good at-bat and eventually we'll get those runs in.

And to have Matt stand up there and have that big swing at the bat after things weren't looking great was big for us.

And then obviously Danny getting those other runs. And [inaudible] got those two sac bunts now. Those were important things that don't show up in the box score that we'll talk about later for sure.

Q. On that, contributions all up and down the lineup, quote/unquote, role players, guys coming off the bench, all that stuff. Does it remind you at all of the 2018 team just the way all those pieces fit together and the way you used the depth of the roster?

COACH FORBES: We were just talking about that, I

pictured guys like Jackson Hesterlee, Dylan Enwiller and Dallas Tessar, guys changing roles on the mound. And this team's similar. I think they had a lot of talent. They can help us. We talked about it before the game. We actually talked about it today. I told these guys, it's easy, when it's easy. These last two games, we had the lead. It's going to be harder for us to win. We've got to make plays and be good fundamentally. Our guys they listened and paid attention.

And the other thing is making sure guys understand that somebody's going to have to help us to win a championship, somebody that's not in that lineup or maybe somebody that hasn't done a lot yet has to help us win. And that's what our guys have been doing.

Q. You go back to a year ago. We got in situations where you tried to piece things together on the mound, a lot of and ups and downs there. But so far this year, since you guys have found a TBA, some days it's been pretty successful. Again here today. Just what does that say about the strides that a lot of those guys have made over the past year?

COACH FORBES: Gains, like I talked about yesterday, I felt great about hiring him for a reason. And I knew coaching him as a player, him going to liberty and doing what he did there, I knew he was ready for that next step back at UNC.

And he's just that steady guy. And we knew going into the season we had more pitching depth. Obviously we may not have Austin Love. I thought he was the best pitcher in our conference to finish the year last year.

But we felt like that depth could help us and we could spread that depth out and you're starting to see some of that now. Now, a lot of those guys when we came back, they had to step up and pitch better than they have.

Q. I have to ask you about Stokely. He had the RBI today. And just his play over this year -- he's from the area. So just how has he done this year and how important has he been to the Tar Heels?

COACH FORBES: See these guys smiling over here. If there's one guy on the team that's going to make you smile, pretty much all the time, is probably Stoke, isn't it?

DANNY SERRETTI: Yeah.

COACH FORBES: He just brings the same attitude, and he's a positive kid. And again, like Mikey said, he wasn't a star at the start of the season. What's been the most impressive thing about Hunter is how well he's played at



first base and that's a very important position and makes these infielders even better.

He's had some big at-bats for us. We give him a hard time because he doesn't have a ton of extra base hits and he's a bigger guy, had to have more extra base hits. Big hits. And he got another one today.

Q. (Question about pitching)?

COACH FORBES: We like our depth. I have to sit down with Coach Gaines tonight and we'll talk about it. We will announce a starter. Carlson is available on a full day's rest, like Tyler Baum was in 2019. Just not sure how we're going to use them. We'll wait and see who wins, because it might be a matchup thing. And we'll announce the starter and have everybody ready tomorrow.

Q. How would you assess the confidence you're playing with during this?

COACH FORBES: You're watching it. Confidence is a fragile thing. I asked every kid when they first get to UNC, does your confidence waiver with performance. They look at me, like I can't lie about that, it does. But then we work hard.

And I got this from Coach Fox way back. He asked me when I was a player, you've got to get where it doesn't waiver with the performance. Trust the work and put it in and have faith in it.

But confidence is confidence, and you start rolling off some wins and the guys start figuring out, okay, we can win those close games, confidence grows even more, and it really started to grow when we got those two one-run leads at NC State.

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