

2026 Men's College World Series

Friday, June 19, 2026

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

North Carolina Tar Heels

Coach Scott Forbes

Gavin Gallaher

Jason DeCaro

Postgame Press Conference



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

SCOTT FORBES: Good morning to everybody. Hope you've all had a great off-day, another "off-day." Honor and privilege to be here. We're thrilled with this opportunity. I'm thrilled for our players. They deserve to be in this game.

Just really excited for them. They put in a lot of work that people don't see. They've had a lot of people support them. But at the end of the day, it's all about the players and what they do. They're the reason we're here.

So I'm just excited to watch them again and jump on their backs and try to make good decisions for them. But we're excited to get this thing going starting tomorrow, and excited for our fan base and all of our families and Tar Heel Nation.

Q. I know you've talked a lot about the togetherness of this group, but even before Omaha, where have you started seeing a lot of that togetherness before getting out here? When did that really start for you guys?

GAVIN GALLAHER: I think that it started first day of practice. We knew that this was a special group coming in. And the coaching staff, they do such a good job of bringing in the right people, more so than just the right players.

So everybody just kind of -- we got along well together from day one, and then just the more time we spend together throughout the season and in the fall, everything, spending time off the field together, it's really helped us

grow closer together.

Q. Jason, you guys have been the constants over the last three years, other than the coaching staff. Just talk about the journey you've experienced as a young freshman to now in this moment?

JASON DECARO: Yeah, it's awesome to be in this situation. From the day that me and Gavin stepped foot on campus, this was always the goal, was to be in this game and to win it.

So just to see where we came from, from freshman year coming here, last year, how we ended the season, and then this year, the journey's just been awesome. Just excited that we have this opportunity to go out there and compete for a national championship.

Q. Jason, what are your thoughts, realizing that you're likely last college start comes in Game 1 of the championship series, playing for a national title? And what are your thoughts about facing a team that hit five home runs on Wednesday?

JASON DECARO: I don't know. I've got another year left.

SCOTT FORBES: Yes, he does. (Laughter).

JASON DECARO: Not really focusing too much on them. Just really focusing on what I can do, how I can pitch to my strengths, especially at this point in the year. We've worked so hard all year to improve ourselves. So there's no reason to go away from that now.

Q. What about the moment -- your possible last start?

JASON DECARO: It could have been the last start of the season last weekend. It could have been this past week. Just going out there and having a blast, trying to enjoy every pitch out there, enjoy every second of it.

Q. Jason, a big narrative for the other team that you'll be facing in the finals is their weekend rotation that currently contains three freshmen. Can I get just a thought on some of the freshmen arms from your



team, specifically Ken Glauber and Jackson Rose, but if you want to open up to others?

GAVIN GALLAHER: They've been unbelievable for us. Glaub's the best freshman in the country, and then Rose isn't too far behind him. Just the innings they've been able to throw for us and the spots that they've both been in, it's been huge for us to be able to have those guys.

Especially for us starters, we know that you know we can go out there and there's way less pressure on us because we have guys like that in the bullpen behind us to pick us up.

Q. The 2006 team was in Chapel Hill and then obviously the 2007 team. You're in a place that hasn't been done in almost 20 years. Have those teams or any of those players given you guys any guidance or advice on getting to this spot?

GAVIN GALLAHER: Yeah, we've talked about it before. They've really paved the way for UNC baseball program. They've kind of opened the door to letting everybody know that UNC is going to be contenders, going to be in Omaha.

So those guys having those experiences in the past, they've been super supportive of us. They've been around a ton of games. It's more so just seeing their support for us means a lot.

So it's really special when you have players from that long ago still keeping up with the program. And I think that speaks a lot to this program as a whole truly is a family. So we're very grateful for their support. And, yeah, they've been nothing but awesome for us.

Q. Gavin, Gold Glove at second. Going back to the conversation with Coach Forbes about moving to second after playing at third, what was that like? Then to reach that moment yesterday, how do you just describe that?

GAVIN GALLAHER: Well, I just told him that I knew I'd been playing the wrong position for the past two years. (Laughter).

No, but seriously, I'm always -- I said from day one, my goal, I just wanted to be in the lineup. I wanted to contribute to the team. So wherever that was that was the best thing for the team. That's what I was going to do and the past two years, it was third base. This year it was second base.

