
Logan Harlow

SPORTS WRITER

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loganharlow2@gmail.com

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/logan-harlow>

loganharlow.com

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Ayo Dosunmu Quickly Made Minnesota Home

By Logan Harlow · Zone Coverage · Oct. 1, 2026 · 722 words

When Ayo Dosunmu had to decide where he wanted to spend the next part of his career, he probably had a lot to consider. His role. His contract. The chance to play alongside Anthony Edwards and LaMelo Ball.

But when Ayo explained why he wanted to stay in Minnesota, his answer was pretty simple.

“I felt at home,” he said. “That was the most important part.”

That stood out to me because Ayo had been in Minnesota for only a few months before deciding to stay. The Chicago Bulls traded him to the Timberwolves at the trade deadline in February, and he quickly became an important part of the team.

After signing a 5-year, \$112 million contract this summer, the basketball situation alone didn’t draw him to Minnesota. He can actually see it as his home.

Ayo said at Media Day that when players enter free agency, they have to think about whether they can picture themselves living in a certain place. Minnesota checked that box for Ayo. He said he could see himself having kids and raising a family there, and he also highlighted the area’s public schools as another reason he wanted to stay.

That’s a pretty different answer than what you normally hear when a player explains why he re-signed. And it makes sense, given how quickly Ayo became comfortable with the Wolves.

After coming over from Chicago, Ayo averaged 14.4 points, 4.2 rebounds, and 3.5 assists in 24 regular season games with the Wolves.

He shot 41.4% from three during that stretch and then averaged 15.6 points during the playoffs.

He also delivered one of Minnesota’s biggest individual performances of its playoff run.

In Game 4, after Donte DiVincenzo tore his ACL and Ant hyperextended his knee, Ayo stepped up and scored 43 points against the Denver Nuggets in Game 4 of the first round, going 13-for-17 (76.5%) from the field and a perfect 5-for-5 from three. It gave the Wolves a critical 3-1 lead, and it was the most points off the bench in a playoff game in 50 years. It was the kind of performance that turned him from a midseason addition into someone the Wolves viewed as part of their future.

Ayo talked about his first conversation with Chris Finch back in July, saying Finch immediately told him to play and that he trusted him. Ayo said that interaction helped him realize Minnesota could be a place where he stayed long term.

That trust seems to have carried over. Now Ayo is entering his first full season with the Wolves, knowing he'll be part of the team's plans for years instead of wondering where he will be playing next. That's worth emphasizing, considering how much has changed around him.

Minnesota looks different this season. They added LaMelo Ball and Jonathan Kuminga and moved on from Julius Randle and Naz Reid. That's a lot of new personalities who must figure out how to play together.

The Wolves have already worked to build that chemistry.

Rudy Gobert brought the team to France during the offseason, giving the players a chance to spend time together away from the court. For a team that went through so many changes this summer, those kinds of experiences matter. Ayo is now one of the players who already knows what it feels like to be part of the group. That's important because his role could change this season.

With Lamelo joining Edwards in the backcourt and Kuminga entering the starting lineup, Ayo could spend more time coming off the bench. But Minnesota didn't give him a five-year contract because of what he did for a few months.

The Wolves see him as someone who can be part of this team moving forward.

And Ayo seems to feel the same way.

He had a chance to go somewhere else this summer. Instead, he stayed in Minnesota, and his explanation had very little to do with basketball. It has become a place that feels comfortable.

The Timberwolves spent the offseason trying to build a new identity with many new faces. Still, having players who genuinely want to be there could matter as much as figuring out who starts, who comes off the bench, and how the new pieces fit together.

Ayo already seems to have answered one of those questions.

Minnesota feels like home.

How Much Will Anthony Edwards Miss Naz This Season?

By Logan Harlow · Zone Coverage · Sept. 30, 2026 · 645 words

Of everything Anthony Edwards said at Minnesota Timberwolves Media Day on Monday, one answer stood out. With the Wolves undergoing so many changes this season, Edwards was asked about the former teammates he would miss. His answer was immediate.

“I’m gonna miss Naz for sure,” he said. “That’s my brother.”

It was a simple answer, but it stood out to me because so much has changed around the team this offseason. A big constant on the court, Ant’s close friend is no longer in Minnesota after the Wolves traded him to Charlotte, ending a run that began before Edwards arrived in the NBA.

