

Atlantic Coast Conference Baseball Championship

Sunday, May 29, 2022

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Truist Field

North Carolina Tar Heels

Scott Forbes

Vance Honeycutt

Max Carlson

Postgame Press Conference

North Carolina 9, NC State 5

SCOTT FORBES: ACC Champs. You know, I remember being at Virginia, down like that, we were down in the bump dumps, too, after that walk-off win on Saturday. But I just, you know, what I had, what kept me going for this team was our team, was our players. Because they have done everything right from the start of the fall, summer school guy, all the way back then, in the classroom, off the field, work ethic. I just felt like, okay, we just had to stay positive and something good is going to happen.

And these guys did it. Started in the locker room with guys like Angel and Danny, Clemente, I could just roll them off, all these guys that just graduated, and that's true leap. We all know if you coach long enough, you know, those players are the ones that make these things happen.

So as far as today goes, our whole approach was we wanted to win an ACC Championship for the University of North Carolina's baseball program and we just happened to be playing NC State. I thought it was great for our fans, everybody's fans. Charlotte, packed the house. And story of the game was Carlson. He's a guy up here that, you know, had that season-ending surgery and we weren't sure if he was even going to be available this year. I've always believed in all these years of being a pitching coach, and there's too much rest and four days is about perfect, and I'm proud of him. You've got Vance over here obviously with the two bombs that didn't hurt. But I'm happy for these guys and our program.

Q. For coach or one ever the players, heading into next weekend, how do you take this momentum to build off of what you've done and turn the season around heading into the regionals?



MAX CARLSON: Obviously we are feeling pretty good but we don't want to ride the highs too high and ride the lows too low. Just going to keep our heads forward, keep working hard and see what happens.

VANCE HONEYCUTT: Second that. Just kind of going off of feeling good and then just came back to work next week and get ready to work on the weekend.

SCOTT FORBES: You can see by his answer. Ice water; he's a laid back dude.

He's exactly right. We know what our mission is and this is one steppingstone. So we'll enjoy today and we'll get back at it tomorrow with our normal routine and be in the weight room after the selection show.

Q. Four days' rest for you, second start back-to-back. When did you find out that you were getting the ball today and what was the mindset, again, just short rest?

MAX CARLSON: Yeah, I was texting back and forth with Coach last night and he said I was going to get the ball. Told him I wanted the ball. And four days' rest, that's a big league rotation. Nothing I can't do, I guess.

SCOTT FORBES: Just tuning him up.

MAX CARLSON: I guess.

Q. Vance, can you talk about your performance today? That's like a little league performance right there, putting up some big numbers today. How nice was it? How satisfying was it to have a performance like that?

VANCE HONEYCUTT: It was awesome. It was really cool. But at the end of the day we wanted to win, and we got that. So someone was going to step up. I didn't know who it was going to be but this team always works and we just kind of got in that groove and we were able to step up and get some runs across, and the guys were able to hold it down.



Q. Vance, we talked to you last weekend about how you have not played in postseason baseball. Now that you have four games under your belt, tournament MVP, what did you take from the last four games and what can you take into next weekend?

VANCE HONEYCUTT: Win-or-go-home. That mentality. You're just playing to win the one game and at the end of the day, you want to be 1-0. That's kind of the mentality you have to go at, and we're going to do that this week.

Q. Vance, what does that look like when you're in a zone over the course of three or four days?

VANCE HONEYCUTT: I feel like if you're seeing it well, you're able to spin on pretty good pitcher's pitches, that off-speed in the dirt or changeup low, stuff like that. You're able to get your pitch and not kind of chase and if you're able to do that then, you know, you can find a barrel and good things happen.

Q. Max, I was going to ask you about Vance. What can you say about the way he's swinging the bat, the confidence he's playing with and must be a nice luxury to be able to sit in the dugout and watch him Jack a bunch of balls out of the yard.

MAX CARLSON: Yeah, it's a pleasure to watch. It's extremely fun. And it's not just Vance, either. The entire lineup, all of them can do damage. It's a pleasure to him out there in center field and all other eight guys on the field because they hold it down for us.

Q. I asked you about this earlier in the season but going back to those midseason tweaks that you made to your swing, taking the tilt out and how you've seen those improvements, especially with your consistency throughout this ACC Championship run.

VANCE HONEYCUTT: The credit goes to Coach Wierz (Wierzbicki). He's always open to work with you. Needed to make a change and we just made a couple tweaks here and there. It's just kind of -- it's working out so far, so hope to keep it going.