And we talked about it. I told him actually I told him sometime in the fall I think that I was going to be our

starting shortstop. That's where I wanted to be. But at the end of the day Jake Schaffner's pretty good shortstop.

So just working up the middle, it took some hard work. But it was like going back home, really.

Q. Gavin, I've been very impressed with the defense of North Carolina. I would like to get your thoughts -- it's a big ballpark. It plays big. Just your thoughts on your inner diamond and the guys in the outfield's have been pretty amazing, pretty impressive?

GAVIN GALLAHER: Yeah, it has been. That's a point of emphasis all year and every year since I've been here and I know before that, is that pitching and defense is what wins championships. And you've seen that before in the games here already.

It's been awesome. We focus on it every day at practice. It's a point to focus on our defense as much as we would be if focusing on our offense because that's the easy part is to get in the cages and hit.

So, I mean, it's a credit to the coaching staff and it's a credit for the guys showing up every single day, ready to work hard and focus on defense.

Q. Jason, with starting pitching so much of it is about emotion regulation. You're about to start probably one of the biggest games of your entire college career. What are you doing to make sure that you're regulating that emotion and keeping yourself in that sweet spot for when you go out on the mound?

JASON DECARO: Yeah, Coach Forbes talked about it with us a little bit this week, about how there's going to be some extra nerves. You're going to be a little bit more excited. This is the biggest game that we've all ever played in. So just accepting that and using that to your advantage.

You're going to go out there and you're going to have some extra adrenaline. So just trying to do a good job of slowing yourself down, taking a deep breath, and just at the end of the day, focusing on each pitch, one pitch at a time.

Q. Going back to Gavin moving to second and then getting a Gold Glove there, what was your perspective of that conversation and the decision to go there? And obviously it's worked out well for you guys.

SCOTT FORBES: We recruited Gavin as a middle infielder, but obviously we like to recruit athletes that can play all over. Heck, in 2024, I made some crazy, what I thought were bad decisions, but the team baled me out. I

look up and Gavin's playing first base, I think, at the end of that clincher against LSU.

But he's played some outfield. He can move all over. He's willing to do so. There's no ego involved.

And he was right. We put him and Jake Schaffner at shortstop, and we wanted to see who was going to win that job. And I felt like it was better -- me and my staff felt like it was better for our team for Gavin to play second and Jake to play short. And he's done a phenomenal job.

And Coach Jackson came back here. He works primarily with our infielders. And Kyle Datres is also back now coaching with us. They work really hard, and he's gotten better and better and better. And he had to work really hard to become a great third baseman. I think the middle was a little more natural for him. But you don't get as good as he's been without a lot of reps. So he's put that work in.

Q. Jason DeCaro, Ryan Lynch, Folger Boaz, Cord Rager, and Mercurius, Nick Wesloski -- those are the six starting pitchers for the two teams playing in the finals here in the College World Series. All those guys were recruited out of high school and not the transfer portal. Do you draw any conclusions of recruiting arms out of high school versus hitters?

SCOTT FORBES: Yeah, we still want to get the best high school players, period. You're looking now -- I was looking at the CBA stuff; who knows what's going to happen. But they're longer -- obviously Lynch is a draft eligible sophomore.

But we still want to get the best high school players in our state, and we want to get the best high school players in the country. However, you have to mix that in with the transfer portal and be realistic that it's harder to win with really young players everywhere.

But we have put emphasis on high school pitching. I've always believed, with my pitching background, that if you're 17 and 18 years old and you've got command, and it's 90, 92 with three pitches, that usually doesn't go backwards.

The harder part offensively is the physicality of swinging the bat and being able to handle playing every day as a position player in so many at-bats. I think you're at more an advantage if you're an older player positionally than you are as a pitcher, necessarily.

It's good recruiting by both sides. And I think that's why we're both in the finals.

Q. You mentioned that the togetherness was one of

those big qualities of the '06 and '07 teams. I'm curious, when did you know that this team was as close as that team was? And how did you see that develop over the course of the season?

SCOTT FORBES: It's a credit to our players and our returners. It's also a credit to my coaching staff. We work really hard through that. One of the joys of being a head coach is every team's different, and how can I as the head coach give this team the best chance to have success and work on that togetherness?