Reid wasn’t just another former teammate for Edwards. He was one of the players beside him from the start of his career, through Minnesota’s rise from a young team trying to find its identity to a legitimate Western Conference contender.

Now, for the first time in Edwards’ career, Reid won’t be in the locker room with him.

That seemed to carry more weight for Edwards than the normal roster changes that come with an NBA offseason.

Edwards’ answer was also interesting because he didn’t mention Julius Randle, another major piece of Minnesota’s team over the last couple of years, as someone he’d miss. Randle spent two seasons alongside Edwards after the blockbuster Karl-Anthony Towns trade and was an important part of the Wolves’ offense. However, when Edwards was asked about who he would miss, he immediately went to Reid.

There’s no way to know 100% if that omission meant anything. Edwards could have been thinking about the teammate he was closest to and nothing else. Still, it was noticeable. Ant isn’t a mean-spirited guy and wouldn’t say he publicly had a problem with Randle or anything. Still, him not being mentioned is telling; at least on the court, I think there was some frustration with Randle’s game.

It’s not like Edwards was sitting around, dwelling on the changes.

“I’m super happy about the changes in the locker room,” he said.

That’s what makes his comments about Reid so interesting. Edwards can miss his friend while still being excited about the team Minnesota is putting around him. The Wolves have completely

changed their roster this offseason. Reid and Randle are gone, while LaMelo Ball and Jonathan Kuminga are now two of the biggest additions around Edwards.

LaMelo will change how Edwards plays.

For much of his career, Edwards has been asked to handle the ball and create offense for himself and his teammates. Now, with Ball on the roster, Edwards could spend more time playing the role he believes fits him naturally.

“I feel like I’m a natural two guard, at heart,” Edwards said. “I never thought I could develop any PG skills. Finchy harps on me passing the ball, but we got LaMelo, I’m happy.”

That quote gives a glimpse into why Edwards is so optimistic about the changes. He doesn’t have to be the team’s primary creator every possession. Ball can take on more of that responsibility, allowing Edwards to focus more on scoring and attacking defenses.

Kuminga gives Minnesota another athletic player who can attack the basket and create opportunities, giving the Wolves a supporting cast that looks very different from the one Edwards has played with over the past few seasons.

But even with all those changes, Edwards hasn’t forgotten the teammates who helped him get here. Reid was there from the start. He was there as Edwards developed into the face of the franchise and as Minnesota became a playoff team capable of making deep postseason runs.

Edwards now has to move forward without him.

The Timberwolves are asking Edwards to lead a different team into a new era, and he seems ready for the challenge. But Monday showed that even as Edwards looks ahead, he’ll miss parts of the old Wolves. Naz Reid is one of them.

GAME STORY

No. 19 Heels rally after dropping first set of season, surge to 3-0 with win over JMU

By Logan Harlow · Tar Heel Tribune · Sept. 4, 2026 · 486 words

CHAPEL HILL – No. 19 North Carolina jumped out to a 3–0 lead in the first set Thursday night and appeared poised to cruise. James Madison had other ideas.

The Dukes became the first team in three matches to take a set off the Tar Heels, winning the opener 25–21, before Carolina regrouped to close out a 3–1 volleyball win at Carmichael Arena, taking the final three sets 25–21, 25–18 and 25–19.

Coach Mike Schall said what stood out most was the way it answered the early adversity.

“I think it was the way we responded that I love,” he said. “We didn’t get on any magical scoring runs. We just kept punching back, and that’s what you have to do against a team like that.”

Carolina looked in control early in the first set, leading 10–9 behind a standout defensive effort from Bridget Malone, who finished with a double-double of 11 kills and 11 digs. But a service error into the net and a stretch in which the Tar Heels struggled to handle James Madison’s serves opened the door for the Dukes (2–1) to swing to a 14–10 lead. JMU held that cushion for the rest of the set.

The first-set loss didn’t rattle Carolina, and the Tar Heels seized the momentum from there. Graduate opposite hitter Chelsea Thorpe, who led UNC with 14 kills, said the team had entered the match with a plan but needed live competition to sharpen it.

“We knew the game plan. I think you don’t really get into it until you’re playing the team,” Thorpe said. “I think we just started executing better. That’s all we needed to do. I think one side of the game we needed to improve was defense, and that was something we made a focus in the second, third and fourth sets.”

