

# 2024 Men's College World Series

Friday, June 14, 2024

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

**North Carolina Tar Heels**

**Coach Scott Forbes**

**Vance Honeycutt**

**Dalton Pence**

**Casey Cook**

Postgame Press Conference

North Carolina - 3, Virginia - 2

SCOTT FORBES: Heck of a game, two good teams. I have a lot of respect for Brian O'Connor and Virginia. They've been so good for so long. It's a testament to him and his coaches and obviously the players. We've had so many battles against them, so I wasn't surprised that we had another one.

I was really excited for our players when I looked up there and saw all of our fans who have traveled. Our chancellor is out there, some of our biggest alumni. A ton of former players. Our athletic director. Coach Fox was here which obviously is really special to me. And people that have really given a ton to our program got out here to support these guys.

And then I thought the first inning, the story of the game was the strikeout against Didawick. I think if they score right there, have a big inning it would be tough in this ballpark. But our pitching did the same thing they've been doing. They kept us in striking distance. We played good defense. We made plays.

And then Jackson Van De Brake, he's one of our captains. There's a reason this team is like it is. There's a kid, All-ACC last year, hasn't gone like he wanted it to, and he steps up there and hits a double.

And obviously these guys, they have come through all year, Vance got the big hit. And a big-time team win for us.

**Q. Vance, can you take me through your mindset in that final at-bat?**



VANCE HONEYCUTT: Coach Wierz had a really good approach for us, and I just wanted to just go at it slow, just try to slow myself down. And I got a good pitch 2-0 and kind of came out of it. Got the same pitch 2-1 and stayed down.

**Q. Casey, what was your view of the last at-bat of Vance there, and just the outcome of it, and knowing he has the knack of delivering in these type of moments? What did you see when you were out there?**

CASEY COOK: You shouldn't feel like he's going to come through every time, but that's how I felt. And that's just how it's been going recently.

And Colby popped up and Vance stepped up to the plate, and I think everyone in the dugout knew he was going to come through. And that's what happened.

**Q. Can you talk about Jackson coming through? And he hasn't had an at-bat in 24 days or something, to come through in that spot.**

CASEY COOK: He's a great teammate. He's all we could ask for. He's there for us. He's cheering us on when we're out there playing. It makes us extremely happy to see him come through.

And you don't want it for anyone else other than Jackson. He's our captain. And we love it for him. And we have full confidence in him. It's great to see out of him.

**Q. Casey, you seemed to have not really found a postseason rhythm. And that changed this afternoon. Have you made adjustments at the plate or mentally?**

CASEY COOK: Honestly, not really. I'm just thinking my at-bats weren't terrible the last 2 weeks. The balls just weren't falling, the RBIs weren't coming. I just had to stick to what I was doing all year. And luckily today the ball started falling and started driving, I guess, a run in.

**Q. Vance, what's it like to have like guys like Jackson**



**and Alex be such catalysts in late innings? And Alex laying down the sacrifice bunt, what's it like to bring that momentum and then you finishing the game there?**

VANCE HONEYCUTT: It's huge. We have the utmost confidence in our guys. I don't think the moment is too big for anyone. Coach Forbes preaches every single day to stay with the process and that's what we're doing day in, day out.

**Q. Dalton, could you tell us what was working for you out there? And did you get a chance to talk to Jason about how his outing was working?**

DALTON PENCE: I didn't get a chance to talk to Jason because I was in the bullpen. But just talking to coach Howell out there and just seeing what was going on, watching the pitches before me, watching Poston go through his.

And just commanding the strike zone and letting my stuff work from inside the strike zone to out of it and just attacking them. That's really what I had going for me.

**Q. Scott, I know in the past when you're pinch-hitting normally you'll go to Johnny, like you did against LSU in Game 7. What was it about the match-up that made you go with Vandy this time? Was it just the pitcher?**

SCOTT FORBES: That was one thing. Couple things go into stuff like that. Vandy has been really good in BP, really good in live at-bats. And Johnny has been good too. But I asked Coach Wierz after Alberto's second at-bat, hey, if we need to pinch-hit for Alberto, what do you think? And he said, I feel really good about Vandy.

The thing about Vandy is he's not an all-or-nothing guy. Even though he doesn't have a high batting average, he still looked at the ball -- he's walked. He has some savvy about him, he can get a bunt down, he can run.

So we were just, this park is hard to hit a home run. We felt we needed that spark.

And Coach Wierz, these guys spend a lot of time on prep. And he really felt good about the match-up against Hungate.

