

# 2026 Men's College World Series

Thursday, June 11, 2026

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

**North Carolina Tar Heels**

**Coach Scott Forbes**

**Jason DeCaro**

**Jake Schaffner**

**Gavin Gallaher**

Press Conference



lineup. It's great when leaders who have been there before like Gavin and French can really calm us new guys down and really tell us to be in the moment and take it all in and don't take it for granted. So it's been great.

**Q. Jason and Gavin, you guys were two guys that were here when you made it two years ago. Is there anything you're bringing, anything you learned from your first trip around that you're bringing into this one?**

JASON DECARO: Yeah, I think just coming here with a mission. Not getting caught up in everything that's going on. Because it's easy to do that. There's a lot of extra stuff that you can do. And a lot of that can be distractions. Just staying focused on why we're here and just keeping the main thing the main thing.

GAVIN GALLAHER: I would say slowing things down. I remember coming in here in '24 and I don't really remember much of it. It just felt like we landed, had a couple of good practices, and before you know it we were back on the plane back home. Just trying to slow things down and hopefully be here for a couple days longer than we were last time.

**Q. Jason, your last start against USC was obviously outstanding. How long did you give yourself to enjoy that before moving on to your next start here in Omaha?**

JASON DECARO: Honestly, it was the next day. I knew we had to win in order for our season to continue. So I was kind of over it pretty quick. Credit to all the guys that played that day and how they were able to pull that one out.

So excited to be here and ready to go for tomorrow.

**Q. How much are you leaning into Jason and Gavin's experience in allowing them to sort of talk to their teammates and how are you balancing using their experience, also wanting to share your experience being here as well?**

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by North Carolina coach Scott Forbes and student-athletes Jason DeCaro, Gavin Gallaher and Jake Schaffner.

SCOTT FORBES: Honor and privilege to be here. Thankful that we're here. These guys put in a lot of work since August 17th. They're the reason that we are here. Phenomenal group to coach. A lot of thankfulness for them on how they've gone about things and how they've worked.

Again, to see the joy on their faces is very rewarding as a head coach but also as a coaching staff. These guys are ready. They're coming out here to play well. There's no doubt in my mind that they will. And I'm excited about just jumping on their back and staying out of their way.

**Q. Gavin and Jake, Gavin, you've had a lot of postseason success yourself individually. What's it feel like to be here now and take that with you as a team? And is there anything, Jake, that these guys have taught you and made you be better ready for this postseason?**

GAVIN GALLAHER: Just very fortunate for the opportunity. We have a great program, great culture. So we're deep in the postseason a lot. Fortunate to be part of that for three years now, being here twice. Unbelievable opportunity, and it's a great experience every single time. It never gets old. Just showing up to the field, that playoff environment, the atmosphere. It's really awesome. I just try to channel that.

JAKE SCHAFFNER: We have a lot of new guys in our



SCOTT FORBES: Obviously that's important, but there are a lot of guys who haven't been here. So my job is to be up front and honest with them, like Gavin just said, if I recognize the same thing. I don't really remember that much as well. I learned a lot from '24.

If you want to come out here and you want to have success, my job as head coach is to remind these guys why we're here. While it's an honor to be here and it's hard to get to the College World Series, it's even harder to win it, and you don't want to look back and say would have, could have, should have, we didn't do this, we didn't do that.

We watched some documentaries this year about Super Bowl teams, for example, that it took them a year, because of all the distractions, and they had to get back to win it. So I explained to this team, we don't want to look back and feel that way. We're out here on a business trip, but the longer -- when you like when you're going on that business trip and you play well, you get to be on that business trip longer.

So that's our overall goal, for sure.

**Q. Could you just kind of talk me through and walk me through your emotions and just all the feels of being in Omaha for the first time?**

JAKE SCHAFFNER: Yeah, I mean it's been incredible so far. I got to be fortunate enough to come here as a little kid in 2019. So just being able to be here now, with the team, with a great group of guys like this, it's been unbelievable so far. I'm really excited for tomorrow.

**Q. Coach, we talked in the fall about the new lineup, a lot of new guys in the lineup, we don't really know what we're going to have. Seems like we've kind of figured it out. Do you want to just speak on that lineup now and how well they've matured throughout the season?**

SCOTT FORBES: Yeah, I don't feel like our lineup's gotten enough credit throughout the season and that's helped us. These guys play with that chip. So hopefully they won't write too much about how good our lineup is.