Carolina settled in during the second set, with Safi Hampton, who finished with 13 kills, and Lauren Sheppard helping the Tar Heels build an early 9–5 lead. James Madison answered with a push of its own, tying the set. With the score tied at 21 and Carolina four points from facing a daunting two-set deficit, the Tar Heels reeled off four straight points, powered by a determined Thorpe, to close out the set.

“The back row behind us had our back,” Thorpe said. “So, we definitely stepped up our defense.”

Hampton, Jackie Taylor and Laynie Smith were also constantly making plays as UNC dug themselves out of the early hole.

UNC will now make the quick turnaround against Colorado State at 6 p.m. Friday at Carmichael Arena.

“We feel very prepared because we’ve been studying them all week,” Schall said. “From a player perspective, it’s more of a cram session. James Madison was our top priority [Thursday], and we’ll just get to work. We’ll get into a good rhythm [Friday] and give them the information that they need to be prepared for.”

What Jimmy Kimmel's Suspension Really Says About Free Speech and TV

By Logan Harlow · The East Carolinian · Sept. 24, 2025 · 623 words

Jimmy Kimmel getting suspended might not sound like a big deal at first, late-night shows rotate through drama all the time—but this situation feels different. After Kimmel made comments about the killing of conservative activist Charlie Kirk, ABC pulled Jimmy Kimmel off the air indefinitely. That move created a storm of arguments about whether this was holding him accountable or flat-out censorship. Honestly, both sides have a point, and that's what makes this so messy. During his monologue, Kimmel said, “many in MAGA land are working very hard to capitalize on the murder of Charlie Kirk,” and added that “the MAGA gang” was “desperately trying to characterize this kid who murdered Charlie Kirk as anything other than one of them.” Those lines set off the firestorm, with critics crushing him for making political accusations before the facts were fully clear.

I will start with the free speech side of things. Kimmel is a comedian and a late-night host. His whole job is to comment on what's happening in politics and culture, often with a sharp or sarcastic edge. Plenty of hosts before him have said things that offended people like Jon Stewart, Colbert, even Letterman back in the day. Supporters say Kimmel was doing what he's supposed to do: take the news and spin it into something worth talking about. The bigger concern is how quickly government pressure and affiliate backlash seemed to influence ABC's decision. When the FCC chair comes out swinging, calling the comments “misleading” and hinting at consequences, it's easy to see why people call this censorship. If politicians can pressure networks into shutting down certain voices, that's a real problem for free speech.

On the flip side, though, there's the issue of responsibility. Kimmel made those comments while facts about the Kirk shooting were still unclear. Critics argue that he jumped to conclusions and essentially used a tragedy as political ammo before anyone even knew the full story. That's not just bad taste, it's dangerous when you have a platform reaching millions. From ABC's perspective, and especially from station owners in conservative markets, airing that kind of content could anger viewers and advertisers. At the end of the day, a TV show is also a business, and if the product starts losing people or creating legal headaches, the network is going to step in. Free speech doesn't mean freedom from consequences, and Kimmel is now facing those consequences.

What this whole controversy really exposes is the line between censorship and accountability. Should networks have the right to pull programming they feel crosses a line? Of course. But should government agencies like the FCC be weighing in on a comedian's monologue? That feels

like a step too far. Even if you think Kimmel was wrong, it's hard to ignore the effect this could have. If every host has to worry that political leaders might take their show for an unpopular joke or opinion, then late-night comedy as we know it won't survive.

Personally, I think both things can be true: Kimmel probably spoke too soon and too harshly, but the response went overboard. ABC could have issued a statement, aired a clarification, or even suspended him briefly without making it look like the government had a hand in shutting him down. Instead, it's turned into a free speech debate that's bigger than Kimmel himself. Whether you love him or can't stand him, this situation matters because it shows how fragile the balance is between saying what you want and keeping your platform. Thankfully Kimmel has now been reinstated so it looks like we are reaching an end to this whole situation.

Your comment has been submitted.

Reported

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It is a big deal.

Log In

Southern culture of Greenville, NC

By Logan Harlow · The Hook · April 29, 2026 · 806 words

One thing you notice pretty quickly at ECU is that the school has a southern vibe, and it's different from what you see at some colleges near bigger cities. Greenville isn't a major city, and honestly, that shapes a lot of what the campus feels like. The town moves at a slower pace, people are more laid-back, and the school ends up taking on the personality of the area around it. As a student here, the culture isn't something you overthink every day, but you definitely feel it affecting the way people act, the traditions that matter, and even what students wear or do for fun.

