

2026 Men's College World Series

Sunday, June 21, 2026

Omaha, Nebraska, USA

North Carolina Tar Heels

Coach Scott Forbes

Cooper Nicholson

Caden Glauber

Erik Paulsen

Postgame Press Conference

North Carolina - 6, Oklahoma - 2

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by North Carolina head coach Scott Forbes and student-athletes Caden Glauber, Cooper Nicholson and Erik Paulsen.

SCOTT FORBES: Great game against a very, very good team. Very well coached. They give you a lot of challenges on both sides of the ball.

They jumped on us quick. Our guys did a great job of just putting their head down and not panicking. And we talk about it all the time, being process-oriented, next-play mentality, just play every pitch. When you look up, whatever happens, happens. We did a good job of that.

I thought Lynch was good. It's an oblique. Hopefully he can get that thing better and pitch for us tomorrow. I don't think it's too serious, but I didn't want to gamble. And Glaub came in was lights out for us.

A big, big swing of the bat, obviously by Owen Hull with that home run, extending the lead. And then Cooper Nicholson, that ball was touched. And I thought for a second he was going to catch it with the wind. So that was big for us as well.

We made plays defensively like Gavin turning that double play at the end.

So excited for our team. This is what it's all about. This is why you work so hard to play in a night game, national championship game. So we're excited about that opportunity. We feel like it's an honor and a privilege to be



in that moment. We'll talk about it tonight.

I do want to give a shout out to the Carolina fans. All of our alumni, the players that have made it out here that I've coached, it's been unbelievable. We have a send-off at our hotel. It's one of the more impressive things I've ever seen.

Our administration, our donors, everybody's out here, and they're out here because they're pulling like hell for our guys, and they feel that. So I wanted to talk about that briefly.

But I'll stop talking and move on, and excited to play tomorrow night.

Q. Cooper, could you walk us through the home run there? Did you think it was out? What the pitch was, what you were looking for and the swing?

COOPER NICHOLSON: Coach Forbes gave me the light on 3-0. And I swung at a bad pitch. I should not have swung at that. I was just sticking through the at-bat, looking for something over the play. Got a breaking ball and swung at it.

SCOTT FORBES: Glad he swung at it.

Q. Caden, just walk us through the rush and getting ready to get in there for Lynch after he went out and not getting maybe your usual warm-up.

CADEN GLAUBER: It wasn't really a rush. Injury, you get as much time as you need. They kept telling me that. So I don't have to rush. But I don't really like throwing a ton in the bullpen either way. If I'm coming in, I know I'm coming in.

They'll tell me that you'll be in against this hitter. I'm not going to throw more or less I'll try to stick to six pitches in the bullpen. And then you get eight out there. That's pretty much perfect.

Q. Erik, the first two innings, six strikeouts, one hit. You had the one hit there. And then after the next



three innings from Xander Mercurius, four runs on four hits, two walks, no strikeouts. Did you notice something from him early on in that first at-bat that you were able to share with your teammates? Or how did the approach change for everybody else one time through the order?

ERIK PAULSEN: Yeah, I think we just let the fastball get deep. That was my approach. Let the fastball get deep and hit the off-speed out front. He dotted a fastball away. I let it travel. And went that way with it.

And I think just hitting's contagious. You know, you see one person get something done, you have more confidence at the plate. And I think that's exactly what we did today.

Q. Erik, what did it mean for you to get this win on Father's Day?

ERIK PAULSEN: It meant a lot. Seeing my mom in the stands with my siblings, and my dad's mom, my grandma, she was also in the stands today.

It's really awesome to see them out there. Obviously it's very emotional. But it was glad we got to the win today and can't wait to go out there tomorrow.

Q. Caden, five shutout innings against the hottest offense in college baseball. Kind of just walk me through your approach and your mentality today on the mound?

CADEN GLAUBER: Yeah, when you play for the best team in college baseball, it's pretty easy to go out there with the defense you have and the offense you have. Working with Coach Gaines and just throwing what he calls. He works so hard behind the scenes to know what type of pitch to throw in whatever count you're in.

So it looked pretty challenging, I guess, but you know with the defense we have and the team that we have, it was pretty easy.