We do believe we have a good lineup. We feel like we've gotten better. We can pressure you. We walk. We hit-by-pitch. We got some speed. But then a credit to my coaches, Coach Jackson and Coach Wierzbicki. We also have Brandon Martorano who's coaching now here, finished his degree. Kyle Datres. Great players. They played here in Omaha together.

And I see how hard they work to help these guys improve,

learn plate discipline, get their A swings off, get better on the bases. So it's become more of a complete lineup and they feed off each other, and they know if the guy has to walk, the next guy can do it.

And it takes a little while when you have new players, but we felt like we had a chance to have a pretty good lineup and put pressure on defenses from different areas. But again, I know how much they spend in those cages and on the fields. That's a huge credit to the coaching staff.

**Q. Coach, there have been 23 different teams that have reached Omaha in the last three years. You guys are the only team that has come back. What does this say about your program and the model of consistency that you've brought with this program?**

SCOTT FORBES: You know, Roonz gave us a big compliment not long ago, someone told me about it, sometimes UNC just out-programs you. And that's a credit to our players.

We do take a lot of pride in how we do things, but when you talk about a program and culture and standards, it's everybody. It's not just the coaches. It's not just the players. It's the support staff. It's the administration. Heck, it's the chancellor. It's everybody. And we have felt that extremely strongly even more recently in UNC in this new landscape of the craziness that's going on with the transfer portal and with NIL.

And when you know you have that much support and you know you have people that are at the Bosh every day putting in the work, you feel like you can have a chance and development matters and players getting better.

So there's a lot of credit that people don't get. It's kind of like a game after the guy that hits the home run gets all the credit and nobody gets the credit for getting the bunt down in the fifth inning or making the great play in the gap.

So really the thing that makes our program what it is is all the support that we have and how hard everybody works to help players have everything they need at their fingertips to get better.

**Q. According to roster percentages of the eight teams that are here in Omaha, you guys, North Carolina, rely a lot more on high school recruiting than some of the others. However, you did kind of plug in some transfers into that offense. Can you explain your process of maybe hand-selecting a select few of transfers then maybe the process of spraying the board. And maybe, for example, you replace the star, Luke Stevenson, behind the plate with Macon Winslow**

and Colin Hynek?

SCOTT FORBES: Yeah, again, a credit to our coaches. The transfer portal timing, obviously, is not ideal. Matter of fact, Jake Schaffner, his visit was scheduled on the Monday after we played Arizona Game 3. And so that was a heartbreaker. And we had to flip the switch. And I'm glad we flipped it good enough to get that kid because he's a heck of a player.

But you look at roster construction, obviously your resources matter. Our administration has stepped up and helped us more there. But we say it all the time. We use two words, me and my staff, is patience, because we want to get -- we don't want to just jump the gun right out of the gate when the transfer portal opens -- really three things.

It's patience. It's getting the right guy all the way around, not just the talent. But they got to have character. They have to have makeup. I feel like winning matters and those type of things. Then we still have to get great high school players and try to get them through the draft the best we can. Especially on the mound.

It's not easy for kids that talented. We'll go through it again this year. We like our high school players that we have committed, but we're going to fight the draft for them.

And then just recognizing your biggest needs are. And this year, for instance, we felt like we returned the bulk of our pitchers, and we had to land certain-type players off the transfer portal. We identify them, thankfully, that they picked us. Not all of them picked us. We had some battles that we lost.

But as our resources grow, hopefully we won't lose those battles. But you also can't be afraid of the transfer portal and say it can help you. It can help you stay old as a more mature player, and those more mature players, when you combine them with some returners, you bring in a Caden Glauber, a Tyler Howe, and a Jackson Rose, they help them understand what it's going to take. And then development side obviously matters as well.

But for at University of North Carolina, we're always going to go after the best high school players, but we're not going to shy away from also trying to get the best guys off the portal.

**Q. Piggybacking off what you were previously asked about returning here, what does you guys being the only team to make it back in the last three years, the 23 other teams have come and gone, what's that say about the parity in college baseball right now?**

SCOTT FORBES: That's the great thing about this game. And I know people think it's going to change because of money. I don't see that because you've got the great equalizer in this game, and that's the pitcher. If that pitcher's on, your season is over just like that, no matter who you're playing.

We saw that in 2017. We were loaded. And Davidson knocked us out. They were an older team. They had been together for a while. They had one or two pitchers, if they were on, it was a tough day.

There's a lot of great coaches that work really, really hard. And I think the portal has made a difference, too. You can stay old. You look at Troy. They've taken advantage of the portal. Skylar's a heck of a coach. But if I'm in a smaller school, I've been there before, all of a sudden I can have a one-year roster that I can take advantage of and have a bunch of 21-, 22-year-olds as well. So I think it's really good for college baseball.

The other thing about being here, you have to be careful saying how much experience matters. It doesn't hurt, but my first year here in 2006, we hadn't been in how long, I think '89, next thing you know we win three games in a row and we're playing Oregon State in the finals.

So my goal is just to get these guys present. But I love the parity. I think it's awesome. And it helps as a coach, like, no matter who we play, you have to show up or you get your tail beat.

**Q. You alluded to this before. The last time you guys came here in 2024, the program hadn't been here in six years. It was your first year here as a head coach and none of the players have been here. Now you have players like Jason and Gav who played in Omaha, played big roles in Omaha. Does it feel any different being here in '26 as opposed to '24?**

SCOTT FORBES: Yeah, honestly it does. I don't really know exactly what that is. I'm always honest with our players, so I need to be honest in here, too.

It's just different. Your first time as a head coach -- I had been a head coach a little bit, but your head might be spinning a little bit more. Now I'm kind of like I've been a head coach for a while. And I preach to our guys, you stay process-oriented and you keep winning and you keep finding ways to win, eventually you'll get somewhere, hopefully you'll knock the door down.

For me, I'm more stepping back and saying, okay, how do we just find a way to be even better when we're there. Sometimes you do everything and it doesn't happen. But I

feel like the biggest thing for me, the same as Gavin said, my job, when we get the team here and my job as the head coach is not to just be in Omaha. It's to do all I can, not leave a stone unturned. I've been saying that to our staff.

I reminded them, hey, we've done this all year. Let's just don't stay -- let's just don't just be happy. We're meeting today as a coaching staff. We'll still have free time and take it in. But we just wanted to have the same approach as coaches that we've had all year to get our guys here and not leave anything left unturned when we play Ole Miss, and then we'll go on to the next game.

**Q. Going off the "don't leave any stone unturned," you talk about how difficult this format is to win, this weekend kind of mirrors that of a regional but with the day off in between. I'm just wondering how, if at all does the coaching approach change when you know you have the day off in between games?**

SCOTT FORBES: Yeah, 100 percent. That's the plus of having been out here, for me. We're going to go get it. We'll announce one starter. We have another starter ready. But my goal and our goal is to win tomorrow. Because you have that day and it gives you rest and that rest is vital. And it helps you manage your pitching. So I've learned the hard way, you know, being out here a lot, making some decisions based on the next day. I'm not going to do that. I haven't done that all year.

I feel like there are certain times in the game that that's the biggest moment. We're going to go -- if we're going to try to -- if it's a pitching change, or a pinch-hitter, or whatever it is, that's what we're going to go for it. I can tell you that.

**Q. How, if at all, do you feel like the size of this ballpark plays specifically to your team's advantage?**

SCOTT FORBES: You know, the balls are mighty hard now. The ball's going to get out of here more. Depends on the wind. I do like the fact that we can defend at a high level. We hit a lot of doubles. But it's not like we haven't hit any home runs.

And the park matters. I'll have to go look and see how many home runs everybody has, but I think if we're playing in a smaller park, we're over a hundred.

But the fact that we can pitch it, and when we're on, I feel like a true ballpark is good for our team.

I've never liked a bandbox where you give up a fly ball to right field and the ball's automatically gone. I'd rather play in a ballpark like this, where it's true, you've got to hit it to get it out of here. But if you make good pitches, it's not a

fly ball that's just disappearing over the wall.

**Q. What is it about this program that always seems to be under the radar nationally? I mean, even within the ACC, this year, the headlines were Georgia Tech, years past were Wake Forest, Virginia, but UNC has always just slid right in nationally. What is it about being under the radar all the time?**

SCOTT FORBES: I don't know, y'all tell me. You know it's fine with me. Because I'm just going to keep using it, because obviously, if you have things you can talk to your team about, you're going to do it.

But if you really step back and look at it, this program's been really good. And a lot of great players have played here, too, that have made it to the Big Leagues as well, and I really don't have an answer.

I feel like we have shown as a program that we can compete with anybody. We're not going to back down from anybody. But I kind of like it, to be honest with you, to keep that little bit of edge.

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