Compared to city schools, ECU feels more relaxed. Students don't seem constantly rushed or stressed about where they're heading next. People talk to you, even if they've only met you once. Professors know your name more often than you expect. It's not that everyone is extremely friendly all the time; it's just that the environment isn't chaotic. When I visit friends at schools in Charlotte or Raleigh, everyone's running around juggling work, internships, and commuting on top of classes. Here, everything feels closer, and the day-to-day pace reflects that. You don't have to plan your whole day around traffic or figure out how far everything is. It's simpler, which I guess fits the southern style of the area.

The southern culture definitely shows up the most on football weekends. At ECU, game days feel like the biggest events of the semester, even if the team isn't having its best year. Tailgating is huge, and the whole campus shifts into one big social scene. You smell fried food, hear country or rap depending on which tailgate you're walking past, and see everyone wearing purple and gold. It's not polished or flashy, just loud, crowded, and fun. If ECU were in a big city, the games would probably get overshadowed by pro teams or other events. Here, the school is the entertainment, and that's what makes the traditions stick. Students actually show up because there isn't a giant city full of distractions pulling people in a million directions.

The style on campus also reflects that southern influence. A lot of people dress casually: shorts, Crocs, sweats, ECU shirts, baseball caps, and boots when it's cold. There's not some huge pressure to look like you're walking down a runway. At city schools, trends move faster, and people keep up with them more because they're living in places where fashion is a bigger part of the culture. At ECU, the style is comfortable and practical, and it fits the environment. You'll see the occasional dressed-up student, but for the most part, people prioritize comfort, especially when they're walking around campus in the heat.

Southern culture also affects what students like and dislike about ECU. For me, I actually like the slower pace because it keeps things manageable. It's nice walking across campus and seeing

familiar faces or running into people you know without trying. A lot of students feel like ECU has a close community just because the school and town are so connected. If you go to a restaurant, a grocery store, or even the gym, it's mostly students or alumni. That makes it feel like the town revolves around the university, which is very different from big city schools, where students are just one group out of thousands of residents.

Another thing about ECU's southern culture is that it makes the campus feel smaller than it actually is. It's a big school on paper, but it doesn't feel like one. You notice the same people around campus all the time. You see people again and again at dining halls, sporting events, the rec center, and even random spots off campus. That can be a good thing because it makes it easier to build friendships. At city schools, students spread out into different neighborhoods, and you don't run into the same faces as often. At ECU, you pretty much will.

Overall, the southern culture here isn't something I think about constantly, but it's definitely one of the biggest things that separates ECU from schools in urban areas. It affects the pace, the atmosphere, the traditions, the way people dress, and how students connect with each other. Some people love that, and some people don't, but it's definitely part of what makes ECU the kind of school it is. For me, it's a big reason why the campus feels comfortable and familiar, even if Greenville isn't the most southern place in the world.

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ECU football season preview

By Logan Harlow · The East Carolinian · Aug. 25, 2025 · 1095 words

The 2025 football season kicks off against rival North Carolina State University (Atlantic Coastal Conference) as the Pirates look to reestablish themselves as a contender in the American Conference this year. Last fall, ECU had an up-and-down campaign that was marked by inconsistent quarterback play and struggles along the offensive line. The Pirates ultimately found their footing at the back end of the season when Blake Harrell took over mid-season as Head Coach, and when they closed the season out with a win over NC State in the military bowl.

Week 1 – Aug 28 at North Carolina State University

The Pirates waste no time diving into a hostile environment, opening at Carter-Finley Stadium in Raleigh, N.C. against North Carolina State University. Head Coach Blake Harrell's defense, led by Junior linebacker Dameon Wilson and Senior Jackson Barker, will be tested early against the Wolfpack's physical run game. ECU's quarterback room, featuring Sophomore quarterback Katin Houser and Junior quarterback Raheim Jeter, will need to establish rhythm behind an offensive line anchored by Senior Jayson Tarpeh and Junior Leivi Semaia.

