

# 2026 Men's College World Series

Wednesday, June 17, 2026

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

**Georgia Bulldogs**

**Coach Wes Johnson**

**Brennan Hudson**

**Kolby Branch**

**Tre Phelps**

Postgame Press Conference



and didn't miss their pitch. And yeah, wish them the best of luck. I think Skip does a great job.

**Q. The whole season, really, since you guys started the Sour Power, the message of the day today was, kids playing a game, having fun. How did this team personify that message this season?**

**KOLBY BRANCH:** I just think that one of the messages before the first game at Omaha was, look at all these kids in the stands. Make them believe that baseball's fun, baseball's focused. And when you're doing both of those, you come out on the right side of things and I think that you play good baseball. And I think that was our identity this season. I think it worked.

**BRENNAN HUDSON:** I personally don't think we really tried to push it that hard. It's just the guys that we had in the locker room just love to have fun with the game. And our coaches do a fantastic job at letting us have fun and continue to push us to have fun because they know that's what's going to drive us every day and make us want to come back and continue to get better.

I really think it was just the personalities of everybody in the locker room, just having fun and continue to build off of each other.

**TRE PHELPS:** I'll piggyback on what both of them said. We have a lot of fun, I think that was kind of always the message, whether we were here or before we got here. And if things just happen and go your way when you're not having fun, I mean that's going to happen. That's baseball sometimes. So we're just going in and just being able to have fun at-bat in and at-bat out and pitch in and pitch out.

**Q. Kolby, if I told you before this whole thing starts that you guys would have had two complete games from your pitchers, probably would have thought you would be in the championship series. But obviously the offense wasn't quite what it had been during the regular season and regionals. Is there something you can put your finger on? I know you guys played some great pitching, but just overall the way the bats kind of went during this series, what was your take on that?**

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**WES JOHNSON:** I've got to thank a lot of people. So just bear with me. Always need to thank my wife and family, the sacrifices that they make. To help a program get into the position we got in this year, people will never probably truly understand until you're in that.

I need to thank President Morehead and Josh Brooks, our director of athletics. And then my two sport administrators, Will Lawler and Tanner Stines. Without them the support of what they do for us daily, just bringing baseball to a high level to the University of Georgia, once again we wouldn't be here without them.

We'd also like to thank the city of Omaha for putting on the best event our sport has to offer. The American Legion, our hosts this week, have been phenomenal, and just can't thank them enough.

And a few other things. Like really proud of our players. Need to thank our players and their family. This team went 30-9 against Southeastern Conference teams this year. That record will speak for itself for a long time. And just countless regular season awards.

Moving on to the game, I think OU's playing really, really hot baseball right now. That team is playing at their peak. They came out tonight, they had a guy who came out, pounded the strike zone.

I thought we had some things, had some chances a couple times to get back into the game. But they executed pitches all night long. They got off great swings in hitter counts



KOLBY BRANCH: Yeah, I thought the pitching was great. Joey and Caden both going complete games, pretty unreal in Omaha. I tip my cap to those guys. Those guys were just shoving the whole time they were here.

And the offense kind of struggled at times. That hadn't been like us all season. And so we just kind of had an off weekend. And that happens in baseball. Sometimes you're rolling and sometimes we just kind of lost a little bit of the mojo. And that's what happens sometimes, and that's what happened to us here a little bit.

**Q. Kolby, ultimate baseball moment there in the ninth inning, you hit the home run. You may not have seen it but Kolby had a gigantic smile on his face when you hit it. And then obviously you guys high-5 running around second base. What was that moment like for you? And do you plan on staying throughout the weekend rooting on the Sooners?**

KOLBY BRANCH: Yeah, I think such an unbelievable -- can't script it up any better. You kind of just -- you're down, what is it, eight runs, so you're just trying to have a good at-bat. And you kind of have those emotions flowing through you because you know it's your last one, most likely.

I got a pitch up and drilled it. And I saw Kyle and he was out there, he was smiling. And just, it's a good moment. Got to high-5 him and that was kind of cool, wishing luck in the national championship.

**Q. When you guys look at this season, you talk how much you talk about how you gelled so quickly. Why do you guys think that was?**

KOLBY BRANCH: I think that this group of guys, it's special sometimes, you know. When you get a group of people that all love each other and are all pulling on the same rope for however long we were together since August.

And since that moment that we all got here on the same day that we've been pulling on the same rope. And until we got to Omaha, and we pulled on it ever since.