I've never liked to use the "team bonding" thing, but the locker room's important. But the biggest thing is, can you get everybody pulling in the same direction with the same common goal, and that is to win a championship and be a part of something that's bigger than yourself. Now with all the distractions with social media and NIL and draft, there's still nothing better than that.

The team, the team, the team is what we always talk about. And when you have guys return and know what our culture is about, and they implement that to all the new players -- and they make it clear right away, like, hey, at the end of the day the two most important things that these guys that have already been here about care about is, can you help us win, and what kind of teammate are you. Because that's what you're going to be remembered as the most. That's why we've had such a good team.

Q. I looked around the room. There's not a lot of us that were in 2006, '07, '08. What do you personally bring from those experiences with you now that you're at the end of the bench?

SCOTT FORBES: That's a great question. A lot of things. Number one, to enjoy it more. To understand how hard it is to be in a national championship. I remember waking up for game three against Oregon State in 2006. And I sat down and looked at my breakfast, and I couldn't eat it. I was that nervous. Like, holy Moses, we're playing for a national championship.

I wouldn't do that now. I'll be excited, but I want our players to embrace the moment and to enjoy the moment and to understand -- you don't want to look back and be, like -- I was walking on eggshells and fearing what would happen if we didn't win. That was the number one thing.

I learned personally, too, that you've got to go for it. You've got to live in the moment. You've got to go after every single pitch and not think about the end goal, just think about that current game and the Nick Saban process of just trying to dominate every play and every pitch.



But, man, I have really stepped back and said, man, let's embrace this. Let's get the elephant out of the room.

I've talked to our players about it. I talked to them about it last night. Hey, we're playing in the national championship. You're going to have even more nerves. It's going to be hard to sleep. Invite that. Embrace that. Talk to it because it's not fear, it's just excitement.

I mean, I could come here and talk about a million things that I've learned. But now I've learned also to enjoy just being in this spot and enjoy being in Omaha and what the College World Series is all about.

Q. You've got your nine guys and maybe 10 with Rom Kellis, but what about with guys on the bench like Lee Sowers and Perry Hargett and Jady Nunez and Sawyer Black, could you just talk about their importance to the team, what they're capable of doing and how they've helped with the culture?

SCOTT FORBES: Yeah, that's what makes a team sport unique, those names you just said. Those guys work their tails off. They're ready for their opportunity. And Jady Nunez was getting ready to come to a plate in a super regional with a game on the line if Owen Hull got walked.

And because of his hard work, because of the teammate he is, how hard he works, he's going to be ready for that moment.

But it's not just those guys. I told our managers, we've got the world's best managers. We have bullpen catchers, and I watch these guys. I watch them celebrate. They're all the same. They're 14 guys here or 15 guys here -- that's what I don't love about the media. There's some separation, but there's really not with a team sport. When it's all over, you look at your friend as your friend.

But those guys are very talented. They're ready. And I've told them over and over, to do something that's special, to win a national championship, somebody does something that hasn't done maybe a lot "on paper" the whole season. So I have a feeling that's going to happen.

Q. The culture side of it is so huge, especially in the NIL era, the transfer portal era. Can you speak to the rocks that Jason and Gavin have been for you, as well as the other guys that have been here, whether it's Matty or Carter French and all, and how important that is for your culture to put you in a position like this today?

SCOTT FORBES: I think culture, we go over that the first team meeting. We went over it August 17th, I'll do it again.

I'm not there with our summer school guys, I would have already done it with them. I'm glad I'm not doing it with them. I have to do it with them on Zoom.

But we define culture as, how you do things, how we do things around here. That's the joy of being a head coach. That falls on me and instilling the standards. But then the players have to buy into and they have to believe in it, and they have to understand that, hey, how they do things every single day is important. We can't talk out of both sides of our mouths.

So these guys that now have been in the program for three years, they do understand that we are going to do things a certain way around here. And we're going to respect the game, we're going to respect our university. You're going to go to class. You're going to work hard to get your degree.

You're going to learn -- Jay Bilas said it best. He has a great quote: You have you to work at being a great teammate just as much as you do at being a great player.

But when you figure that out, how important that is, you start building your culture. And our culture is at a point where, I tell our players all the time, I'm not getting younger; my rope's getting shorter. So our culture is only going to get better. Our standards are only going to get more important and more high. So you're going to have to meet those. And these guys help me instill that in the new players when they get in there.

I was in the locker room, and I liked to think that Coach Fox could say that by the time I was a senior there's a lot of things that didn't get to him that we took care of in the locker room. And that's the mark of a great program and a great team if your players are doing that. So these guys have been doing that all season.

Q. This Oklahoma team has been on an amazing power surge the last couple of weeks, five home runs on Wednesday. What's important for Jason in dealing with that? And then for your hitters, you're going to face a power pitcher who was outstanding the other day, what's important for them?

SCOTT FORBES: The most important thing is we are who we are. Don't focus too much on the opponent at this point in the season. We got a lot of the same thing, when Georgia Tech rolled into Boshamer Stadium. We learned a lot from the Virginia with a powerful offense.

What Jason's going to do is what he's been doing. We don't care what the offense has been, what they're doing, how hot they are. He's going to go right after them with his

stuff. You start being tentative, you start getting negative counts, then that offense gets even better.

So we'll do our scout prep on Oklahoma, and we know obviously how well they've pitched it. And we know how much power they have. We know that they've got velocity. That's where practice comes in. We're going to be prepared for that. We're going to train for it.

But at the end of the day the most important thing, our guys have done a good job and our coaching staff has done a good job, and I just reiterate that to everybody -- and I've been coaching a long time -- and our prep's what is most important. We have to be ready to play our game and play at a high level.

And if we do that, hopefully some of that stuff will equal out because we feel like we've been pretty hot as well. But they've played great. And if it's going to be a big challenge for us, but we're going to be ready for it.

Q. On the eve of you coaching in this game one of the national championship, have you talked to Coach Fox at all about that moment or any of your assistant coaches to recognize what you guys have accomplished but what you still have to do?

SCOTT FORBES: Coach and I talk all the time. But we haven't talked specifically about playing for this game. He'll probably shoot me a text. Coach is more -- I played for him -- so it's more he's proud like a second dad, and I appreciate that. He's been unbelievable to me since I became the head coach. Been a big sounding board for me.

I wouldn't be here without Mike Fox. He gave me the opportunity. He gave a bad, rough around-the-edges junior college player an opportunity at North Carolina Wesleyan, and because he gave me that opportunity I'm sitting right here now. But as far as playing the national championship, you want to reach out to as many people.

And he's won one too at North Carolina Wesleyan. We've been in it together. So we know what the emotions are like. But the biggest thing for me is, like I said earlier, just I used to think, oh it's just another game and say that to the team but it's not.

Get the elephant out of the room. Guys, we're playing for a national championship. Let's go ahead and start talking about it. Then we'll get back, we'll taper off of that and start getting back to our process, which is getting on that field and cranking that machine up for that cheese we're about to face from that big lefty.

Q. You mentioned the off days that are built into the College World Series schedule. What did you do during the off-day and today outside of the media day? Have you looked at Oklahoma at all? What do you know about the Sooners?

SCOTT FORBES: Oh, yeah, the off-days I had to remind myself, actually in my mind I thought Glaub, that's what we call him, Glauber had one day rest, but then I was, like, wait a second, he's got two days' rest.

So the days off have been great. We've used them strategically, with practice being the most important thing and our players' bodies and them feeling good, and I've told them forever your goal is to feel your best at the end and we're at the end.

And the only way to feel your best at the end is through your preparation. So we used practice sites. We used the weight room. They've gotten a lot of rest, a lot of sleep, been nutritionally sound.

But they've also had free time. And I told them before, if you play well, you're going to have more free time. And the teams that manage that free time the best with discipline probably will play the best.

So this is a disciplined group. Their families are out here.

So me personally, I've just spent as much time possible with my family because I have a ton of family out here is. I have a ton more coming, which is going to be great. I've also spent as much time -- the thing I've enjoyed the most about us playing this long is I get to spend more time with Gavin Gallaher and Jason DeCaro. That's the best. I enjoy that the most.

Of course, I've done my homework. I was an assistant coach for 20 years. I can't go into a game without watching the opponent.

I've worked hard and watched Oklahoma. I watch a complete game, one complete game tonight just to see them play. I'll pick one that I feel like that they play a team that's kind of like us. And then I'll just wake up tomorrow and be excited to play a weekend series like we've been doing all season.

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