Week 2 – Sep 6 vs Campbell University

The home opener at Dowdy-Ficklen should give ECU a chance to flex depth. Senior running back Marlon Gunn Jr. and Junior running back Parker Jenkins will get plenty of work behind this offensive line, and fans will hope to see early connections between Houser and his receivers, particularly Sophomore receiver Yannick Smith and Senior receiver Kelan Robinson. On defense, look for defensive coordinator Josh Aldridge's defense to pressure Campbell's quarterback with edge rushers Senior Ryheem Craig and Senior Jasiyah Robinson.

Week 3 – Sep 13 at Coastal Carolina University

This trip to Coastal is one of the Pirates toughest nonconference battles. Coastal is known for its uptempo offense, and ECU's secondary, with veteran graduate student Teagan Wilk and Senior TyMir Brown will need to be sharp. On offense, Houser's ability to spread the ball to playmakers could decide whether ECU can keep pace in what might be a high-scoring affair. The defense's ability to contain explosive plays will be the difference.

Week 4 – Sep 20 vs Brigham Young University

Coming from a tough Big 12 Conference, BYU's visit to Greenville is a marquee matchup for ECU. The Cougars bring size and power, especially in the trenches, which means Senior defensive lineman Xavier McIver and Senior defensive lineman Zion Wilson will be critical inside on the

defensive line. ECU's run game, led by Senior running back Marlon Gunn and Sophomore running back London Montgomery, has to succeed early to prevent Houser from facing constant pressure to air the ball out down the field. Special teams, with Senior veteran kicker Andrew Conrad, could play a big role in what may be a physical, low-possession game.

Week 5 – Sep 25 vs Army University

Preparing for Army's unique style and triple-option is never easy, Defensive Coordinator Josh Aldridge's linebacker group needs to make big plays if they want a chance at stopping the run game. Offensively, ECU will need to maximize possessions, relying on its tight ends to keep drives alive on third down. After last year's outing against Army where the Pirates fell 28-45, ECU will need to figure out how to stop the run game.

Week 6 – Oct 9 at Tulane University

This road trip will be a true test of where ECU stands. Tulane's defensive front will challenge ECU's offensive line, while the Pirates secondary, led by veterans like Senior defensive back Jonathan Jean will have to slow a balanced passing attack. One of the keys to winning will be whether Houser can stay poised in a tough road environment and whether the Pirates can force turnovers to swing momentum.

Week 7 – Oct 16 vs The University of Tulsa

This Thursday night home game presents an important chance for ECU to gain ground in conference play. Tulsa doesn't have Tulane's depth, but the Golden Hurricane always play scrappy. Look for Harrell's defense to unleash edge pressure, with Craig and Senior Samuel Dankah keying the pass rush. Offensively, expect ECU to lean on its run game and play-action passing, especially to big targets like Yannick Smith downfield.

Week 8 – Nov 1 at Temple University

Lincoln Financial Field in Philadelphia, P.A. has not always been kind to ECU, but this is a winnable road test. This game could allow younger skill players like Sophomore running back TJ Engleman Jr. or Freshman wide receiver Johnny Williams to emerge, especially if the Pirates get out to an early lead.

Week 9 – Nov 8 vs University of North Carolina at Charlotte

The Pirates host Charlotte in a matchup that has grown into a bit of a regional rivalry. Expect gritty play in Greenville as ECU looks to control tempo with its running backs while stretching the field with receivers like Graduate Student Anthony Smith and Junior Jaquaize Pettaway. On defense, stopping Charlotte's short passing game will be key. The atmosphere should give ECU a strong home-field edge.

Week 10 – Nov 15 vs The University of Memphis

Memphis is always a dangerous opponent, and this could be one of ECU's toughest home games of the year. The Tigers traditionally bring an explosive passing attack, so ECU's safeties will play major roles. For the Pirates offense, Houser will need to make quick decisions and take advantage of Memphis's aggressive defense with intermediate throws to tight ends Conner and Riles. This could turn into a shootout under the lights in Greenville.

Week 11 – Nov 22 at The University of Texas at San Antonio

Traveling to San Antonio, Texas late in the season will be a major test of ECU's depth. UTSA has emerged as one of the AAC's top programs, and their fast, physical style will challenge ECU in all phases of the game. The Pirates best chance is to control time of possession with Gunn and Jenkins running behind a veteran offensive line. Defensively, edge contain and linebacker play will be critical against UTSA's dual-threat quarterback.