So this group of guys is something I'll never forget. And I hope they know that I've got their back, if anything, call me, text me. And these guys will be my brothers for life.

**Q. Tre, you're a local product from just up the road in Atlanta. What has it meant for you to wear the black and red?**

TRE PHELPS: It's meant a whole lot. I've been a Georgia fan growing up, of course. And being able to -- I think the thing that hurts the most about today is knowing I won't be able to put a Georgia jersey on, I'll be playing in it. It will be more from the fan side, which is I'll be a huge fan. But this is then I bleed black and blue -- black and red, I'm so sorry. I bleed black and red. (Laughter). That was bad. Can you all cut that out? I bleed black and red. Always have and always will.

**Q. Tre, the performance at the plate, I know it's not what you wanted. I know this is a very hard game. Like, was the light a factor what do you think happened that kept you from playing the way you normally do?**

TRE PHELPS: No, I think just some pitches that I usually would get to get away from me. At times there's going to be time where I struggle on pitches I usually hit out. It was just being able to compete, at the end of the day, it was just we want to win. I just want to get on base as many times as possible and get Dan to the plate because I mean he's the best player in the country.

So that's kind of the only approach I had going to the plate no matter if it was going my way or not.

**Q. What kind of foundation do you think that you laid for the players that will follow you for Georgia that they can build off of?**

KOLBY BRANCH: I think that the University of Georgia will have a good baseball program for the next however many years. I believe in this place. There's a lot of people that believe in this place.

Just going back to the great players, Charlie Condon, getting to play with that guy and setting that foundation. And obviously Wes coming in here and just doing an amazing job and leading in a great way, in a way that I look up to. He's a good man. It's a good man to play for. And he represents the University of Georgia well.

And the University of Georgia should be a powerhouse in baseball for the next however many years. And I truly believe that with all my heart.

TRE PHELPS: Kind of especially what he said. I'm forever in debt to Wes, the way he just took all of us under his wing, all three years, whether it was 70 or 80 different guys, he treated everyone like we were his son. And he was going to insert belief in to you.

That's kind of cliché to say that's what gets a guy going, but that's kind of what he did with every single person. I

feel like we're all always going to be in depth to Wes for that.

And speaking on Georgia being in a better place, for however long he's here and then the next guy that comes in after that, it's great to know that Georgia's not just going to be a football school from now on.

BRENNAN HUDSON: I mean I agree. The coaching staff here and especially Wes, I mean the amount of belief and confidence that they've not only given us but helped us develop for ourselves is something that I don't know that I can ever repay.

And the ability for them to just kind of take me in and even though my first year here wasn't exactly how I wanted it to be, but for them to have the belief in me and continue to work with me and finally get one of the years that I really want to have, it just shows what they can do for anybody.

No matter if you're a portal guy or a freshman. It doesn't matter. They're willing to work with you, if you put the time in, they're here for you.

**Q. How do you keep building off of the success that you've really laid down here now?**

WES JOHNSON: You just continue to understand and obviously recruit. And you've got a lot of great players that you can -- Kolby Branch won the gold glove today. And you just look at the numbers we put up, almost 180 homers.

And then the development of guys. I mean Daniel Jackson wasn't on people's radar this year, and he just swept every award that you can get if you're a catcher.

So the development piece for us will always be the forefront of what we do. And we'll continue to build on that foundation.

**Q. Like I was talking with Kolby about, you guys did face some very good pitchers today. But the bats obviously kind of just as a whole kind of took a step back as far as the number of hits, et cetera. Was there something about the approaches at all? Is it all credit to the pitchers? What happened with that? Looked like some of the fastballs that normally this team would hit, it kind of obviously didn't?**

WES JOHNSON: I spent four years in Major League Baseball. I always laugh because people say it's 162-game schedule. And my first year we played 33 spring training games, went to the playoffs, played right at 200 games.

This team played 67 baseball games. In 2019, we set the home run record in Major League Baseball for a single season. And we went through stretches where you just -- it doesn't matter. I was around some of the greatest players to ever play the game and nobody stays hot the whole year.

It's just baseball. I mean, I wish I could explain it more than that. I know it's an old cliché. We didn't change anything the way we did. It's just, you know what, nobody hits .500 that I know of. Nobody hits -- and it just so happened, like, as I opened up, we won 30 SEC games. That's really, really hard to do.