Q. You kind of just touched on it but it's pretty well documented that you're supposed to be going to prom and other things that high schoolers do right now. And yet you're dominant at North Carolina. Where does that fearlessness come from?

CADEN GLAUBER: Like I said, you're on the best team in college baseball, so you can't go out there with fear. The preparation takes over the fear. We work so hard on it. You know, you've got to have the right mindset, and you know that you're made for the moment, whatever moment

you're in.

Q. Obviously they've lived off the home runs in the last few weeks. They hit a couple mistakes yesterday. Seemed like you weren't afraid to challenge them. What was your approach against those guys that you know can take any pitcher deep?

CADEN GLAUBER: I think almost think of it like the hitter can kind of sense if you're fearing pitching to him. So you've got to pitch to your strengths. You gotta throw the stuff in the zone.

Like, a good hitter bats .300, but that means he gets out a good bit, too. So you've got to pitch to your strengths and get the guy out whenever you need to.

Q. Cooper, some of the guys are saying there wasn't any panic in the dugout after Oklahoma went ahead 2-0. Where does that resilience and mental toughness come from with this group?

COOPER NICHOLSON: I think we're a tough group offensively. We put together some gritty at-bats, as you saw. We got on base a ton. French, he went, I think, 0-for-0 with four walks. That's just showing what our offense is like.

Q. Caden, Coach Gaines said yesterday you guys, the pitching staff was able to get ahead early but not make those two-strike pitches, those big pitches. How did you see the entire staff, you and Ryan, make all those today?

CADEN GLAUBER: First time facing that lineup, so you don't really know what to expect. Going into today, Coach Gaines did say that you've got to execute those 0-2 pitches. He said it's going to be easy to get the two strikes with our pitching staff that we have. But just kind of learning from yesterday, you gotta make those two-strike pitches and they're going to chase.

Q. Erik, you talked about the emotion of Father's Day and on top of the emotion of probably playing for a national championship. How do you kind of harness that emotion and kind of handle that? Because it's got to be, at times, overwhelming, but also you've got to figure out a way to manage it. And especially I know all the Carolina dads with were wearing your number on a pin. So you've got that extra storyline as well. So how are you kind of managing that emotion?

ERIK PAULSEN: Yeah, my dad always brought me up as a strong kid. I was always around him, around adults when I was really young. It just made me mature really early.

I kind of lost it in the dugout after the game today, after doing a couple of interviews. I just sat in the dugout and got a little emotional. That's the first time I've broke down in a while.

He just raised me to be a strong man. And I just try to carry that out every day.

Q. Does Caden surprise you anymore with what he's been able to do this season, and in particular today with the season on the line?

SCOTT FORBES: I mean, it's just what you expect. It's like the Dustin Ackley version of a pitcher. If something happens, you're, like, shocked. I felt like when The Dust, that's what we called him, was here if he didn't get a hit, something was wrong with him.

And I'm sitting here thinking I might start him tomorrow because our chances are pretty good when he pitches.

Q. You mentioned how Oklahoma jumped out to that 2-0 lead. The teams that score the first run in the College World Series this year are 11-2. And then Jake Schaffner rips the triple down the line, and then he scores on the wild pitch. Walk us through that third inning and the wave of momentum?

SCOTT FORBES: I didn't know that stat. I'm glad I didn't know it. Maybe we need to try to get ahead tomorrow, obviously.

I believe in this team, and they believe in themselves. And in a weird way, they've played better, as they said, when their backs are against the wall.

For some reason I had a weird feeling on Friday when we played Southern Cal, but I woke up with a better feeling on that Saturday. I felt the same way this morning, but I felt that way because I know our players.

Jake Schaffner is a great one to talk about. I mean, that kid brings it every day. Nobody recruited him much. Went North Dakota and thankfully he picked us. I think he's one of the best shortstops in the country. I know he's one of the best overall players and teammates and one of the most impressive young men that I've ever coached just because of his grittiness and how hard he plays.

He plays through some nicks and bruises. But I think he's always ready up there, and ready for the big moment.

He hadn't got a lot of hits it seems like lately. So that was big for him, too, because he'd been stinging it.

