

2026 Men's College World Series

Saturday, June 20, 2026

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

North Carolina Tar Heels

Coach Scott Forbes

Jake Schaffner

Jason DeCaro

Postgame Press Conference



Oklahoma - 9, North Carolina - 3

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

SCOTT FORBES: Congrats to Oklahoma. They played really well, I thought, in all phases. That's why they came out on top.

The great thing about baseball when you're playing in a weekend series is you move on quickly. That's what our team will do. They just beat us today.

I thought Jason was aggressive. I thought he had really good stuff. In their big inning, they did it all with two outs and, again, they got some big hits. We weren't able to get those big hits.

Loved the way our guys competed. Loved the way they carried themselves. But, you know, I believe you give credit where credit's due. And I thought Oklahoma played a pretty complete game. And when they took the lead, they applied some more pressure.

I was really proud of Chewy for going in there and never pitching here and keeping us in the game, giving us a chance to come back. We could just never piece it together and make that run that we generally do. So we'll flush that quickly, like we have been doing all year, and we'll wake up and be excited to play tomorrow.

Q. Jake, offensively it seemed like you were really seeing the ball pretty well from the pitcher regardless of which of the three pitchers it was. What was working for you so well in the box that wasn't

necessarily working for everybody else after the first inning?

JAKE SCHAFFNER: I think that just sticking to our approach that Coach Wierz and Coach Jackson gave to us. Credit to their pitchers. They pitched a pretty good game. But, again, I thought we put some good swings on balls, you know. It just didn't fall, didn't go our way today. But we'll be ready to go tomorrow.

Q. Jason, when you think back on what went wrong for you today, was it anything different from the last couple of weeks as far as the feel for the stuff. I mean, maybe the change-up off a little bit or the fastball command? What stuck out to you?

JASON DECARO: Yeah, I think they just really punished the mistakes. I feel like for the most part made some pitches, and then whenever I did leave a ball over the plate, especially with two strikes, they capitalized. And credit to them for that.

Q. Oklahoma's base running today was really good. Five stolen bases as well, along with just the aggressive base running. Was that something that you guys kind of expected, or did it come as a little bit of a surprise?

JAKE SCHAFFNER: For sure. We knew they like to steal bases. They're aggressive on the base paths. And we kind of knew they were going to try to steal some bags. We'll be ready to get after them tomorrow.

Q. What do you think is the biggest key for you, the bottom of your order to sort of get going today? I know not the day they want it today. And then also the decision to go with Rom Kellis over Macon there in the sixth?

SCOTT FORBES: Yeah, it's a hot and cold game. And, again, I thought they threw the ball well. I thought our guys looked calm in the box. I thought they had some good at-bats. I thought Rom hit two balls really, really hard. Didn't have much to show for it.

When you get to this point, it's all about positivity. You know our guys are competing their tails off. And the great equalizer in this game is a guy on the mound, and they equalized us there at the bottom. We've got a lot of confidence in the bottom. I feel like the bottom will do a good job tomorrow. And what was your other question?

Q. Macon?

SCOTT FORBES: Just felt like he'd been struggling a little bit and wanted to get a new look in there. And Rom had great BP, so popped him in there.

Q. Oklahoma's recent power surge in postseason play. When it comes to game planning for them at the plate, what challenge does such a hot team present?

SCOTT FORBES: A lot. You saw that today. I thought Jason was good. Now the video will tell me how good he was as far as how bad his mistakes were. I think it's pretty plain and simple -- when a team is feeling that good you can't make many mistakes, because they're going to make you pay for it.

But he had one walk, six strikeouts. We didn't get him free passes today. We did strike them out, but they made us pay for those mistakes and they got big hits in big situations and that's how you win games. That's how they're here.

But I also know that our guy tomorrow, Ryan Lynch, could equalize that in a heartbeat. And I feel good about putting him out there.

Q. You guys have been solid in the field all season pretty much. There's some miscommunication out there. Obviously Carter made the great catch. Was there nerves? What was going on out there in your opinion?

SCOTT FORBES: That was a heck of a play by Carter French. I feel like that was old Bermuda triangle right there. The ball just dropped. Everybody is going as hard as they can at it. I think three people called it at the same time. I'm just very thankful that everybody got up from it because it was a pretty good collision, knocked the breath out of Jake.

I asked them when they came in. It was definitely not nerves with our guys. They were getting after it.