I don't know how many teams have done that. I'm sure some have. But it's like 30 games in Southeastern Conference play. I mean after a while you get wore down and you're not going to stay hot. And so I don't think there's anything we did different. We just got cold at the wrong time.

**Q. I know this is a tougher question to answer than five or 10 years ago, but when you look at 2027 and what your team might look like, who might be guys that you can count on? How can you answer that at this stage? I know you're planning that roster already.**

WES JOHNSON: Guys have done it every year I've been here. You look at my first year -- I mean, I took the job here, and we had three guys on the staff who had been five innings in a college baseball game.

We went to the portal and got just a bunch of guys. And then we were one game away from this place. And then the next year we do it, and the next year, and we're going to do it this year.

I'm not going to get into who we're recruiting right now. Those battles are tough and hard, but we will definitely be reloaded. There will be no doubt about that.

**Q. You mentioned that you did go 30-9 against SEC opponents this year. What does it say about the Southeastern Conference that the 11th place SEC team is in the College World Series finals after winning seven straight games against the ACC champ Georgia Tech, the Big 12 champ Kansas, a national seed in Alabama mixed in between, and then you guys twice in a row?**

WES JOHNSON: Yeah, like I said, our league is so full of talent. You can take any team. And if that team gets hot and starts playing well, they can beat anybody in the country at any point in time.



It's a question I answered earlier. We were hot for a long time, and we just happened to not be hot this week. You can't control for that. You can't plan for that. You've got to keep doing it. You've got to keep working the approach.

Nobody tries to strikeout, at least I don't think they do. Nobody's trying to walk guys. Nobody's trying to throw balls right down the middle. I've said that many times about the playoffs and Major League Baseball, when I was fortunate enough to coach in those, and coaching here, it's the teams that get hot and play hot.

Very seldom is it the team who goes box-to-wire. And Oklahoma is talented, another team in our league that's talented, and has really good players and are really hot right now.

When a team in our league gets hot, like I say, they can beat anybody in the country anytime, anyplace.

**Q. With so many veterans and transfers and egos and personalities, the selflessness of this team really stood out. Why do you think they were able to gel so well?**

WES JOHNSON: I think the guys talked about it. Everybody's got a common goal. We try through, in this day and age of the portal, it's real easy for these young men to try to chase a 12-month payday. We talk a lot about finding players who want the path to some form of a 12-year career or longer in this game.

Sometimes we pass on the young men that want whatever in this day and age, and we really try to hone in on the guys who want to make a career out of this game that we play.

We've been fortunate to find those guys and pass on the right ones. And there's a whole process to that. But when you get those kind of guys in a room, the culture tends to evolve in itself.

**Q. To follow up on that, what are some things that you did to construct this roster that you can carry over to next year?**

WES JOHNSON: You just continue. We've got a very -- how do I want to say this now in front of everybody? But we've got a pretty -- our model is very, very detailed, I guess, is what I would say, and we know what we're looking for. It's not always the name or where they were or where they played.

You go down this roster, these guys have come from all over. Nobody knew about Rylan Lujjo last year at Dayton.

So we have our ways and things and we'll continue to do that. We've done it now for three years. This will be our fourth. And with any kind of system or process, you evolve it and you try to make it better and that's what we're in the process of doing right now.

**Q. Want to ask about bringing a Justin Byrd in when you did. Was that one of those deals where he kind of came to you maybe and then said, hey, I've got a little bit left in me and wanted to go out there or --**

WES JOHNSON: Justin's a second-day sore guy. I don't want to get into health issues or -- he doesn't have any health issues. But some guys are second-day sore, some guys are day after.

Sometimes with Justin, you can -- as we've done in the past -- you can sneak an inning out of him the next day because he's usually not sore till the next. And that's what we tried to do today. You're just trying to fight, maybe just give your guys a glimmer of hope, bring in any man right there.

**Q. Getting Daniel to pinch run for him, how important was that to kind of let him have a moment for the fans to appreciate?**

WES JOHNSON: I mean, that guy, as I said earlier, that was the whole process. If he was getting on base, we were going to run for him, just to let our fans acknowledge him. I mean, we wouldn't be here without that young man and what he's done.

You know, if you think about it, it will go down as one of the best single-season performances in the history of our game, a guy ends up with -- he's 25-25 over that, 26-26. He's the catcher, ends up with 31, 32 homers, whatever it is, hits .379. That will go down as one of the best single-season performances in the history of our game.

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