Q. Touching on that third inning, nine batters came to the plate. Seven of them were dealt first-pitch strikes, but eight of those nine at-bats went at least five pitches. Five of them went six or more. What do you have to say about running up Xander's pitch count in that third inning?

SCOTT FORBES: No, question. I think he threw about 50. But obviously, I felt we should have scored more runs there. So I want us to hopefully, tomorrow night, do the same thing but get that big hit. And hopefully we will.

But when a guy is that good, I mean, there was a point where I thought we might set a World Series record for strikeouts because he was that on with that change-up. And a good change-up is tough to do anything with when you back it up with 95, 97 miles an hour.

But we got him in the stretch. He started missing a little bit, and he was leaving the change-up up more so we can make contact with it.

But ill thought getting the pitch count up in that inning allowed us to get him out of the game.

Q. How do you approach tomorrow's game with the arms that you have? Who is available, who isn't? And what is your mentality when it comes to who is going to be out there?

SCOTT FORBES: My mentality is, number one, this is the position we all want to be in. I sure as heck do. And our players want to be in it. So that's the first thing. Embrace that, enjoy it and go after it.

It will be all hands on deck. I trust our pitchers. I have a great relationship with them.

I can't make that decision tonight because I want to see how guys feel. We take a lot of value in catch play. I told Coach Gaines, I feel like we've got about seven options to start tomorrow, and I like every one of them.

And I'm not trying to hide anything. But I want to sleep on it. And our approach will be everybody available as long as they feel good. If somebody doesn't feel good, they're going to be honest with me. It's just a matter of who we decide as a coaching staff to start. I'm not sure who that's going to be.

Q. You told us on Thursday, remembering back to 2006, you were so nervous before Game 3 you couldn't eat your breakfast. Twenty years later, you're in the same position. I guess, what lessons or what's the



message going into tomorrow?

SCOTT FORBES: I told a lot of people sleep is important. I got nine hours of sleep last night. I have to be careful because the guys know I'm a little louder and I have to make sure I don't get thrown out of a game with umpires.

I have more energy. But just to enjoy it. I slept great. As a matter of fact, I ate a huge breakfast this morning, probably the biggest breakfast I've eaten.

When you do this long enough, you understand that there's more to it than -- don't get me wrong here -- we want to win the national championship, and we're going to go after it like crazy -- but you coach long enough, you understand there's way more to it. And I just want the guys to play free and easy and to have fun going after that national championship. So I'm going to do the same thing and practice what I preach.

Q. Could you talk a little bit about what Hull has been able to do in this postseason and what that home run kind of meant, because you guys had kind of left the bases loaded and left two more on, and it looked like you were kind of letting Oklahoma stick around. But then Owen Hull hits the home insurance there, and Cooper adds on. Could you talk a little bit about what Owen Hull has done for this postseason? Because it felt like something similar in that Ole Miss game where he kind of helped rally something there?

SCOTT FORBES: Yeah, honestly, I feel like he's done it, for the most, part the whole season. I think he struggled out of the gate maybe the first two weeks. But then he'll also tell you that he decided to listen more and not have 15 hitting coaches, and listen to one, because that's important. These kids have way too much, sometimes, distractions.

But he's been so consistent. Again, I don't remember a player that has been that clutch. I remember a lot of them, obviously, like a Colin Moran with all those RBIs. You've got guys like Kyle Seager and Dustin Ackley that were doubles machines. But you've got a ton of them. You got Chad Flack, who always got the big knock.

But what he's done in driving in almost 90 runs, it's unbelievable. He just has a knack for the big hit. And that home run was a big hit because you know they're going to make a run. They made a run at the end. And every run we can scratch for, we needed.

Q. Could you talk about that mound visit? Reading lips, it looked like he told you he tweaked it during warmups and then he tried to go and he couldn't do it?

SCOTT FORBES: The first thing, I was thankful that he told me it wasn't his arm, because that's what you dread as a coach. Got a kid out there pitching that's going to make his career in the Major Leagues, not making his career here. I felt better about that.

He just said that his oblique kept getting tighter and tighter, had not pulled yet. I've known it long enough -- could it have been dehydration? I hope it was. Because if he tells me he feels great tomorrow, he might be the starter.