**Q. Reflect on the way some of these games have been coming down to the last at-bat, how is your heart rate the last few games, is this something that you've come to expect?**

SCOTT FORBES: I probably should ease up on the Red

Bulls, I guess. But, I mean, yeah, you almost kind of expect it with this team, but we're playing really good teams.

I was talking to the team about how much I preached, because everybody gets caught up in the power of the offense, scoring runs, the home run, we've got to turn home runs, broke a record.

You can't win if you don't pitch and don't defend, fundamental things we work on every single day. When you get in a big ballpark like this, if you're expecting to hit a ton of home runs, it's just not easy to do.

But the funniest part of the day was at the end of the game when Parks Harber was talking to me and Coach Wierzbicki, "How do you guys make it through the game? I don't even know if I'm going to live to be 50. I think my heart's going to just fail." I can relate to what Parks Harber feels like, I can tell you that.

**Q. Coach, it seems like Vance has almost kind of perfected these oh-for walkups. What's the secret sauce that he was able to push those?**

SCOTT FORBES: I feel like, if you looked at the box score, I just told our team we're going to find some grass here; we're going to get a couple of knocks. Blanco is really good. Only struck us out four times. Three of those Alberto just had a tough night.

And the one against Cook, thought we were having pretty good at-bats; just stay with it. And I felt like Vance was seeing it well. Didn't look like he was just getting beat by fastballs.

But he's also shown in his career that he enjoys the big moment. He invites the big moment. So I'm just hoping we can get more guys on base for him because when guys are on base for him and Casey Cook and Parks Harber, they've driven in runs for us all year.

**Q. Coach O'Connor said that they didn't consider walking Vance in that spot because Casey was on deck. How much of a luxury is it to have that 1-2 punch at the top of the lineup where you can't even consider walking Vance in a spot like that?**

SCOTT FORBES: Really, I know Donofrio didn't have a great night tonight, but Gavin had some good at-bats. It was really that one, two, three right at the top.

Power, the left-handed hitter, Casey, sandwiched in between those powerful right-handed hitters that also drive runs in. It's a big-time luxury because you have a tough



decision to make.

And I would have done the same thing. Casey Cook's over 80 RBIs and he's got a knack -- he's got the biggest knack for driving in runs on our team. So it's a good feeling when I'm coaching third base because I'm always trying to get back to the top of the order.

**Q. You mentioned the strikeout in the first inning as being kind of the story of the game. In the third inning is where I think they had runners on second and third and only got a run out of it. In terms of his composure, what did you see from Jason and his ability to get those big outs in key moments?**

SCOTT FORBES: That's why he's so impressive. He's just not overwhelmed with any moment. He's shown that. When I walked out of there to take him out, he was trying his best to tell me that he wasn't coming out.

And that's what I like. That's how it's supposed to be. But, man, he's so competitive. And he is one of those guys -- Alex White, they remind me a lot of each other. When he gets in some trouble, he can reach back a little bit. He can reach back and get that fastball. That's a really good hitter that he struck out right there in that big situation when he knew a fastball was coming because the command wasn't where it needed to be the off-speed. He's mature beyond his years, and we're lucky that he's wearing our uniform, I can tell you that.

**Q. The effort from Dalton almost got lost a little bit with the heroics of Vance and everything. Three and a third out of the bullpen and it was obviously stuff that you needed. What did you think about his performance?**

SCOTT FORBES: Matt Poston -- Poston got some big outs -- and Dalton Pence, they get a lot of fly balls and that can be a big thing in this park.

We lost to UCLA in 2013. A lot of fly balls and they die here a lot of times.

Dalton is Dalton. He's been our horse the whole season. And the thing I like the most, looking at this box score, is he only threw 29 pitches. So that horse is going to be back out there most likely on Sunday night.

**Q. Are you going to stay personally and watch Tennessee/Florida State later, or is that going to be delegated to one of your assistants, to scout who you might get?**

SCOTT FORBES: Now, with so much video, I wouldn't

delegate that with these guys. I trust them. I don't care what they're doing. I don't care if they're going to the Drover and staying until midnight. Coach Wierzbicki and Coach Gaines, Coach Howell, they'll have our guys prepared and have a great plan.

Me, personally, I love coming back to the ballpark. I'll chat with my family, see what they're doing. I love it. I don't take it for granted. This is a special place.

I remember the first time driving up that hill at the old stadium saying I can't believe this is happening. It's basically how I feel when I come up here as a head coach. It's like, is this even real? So I'll probably go back and sit down and give me maybe two dozen of those mini donuts and enjoy a ball game.

**Q. (Indiscernible)?**

SCOTT FORBES: Yeah, if he's back here, I'll chat with whoever wants to chat.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports