

# 2026 Men's College World Series

Wednesday, June 17, 2026

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

**West Virginia Mountaineers**

**Coach Steve Sabins**

**Matthew Graveline**

**Armani Guzman**

**Gavin Kelly**

Postgame Press Conference



North Carolina - 12, West Virginia - 7

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by West Virginia head coach Steven Meier and student-athletes Matthew Graveline, Armani Guzman and Gavin Kelly.

STEVE SABINS: Couldn't be more proud of this group of kids. What they were able to do and what they were able to accomplish is nothing short of miraculous. So thankful for these players, thankful for the seniors.

We have kids in this group that have been part of the best season in program history twice. This is the best season in Mountaineer baseball history. They've been playing baseball for 135 years. So this group of kids get to say that after 135 teams, that they were the first team to make it to Omaha, to play and be one of the last four teams standing. It's certainly tremendous.

You never want to go down. If you're going to go down, for me, being down 12-1 and scratching and clawing and fighting and running out of gas and giving literally everything that you have left in the tank to compete is poetic for me.

We talk about things that represent this state and this university, and that's what we're all about. That's what we've always been all about. So for the kids to embody those things and to fight back in that situation, I wouldn't want to have it any other way, if you're going to go down.

We obviously set our sights on winning a national title and we believed we were capable of doing that and we fell short of that goal. But these kids stuck together through

thick and thin and adversity. And what they were able to accomplish gave hope and belief and excitement to a state and to a university.

So just so thankful for these kids and thankful for their parents for trusting me with their kids. And hopefully the players were able to take a lot from this season and learn a lot as well.

**Q. Matthew, when you transferred in here, you took a chance to be able to come play at West Virginia. Talk to me about that. And did you envision this kind of run with this special group of guys?**

MATTHEW GRAVELINE: Yeah, so when I committed, obviously the goal is to end your season in Omaha. Like Coach Sabins said, we fell short.

But I'm super proud of the group and the effort all season. And I'm just super grateful for the opportunity to become a Mountaineer and finish my collegiate career as a Mountaineer.

**Q. Gavin and Armani, you guys were able to play in the College World Series, get a taste of Omaha. Does that fuel you for next season?**

GAVIN KELLY: Yeah, I mean, the goal is to win a national title, and we were close. So it hurts. But just really proud of the group. We came back from crazy deficits and then had some crazy games in the regionals and even before, so just really proud of the group.

ARMANI GUZMAN: Just going off that, we're just going to really enjoy this. The whole season was really fun. It was everything anyone could ask for. And we're super grateful that it ended the way it did.

**Q. Coach just mentioned that this is the greatest season in the program's long, historic history. What has this run meant for you guys as just banding together as brothers?**

MATTHEW GRAVELINE: I mean, I'm just glad that I could be a small piece of that. I think if you look around, you've

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got guys from all around the country. I just think it's really special when you have a group like that come together and make a run like this and become brothers and have a long-lasting brotherhood for the rest of your life.

GAVIN KELLY: I'd piggyback off that. I mean, these are some of my best friends for life. Just being able to share the field here with them means a lot. All the hard work that's been put in to get here is really special. And just blessed to be a part of it.

**Q. Armani, you're down 12-1, seventh inning, two down. You hustle out that grounded on first. And then your coaches touched on it a little bit, but how much was the rally behind that microcosm of what this group's all about?**

ARMANI GUZMAN: Yeah, just respect for the game. I mean, if you're going to play nine innings you might as well play them hard. The whole season we've never given up a pitch nor an out. So we just continue to do that. And we ended up coming up short, but we all believed that we were going to come back and win that game.

**Q. This is one of the few teams that's been able to slow down your all's running game, catching you, you know, a couple of times. Were they just more efficient holding you on, good throws? What did you see that they did just a little bit better.**

ARMANI GUZMAN: They're just well prepared. I mean, they played catch really well. And they're a good defensive team, and it showed up here.

And as for us, I mean, we went out playing aggressive. And that's how we play.

GAVIN KELLY: I'd like to say one more thing. Thank you to all the seniors, the staff, the people behind scenes making WVU baseball what WVU baseball is. And it's been a tremendous season. And just really thankful to be a part of it and share it with my best friends.

**Q. Saw that Tim Corbin had at one point shared some notes with you on what it's like to win here. How was that used when you were here? What have you learned throughout this process of actually being in Omaha and winning?**

STEVE SABINS: I think it's a pretty small brotherhood of coaches and peers that you get to do this with. You end up gravitating towards people that you think you have similar beliefs in why you're coaching. Corbin's definitely been win of those guys for me. And the experience has been tremendous.

And I think the more you can make it playing baseball, the better you're going to be. But I think as coaches, you want to make an impact on young people. And so when you find some like-minded individuals like that, and as a young coach you're looking up to guys because you're watching baseball and you're seeing how they play, you're seeing how prepared they are.

There's certain individuals throughout my career that, when you watch and you listen, you start to really respect why they do what they do. Corbin's one of those guys. And there's many others that I've looked up to throughout my career.

You start to get a feel that there's some guys out there that probably could do anything they wanted to and they chose to coach baseball because they have a chance to make an impact. So he's certainly been influential in my life with a lot of other guys.

**Q. Obviously this was a historic season in a lot of ways, but what did this season mean for you in just the grand scheme of things?**

STEVE SABINS: I'm just really lucky. I got an opportunity to come here when I was 27 years old. I had no recruiting experience. I'd been to West Virginia once and Coach Mazey took a shot on me as a young guy with energy.

So I think every season I've been able to play here you get more connected with the people, you get more connected with the state, you get more connected with the university.

So I think there's a lot of people that could sit up here and talk about their school being special or their state being special. But I think there's an alignment of values that is what you're really looking for in coaching.

And so you find a place that welcomes you for who you are. And then the things that you're good at are the things that you believe in. You think that those things could help a university, those things could help a state.

So I think as we've won and we've had big come-from-behind victories and you're able to do more special things, you start to meet more people in the community and you meet more university leaders and more state leaders. And you start to recognize that what we do has an impact on people.

That's why I coach. And so you start to kind of align why you're doing something with the people that you surround yourself with. So I think that's probably been the biggest thing for me is that you become really connected to a place

and you become really connected with those people.

So just really lucky to be able to go through the ups and downs -- and that doesn't happen without getting your ass kicked occasionally as well. It's all the ups and downs and the adversity and then the big wins and sticking together with these kids and working through things that has been so rewarding for me.

**Q. Can you explain the future outlook of the spot that your program is currently in? You have a couple guys with eligibility remaining that you can retain and be a really good team next year, and you guys always do really good in the portal. Oftentimes, coaches sitting in that position complain a little bit about the timing of the portal and still competing in the College World Series. Have you felt that impact at all? And what's been the -- I'm struggling to finish this, but overall portal-wise, have you been affected with this playing the game still?**

STEVE SABINS: I'm either too naive or too young or too dumb to complain. That's not really where I ever go. So there's certain rules. There are certain outlines that you have to follow. And my job's always been to try to figure out how to put our university and our program in the best position it can possibly be.

So I just waste exactly zero brainpower considering any of those things. At a certain point, if someone wants to elect me in some sort of leadership position with the NCAA, I would have an opinion at that point, probably.

But for me, I think we're really blessed to be able to do get what we get to do. And our staff has the same mindset. We just go to work to set our team up to be successful long term.

And would I prefer to not do Zoom calls in the hotel before we come play a game in Omaha? Probably. But I think for every coach that complains about that -- and the other side of it is that we're looking for parity in the sport. And so we're sitting in Omaha. So it's a pretty good marketing tool for us to begin with. So does that mean we need to work a little bit harder while we're in Omaha? Maybe.

But 11 years ago, when West Virginia hadn't been to a regional in 20 years, I was pretty thankful that I was getting to work and recruit young guys. And if I wasn't in Omaha, I can promise you I'd be outworking everybody that was.

And so I think there's some sort of balance there. Like, you've got to give people an opportunity to make jumps and strides. It's not the rich always has to get richer in these situations, right? I'm pretty sure we're going to

capitalize on going to Omaha and recruit the hell out of that.

So to each their own, I guess, when it comes to that side.

**Q. It looked like Maxx jogged out there late in the game. Was there a thought that if you got the game within reach that Maxx was going to come out there if there was a 10th inning?**

STEVE SABINS: Yeah, in the 7th, I think when it was 12-6, Maxx was sitting next to us. And I said Maxx, when we tie the game, you want to go in and hold it for a couple of innings before we win in extras? He's like, sounds good; you want me to put my cleats on? I said yep, head on down there, big dog.

And so that was pretty much the extent of the conversation. Before the game, he said my arm feels great. And so he kind of planted a little bit of a seed in my head there.

**Q. In the ninth, Lumsden's fly-out at any point, did you think that was going to be a home run? And then can you characterize just the way North Carolina started the game offensively? Was it overwhelming at all what they were able to do?**

STEVE SABINS: Yeah, Lumsden definitely thought it was a homer. But I think when you're at that point, you're seeing everything in a positive light. You're like, Lumsden is about to hit a three-run homer, we're about to get hit in the ankle the next pitch and the next dude's going to hit a two-run dinger, this thing's tying up, Maxx Yehl's warming up in the pen. You're playing through all those scenarios in your head because the alternative's no good.

They started off well. We didn't play our cleanest baseball. And that certainly happens. I think if we play really clean baseball, it's just a tighter game. But they didn't play their cleanest version either.

And, so, like I said, I was fired up how our guys continued to battle. They put one of the best pitchers in the country in for the third straight game. And we kind of got him a little bit. And so for me, I'm probably sick, but in those moments, I'm like, we're going to pull every bullet out of North Carolina humanly possible. Even if we lose this game, we're going to bleed them out. Like, that's what I'm thinking in the box.

So our goal was just to scratch and to claw. And I'm not a great, like -- and it's not necessarily right or wrong, I'm just not like a great token at-bat guy or a token defense guy. Everything we do is strategic. And every move we make is

set up to win the game. And every kid on that team and every staff member understands that.

And so like the kids that didn't play, I love dearly. And they will continue to prepare and they're going to earn their way in there. But I think there's probably some scenarios where, if you're down 12-1, there's probably certain teams that would wave a white flag, or you're down 15-0 or whatever.

And I just kind of refused to be that guy in those situations because I think everything is earned and those kids that were in there earn the right to go win or lose the ball game.

And so I'm just as proud of the kids that played as the kids that didn't play and the guys that are working to get in there. And some of those kids got hot in the bullpen and were ready to go in. And their time's coming if they continue to work and continue to get better.

**Q. Can you just take me through your plan for Chansen today? And any reservations after the first inning about them getting a second look at him, second time in the lineup?**

STEVE SABINS: Yeah, we thought we needed -- to win this game, we thought Chansen needed to get through the lineup twice. We thought if he could pull that off, we would be able to stay within striking distance and win the game. And he wasn't quite able to do that. We really wanted to get him through twice.

Didn't start off great, obviously a lead-off walk in that kind of scenario is not what you want. He's the whole reason we're sitting here to begin with. He won 10 games. He's an All-American, one of the best pitchers in the country.

So when you start mapping it out, you have to win today to play tomorrow. But what we really needed is for the guys who played great for us all year to clip five and six innings at a time so you can keep interchanging pitchers, and you could potentially do a little bit better in hindsight, today. But tomorrow and the next day, right, it's coming because you're playing good teams.

And so we kind of know what it actually takes. So you can go on pixie dust and a miracle and that kind of thing. But we needed him to be good. So you don't really have a choice. Although you can keep kind of mixing in new arms, you need for your best guys to be good.

**Q. Following up on that, you had a core four or five pitchers that you really leaned heavily on. Do you need one or two more to make this really a viable run, to have a chance to do that because obviously you ran**

**some guys back out there that were on shorter rest than what they were used to?**

STEVE SABINS: I don't think so. I mean, I actually know you don't. Like, look at North Carolina. They throw probably three less arms than us. So it's not really about the total amount of arms. It's just the quality at which they perform in those moments.

There's basically no team in the country that, when you get to this event, would ever throw more than seven pitchers, and it's probably more like five. That's really what you need.

So throughout the year, every staff starts with 18. That whittles down to 12. Eight get the majority of the innings. When you get to Omaha, five actually throw. And then you might mix in a couple, like, left-handed match-up guys, right-handed match-up guys, depending on what your personnel is.

So not necessarily the amount of arms, it's just you need to have good match-ups too. So who you play matters in this event. Some of that is luck of the draw. Some of that is when you're hot or how guys are performing or their recovery or their age or how they bounce back, all those kind of things.