Q. This is the second day you mentioned that -- that weekend at Virginia, now an ACC Championship. What's been the biggest change from that weekend to now sitting here with a title for the baseball program?

SCOTT FORBES: One thing that I felt like that our players never did, even when we were going through that tough stretch is I felt like they still played hard and they didn't quit. Never quit a game, even though it was tough and I thought that would serve them well. We just need to find a way to

win a couple close games.

But you know, a lot of credit goes to the three assistant coaches, Coach Gaines, Coach Wierz, and Coach Howell. They do a lot of things people don't see. They spend a lot of time with these guys and at the end of the day, we also know, you have to pitch and you have to defend at a high level to be successful. We started doing that, started with Liberty, we have Charlotte, three runs.

And then our team just found a way to get the series done at NC State. I didn't think we played great, but we came out of there with two one-run wins and I felt like that was the switch for our guys. I saw their confidence start to take over and guys were more comfortable in the box and guys were back to being aggressive on the mound.

We talked a lot about defensively, we can cut out the walls and the extra outs and make plays defensively. We could get back to where we wanted to get, and our guys have done that.

Q. You've talked about Vance since the moment he stepped on campus, and here he is, he's the first freshman in D1 Baseball -- for him to be able to make those tweaks and stay even keel and turn on down the stretch, how much does that say about him?

SCOTT FORBES: Well, the coaches in the back -- Coach Vossan (ph), Coach Wierzbicki, I wasn't even at the camp with they decided, hey, we need to offer this kid, a wiry, skinny dude back then who could really run and fast-twitch. Then COVID hit. Didn't get to go see him.

I knew he wanted to stay championship in football. I was hearing things and I honestly started to panic, thought we might lose him to the draft. But thankfully for us, Vance has great parents and they are both Tar Heels and this is where Vance wanted to be. To watch his growth in such a short amount of time, has been really cool.

But I see these kids every day. I see things people don't see, and I see what Vance is. He listens, he's extremely coachable, and he works. When you do that and you're that talented, you're going to have success.

Q. Have you ever seen in your coaching career anything like the last 35 days since the Virginia series, going from struggling big time to just, you can't do anything wrong.

SCOTT FORBES: Well, I still feel like we do some things wrong in the dugout. That's the coaching side of me. I don't know, I'd have to really sit down and think about that. Obviously I've been coaching a long time but I haven't

been a head coach a long time.

But one thing I learned from Coach, as a player, and then being around him all these years, at the end of the day when you go through something like that, all the eyes are going to one person, and that's you who is the head coach. You have to control your emotions. You have to stay positive with these kids and continue to work really, really hard.

So you know, honestly, I can't say that I can remember off the top of my head. But I also remember eating dinner with my mom and my dad, they were went to that game. They are 78 years old, and I have a little bit perspective in my own mind. I preach these guys to live in the moment, be in the moment, don't look behind us, keep your eyes ahead; and that helped me and I think that helped our team as well because we talked about that a lot.

Q. Not all teams head into the NCAA Tournament playing really well. Some teams get in it because they play well early in the season. You guys played well heading in. How important is that momentum heading into the NCAA Tournament?

SCOTT FORBES: You saw it with our baseball team. Momentum is extremely important. I like the fact that it's Sunday and we play again on Friday. I wouldn't like it if we had two weeks. With sports, they are very momentum-based. Coach Wierz (Wierzbicki) and I, Coach Gaines and I huge Atlanta Braves fans so we talk about where they were in the middle of season.

I heard these guy talking about it and it made me feel really good going into the game today, they just said, you know, this is just one step. So they know what they want, and they know how important that recovery is to keep that momentum for us to play well. You don't celebrate so much; you enjoy it and then you get ready for hopefully hosting a regional at Bosh Cary Stadium.

Q. For both the players, how important do you think that win, the shutout Virginia Tech was for momentum in the rest of the weekend?

VANCE HONEYCUTT: I think it was big. They are very, very good offensively, and we knew that, and we knew it was going to be a tough challenge that night. I mean, we came out hot and got the bats rolling and Schaeffer threw a great game. That was just another little block to get us here.

MAX CARLSON: Yeah, I thought win was very good for us and especially after losing series at home earlier in the season. That was a huge game, and credit to Schaeffer.

That was unbelievable. I don't think I'll ever see anything like that again.

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