

Tar Heels Ousted From CWS

Written by Mike Kelly
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The University of North Carolina baseball team saw its dream of winning a national championship fade away Wednesday night.

The Tar Heels (51-16) dropped a 5-1 decision to Vanderbilt and were eliminated from the College World Series at Ameritrade Park in Omaha, NE. It's the second time in four days that the Commodores (54-11) have upended the Tar Heels.

Winning pitcher Taylor Hill (selected in the Major League Baseball draft by the Washington Nationals) and Corey Williams combined on a four hitter; Conner Harrell and Curt Casali both homered for the Commodores, who advance to play Florida in the semifinals on Friday.

"We had one heck of a season," said UNC coach Mike Fox. "That's my overview to start. As far as the game is concerned, we've just gotten beaten by a better club, and tonight it's as simple as that. Vanderbilt's got a terrific team. They pitched well, and obviously getting down early put us in a tough spot."

Harrell's three-run homer in the second inning gave Vanderbilt a 4-0 lead. It was his second home run in three games at the CWS and his ninth of the season. The Commodores opened the scoring when Tony Kemp led off the game with a triple into the right-center field gap and scored on a sacrifice fly.

Losing pitcher Greg Holt (who was also selected by the Nationals in the MLB draft) only lasted 2 2/3 innings and coughed up five earned runs on four hits. And the Tar Heels didn't help his cause as they left nine men on base. UNC, which left 34 men on base in four tournament games, let a marvelous opportunity get away in the fifth inning as the Tar Heels left the bases loaded.

"You're down four and you have the bases loaded and you're thinking to yourself, 'one swing of the bat, a ball in the gap, and we're right back in the game and we get the momentum in our dugout,'" Fox said. "We were in that situation several times while we were out here, and it just didn't happen for us."

"You've got to tip your hat to their pitchers. It's a one-on-one battle. Sometimes the pitcher wins; sometimes the hitter wins."

Vanderbilt plays Florida Friday at 1 pm. The Commodores must beat the Gators twice to reach the finals. Florida defeated Vanderbilt on Monday. Virginia takes on California in an elimination game Thursday night at 6 pm.