So I think we really had a good shot from the pitching side. That was probably the deepest staff we've ever had. And you continue to try to make it deeper and better and more nasty and all of those things. But we probably had the arms that we needed to win a title this year.

**Q. A lot's been made about grit, resiliency, and obviously Armani's single there in the seventh. Curious what you can say about Brock Wills, because we spent so much of the postseason focusing on Lumsden, rightfully so. He was basically in place of Wills, and then Wills comes out there today and kind of shows what he was made of as well.**

STEVE SABINS: So awesome. That kid has been such an instrumental piece of this team. And in teams, in high-level competition, things don't always go your way. There's only nine dudes that get to play, and so coaches have to make hard decisions, and that happens every single year.

And some years it's a bigger storyline and some years it's not, and some guys play good and some guys don't. And there's always some mix of that.

But when things don't go your way, it's very easy to cash out. And so when you see a kid that has been so

team-oriented and then to get inserted into the biggest game of his career and then perform, it just shows you everything that you need to know about character. Because if you cash out, you don't roll into the highest competition in the world and have success.

Whether he had success or not, I knew his character. I knew that he was still working, and I knew he was team-oriented, and I knew he was fighting like hell to be great for the Mountaineers, and that's why he got his opportunity. That's why it came back around to him.

So it's always coming back around to you, it's just whether you're prepared or not, and if you've been working while you're waiting. And so it's such an awesome testament to that kid to be able to step in and then have success in his opportunities.

**Q. You said you're careful with the whole identity of the team, but what traits of this team will you try and recreate with future teams in the future?**

STEVE SABINS: I think athleticism, and then mentally strong kids with plus makeup. So if you have those things, you're probably always going to be in the ball game. You're always going to have an opportunity to compete. As this program has developed, makeup has probably become a much more highly recruited, non-tangible thing that we're looking for.

So there's so much adversity and there's so many ups and downs. So if we can find the right kids that love to work, that are athletic, that want to be here that don't necessarily believe that the grass is greener, those are the kids that you have a chance to win championships with. Talent will take you so far.

But to be able to have that makeup piece matched with the talent is really what we're looking for in recruiting.

**Q. You spent so much time with the team, players, and build a relationship that none of us will probably be able to understand. Did you ever have a feeling just sitting back and watching -- obviously you're looking at the pitch at hand, but it's just like, wow, that's like Maxx Yehl pitching in Omaha right now, and if so, what's that like just for everyone on the team?**

STEVE SABINS: Yeah, you're just proud of them. You're proud of them because there's all these times throughout a season that display character. And so when you see character displayed on the national stage in the biggest moments, you're just proud of them because you feel like you had some small piece of preparing them for what's ahead.

So whether that's more ball games at West Virginia, whether that's their pro career, whether that's them becoming a banker or accountant down the road or a husband or a father, you feel like you have some sort of small impact that, when stuff gets hard and things don't go your way, you continue to fight and you show up and you believe that you can be the best at whatever you choose to do, and there's nobody that's smarter or stronger or more athletic than you. It's literally, if you want to put in the work -- because all those kids are so talented, and so talent definitely plays a piece, but when you just see kids overcome these mental barriers, that's probably what you're most proud of.

Those dudes sitting to my left, everybody on that team, you can basically look in the eyes and be like, that dude's going to be all right. The more guys we can have in our program that you can say, that dude's going to be all right, I feel like I'm fulfilling my mission, and it's something that makes you excited to get to work and go to work every day.

What we do in the fall, how we recruit and how we coach and all of that, it's not easy. It's a difficult process and it's not meant for everybody. And the people that come to our program that don't really get on board don't last and don't have success is the truth.

So these kids have endured a lot and basically bought into the fact that life can be hard and work is required, and sticking together is important. And anything that's worth accomplishing is really a lot sweeter with a group or with a team.

And so you have these kids that you build bonds with for a really long time and that you hope you can be included in their wedding and news when they have kids and everything else, right? That's kind of the most fun piece of that.

So over my 11 years, you just collect this big group of guys that hang together. They show up in the offseason together. Some are still playing. Some aren't. A bunch of them were in Omaha this week. They're shooting you texts.

So you start to kind of create this fraternity of hard-nosed people that want to accomplish great things together and be part of something bigger than themselves. So that's what I'm into, and I think that's what our program is all about.

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