I was impressed, honestly, how they jumped on us like that and we came right back. Obviously we gave up that four-run inning, but that was just a tough play to make. And they all caught it at the same time.

Q. I know every series is different, every team is different, but are you going to draw on the experience from USC in the super regional or the Boston College series or the Clemson series, where you dropped game one and came back to win the next two?

SCOTT FORBES: Yeah, of course, I've already done that. It's a weekend series. I just talked to them, I said you've got to forget this one just like we forget all of them, win or losses. That's being process-oriented and don't let outcomes be distractions.

I told them before, you're playing a weekend series and we're trying to do what we've done really well and win the series. Unfortunately, we lost game one, and that's a stinker. But again, you've got to win two.

And we were in a really tough spot against a really good Southern Cal team. And we found a way. So you know, I have a lot of confidence in these guys, and we'll go about our business the same way we've been doing it all year.

Q. You began the game off with four straight hits and then three hits the rest of the eight innings. What kind of adjustments did you see out of Rager and the rest of the staff?

SCOTT FORBES: I thought he started -- he's got a good arm, obviously, but early on he couldn't land that breaker very much, and he couldn't throw his change-up for a strike. He started throwing those, especially in some big 3-2 counts. And the team that a lot of times wins those 3-2 counts ends up winning the game offensively.

It wasn't like it was a really electric pitch. But he did enough to get you off the fastball. I felt like that was a good adjustment by his part and him being able to land that, we had to adjust and be able to fight two pitches instead of one.

Q. A lot of your job is sports psychologists, and you said they received your message well in the locker room. Do you spend the evening tonight and tomorrow just checking in on everybody? Or do you think they're ready for this?

SCOTT FORBES: Absolutely not. This team's come too far. I trust them. We've believed in what we've believed in all year. I'm going to tell them tonight, we did it all year. When we get back, we'll shower, we'll turn in our loops, we'll have a postgame meal. And I want them to spend time with their families.

We'll meet right before we go to bed. But I'm not going to

go in there and try to pump them up. I don't need to do that with this team. I remind them, man, go to bed and forget about it. Either way -- if you win, you've got to forget about it because sometimes it can be even harder to get that second one when you win the first one because you know what you're going to get from the team that lost that first one.

So we'll just keep doing exactly what we've been doing all year. And I'll trust that process and I'll trust our players.

Q. Something that Rob Vaughn at Alabama said last Saturday. He said they wished they could have got Rager in more pitches out of the stretch. Is that a scouting report? He said the quote is his stuff wasn't quite as dangerous coming out of the stretch. Is that a scouting report on him? Is that kind of what unfolded in that first half or the first inning?

SCOTT FORBES: Yeah, I mean, you want to try to get a pitcher uncomfortable as much as you can. And when you have to move a guy from the wind-up to the stretch, that means you're applying pressure, and you have runners on base.

So obviously that was one of our big goals, to find a way. But that's most all pitchers. We challenge our pitchers to be just as good out of the stretch as you are the wind-up because you usually have to make your most meaningful pitches out of the stretch.

But for sure, that's what we're trying to do, scratch and claw. And we couldn't get that lead-off hitter on a ton. And, again, they did. So that's when you can apply that pressure.

Q. With Chewy and Padgett going, will they give you the ability to bring in Glaub for length out of the pen tomorrow?

SCOTT FORBES: Absolutely. Yeah. I mean, it's all hands on deck, even though it's a weekend series. We did it at Clemson. We were tied and went for it. And obviously we have no choice but to go for it tomorrow. Everybody is going to be well-rested. And Lynch will get us going and we'll go from there. But he will be ready to pitch.

Q. You talk about making big pitches. Jason got into 11 0-2, 1-2 counts, didn't necessarily go his way. What does that say to the need to make big pitches and then Oklahoma's two-strike approach?

SCOTT FORBES: Yeah, I think I'm going to have to watch, I'll do that, I'll watch some of his pitches, and Coach Gaines will do the same thing. Again, I thought he looked

really, really good. And they're hot. And he made some off-speed mistakes and they made him pay for it. You always want to do a good job of executing those two-strike pitches.

Their approach is to get an A swing off. That's clear. They're not spreading way out, just trying to move the baseball. That's evident by some of the strikeouts. They're not afraid to strike out. And if you put that ball where you want to with two strikes, you have a better chance to get a strikeout and prevent that damage.

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