But I just felt that's my job is to take care of him, and I didn't want to hurt it. I've seen things like that tear. So we just kind of -- I just made that decision to not let him throw anymore, or even try to throw anymore because he's a power pitcher. He sits 95 to 98. And that last pitch, I think, was 92 or 93. So he was backing off the gas a little bit. So I just wanted to protect him.

Q. Gavin told me that this is the most unified, united team that he's ever been around. And I asked Cooper about not panicking after the first inning when Oklahoma went ahead 2-0. What is it about this team in your mind that gives them that mental toughness and that resiliency that we've seen, because it doesn't seem like it's normal?

SCOTT FORBES: Yeah, I'm really enjoying it. We tell the guys in the first meeting, I have a PowerPoint, and the first thing that I show them is the word "love." And we talk about the word "love" and what it means, and it's the strongest force on the planet.

But obviously they know, like I said the other day, there's some tough love. But this team really loves each other. And I think there's some tough love in that locker room that I never have to get -- it never gets to me where I have to be the tough-love guy.

That's a credit to them in the locker room, working things out, because things aren't perfect throughout the year. I've been a player, but if you have a special locker room, they work it out, even though they have difficult discussions. Hopefully there's no bloody noses or anything in there.

But you know it's a credit to Gavin Gallaher and Matty Matthijs, but a lot of other guys, not just our captains.

Q. We talk about a lot of the big things that happen in the game. But just sort of speak to Carter French's four at-bats today, four walks, I think the only time somebody's walked four times in a College World Series game.

SCOTT FORBES: I just smile when I think of Carter

French. Obviously, coaching, you have a lot of different players from a lot of different backgrounds, but the great thing about a team sport is you have to have Carter Frenches on your team that aren't the highest recruited players, kind of an old-fashioned walk-on. His summer coach let me know about him. He got into UNC on his own.

I'll never forget the meeting. He came up to my office. He was about 150 pounds, probably. But I said, I'll give you a locker and the rest is up to you. And then after about a week, he'll tell you, I had to have a chat with him like, are you serious about this or not? Because it looks like to me you're just somebody who somebody told you to try out and you're not going after it.

But from that day, that kid has not let up. He's worked. He's been in the weight room. He's maximized his potential. And he's played great for us, made great plays in the outfield. He has that slow heartbeat and ice water in his veins, and his at-bats today were huge for us. I told him, I said -- because my job is to always think ahead and coach. So I had written 10 down beside him, because he would have led off the 10th. I was hoping he wouldn't. But man, I think he led off, what did you say, four times, and he got on base every time. And that's what we need to lengthen out our lineup.

Q. You talk about the pillars of your program, servanthood, humility, love, toughness, resilience, family. How does Erik Paulsen embody all those? And as a coach, just what were the emotions like watching him do what he did today, especially on Father's Day?

SCOTT FORBES: I say that's a tough one. Give me a second and I'll get it together. Sorry.

Erik called me July 4th, I think, and the phone rang really early, so I knew it was bad news. So that's a tough deal.

My wife lost her dad suddenly the week of 2011. So even though I had not -- my wife more than me, it was her dad, not my dad, I feel like he was my dad.

I told him, look, we'll be here for you. I know I can't help you by words. I learned going through that with my wife that the best thing you can do is just be there and learn to listen, have some feel and not ask them every day about it.

But my wife was also 30 years old and this kid is just showing up at UNC still in his 20s. To see what he's done and to see his team embrace him, good night.

I met his dad, too. And his dad was awesome. I mean,

straight NYPD, a bad dude. And he served us. He served our country. He served us 9/11. I know that he's with Erik. I know he's watching Erik.

And today's a tough day for a lot of people, and it was a tough day for him. But it was a little less tough, I think, because he knew of his presence. He knew he was with him. And he knows he has a lot of guys in there that are there for him, and it's okay to get emotional. It's okay to have some tears.

But, man, you know, this is why you coach, at the end of the day. You want to help these kids leave here and get through things and have better lives and learn to deal with -- life's hard. Baseball's not.

So I'm just thankful that he's been in my presence, because, I mean, he's been way stronger than I would have been probably at that age. I love him like a son. Hopefully he feels that.

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