Week 12 – Nov 29 at Florida Atlantic University

The regular-season finale takes the Pirates to Boca Raton Florida, where bowl eligibility could be on the line. FAU has elite speed on the roster, so ECU's defensive backs will be tested. On offense, Houser's chemistry with his receivers at this point in the season will be the key in stretching the field. Closing the season strong on the road would be a big step forward for Blake Harrell's program.

Your comment has been submitted.

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Log In

ECU women's basketball loses thriller in double OT

By Logan Harlow · The East Carolinian · Feb. 26, 2025 · 349 words

The East Carolina women's basketball team (15-11, 6-7 American Athletic Conference) came up just short in a thrilling double overtime battle with the University of North Texas (15-11, 9-4 AAC), falling 75-73. The game, held at Minges Coliseum, was an intense battle with the Pirates leading for much of the game, but North Texas snatched victory late in overtime.

ECU was led by junior forward Amiya Joyner, who put up 19 points and grabbed a monstrous 20 rebounds, tying her career high and the second 20 rebound game of her career. Sophomore guard Khia Miller also had a standout performance, scoring 20 points, including four three pointers, to help keep the Pirates in the game.

The fourth quarter was a turning point, with ECU holding a steady lead until North Texas rattled off an 8-0 run to take their first lead since the opening quarter. ECU fought back, with sophomore guard Jayla Hearp making a crucial free throw with 24 seconds left that sent the game into overtime. The Pirates briefly regained the lead in the first overtime thanks to a 7-0 run, but North Texas responded with a clutch three point shot from senior guard Jaaucklyn Moore, forcing a second extra overtime period.

In the second overtime, ECU once again led by four points but struggled with turnovers, which allowed North Texas to regain the upper hand and ultimately secure the win. Despite the loss, ECU had a strong performance on the boards, out rebounding North Texas 47-39. It was a gritty game, but another game where the turnovers were ECU's downfall, this time leading to 30 of North Texas's 75 points.

While the result was disappointing, the game highlighted some significant individual achievements. Joyner's 20 rebounds was an eye popping amount, and with four blocks, senior forward Tatyana Wyche moved into the top 10 in ECU history for career blocks. The Pirates will look to bounce back when they face Florida Atlantic University (10-18, 2-13 AAC) on Feb. 26, at 7 p.m.

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大樹藥局官網

Log In

East Carolina enters the 2026 college baseball season

By Logan Harlow · The East Carolinian · Feb. 5, 2026 · 770 words

East Carolina enters the 2026 college baseball season with more familiar expectations. Under head coach Cliff Godwin, the Pirates have built a national reputation as one of the most consistent programs outside the Power Four, and this year's group is once again positioned to compete for both an American Athletic Conference title and a return to the NCAA Tournament.

ECU opens the season ranked inside the national top 25 in multiple preseason polls after a 2025 campaign that finished with a conference tournament championship. The Pirates went 35–27 overall last season and saved their best baseball for the AAC Tournament, going undefeated in Clearwater. That late surge helped erase an uneven regular season and reinforced the program's identity as one that peaks when it matters most.

The strength of this year's team begins on the mound. Left-hander Ethan Norby returns as one of the most accomplished pitchers in the conference and one of the most respected arms nationally. Norby was named the AAC Preseason Pitcher of the Year after anchoring ECU's rotation last season with elite command and swing-and-miss stuff. He gives the Pirates a true Friday night presence and a tone setter in weekend series. His ability to work deep into games will be key as ECU looks to show progress from a pitching staff that lost several key bullpen pieces to graduation and the pros.

The Pirates will rely on a mix of returning starters and new contributors to fill out the rotation. Consistency from the Saturday and Sunday spots remains one of the biggest storylines heading into opening weekend. ECU showed flashes of depth last season, but maintaining quality starts throughout conference play will be a deciding factor in whether the Pirates can separate themselves from the rest of the AAC.

East Carolina brings back a veteran lineup with experience across the field. The Pirates were at their best in 2025 when they combined timely hitting with pressure on the basepaths, and that formula figures to remain the blueprint this spring. Several everyday position players return after logging heavy innings last season, giving ECU continuity at key defensive positions and flexibility in constructing the batting order.

The Pirates' lineup may not rely on overwhelming power, but it is built to grind through at bats and capitalize on mistakes. That approach has served ECU well in recent years, particularly in conference play where pitching depth often determines series outcomes. Some returning players from the lineup include, Jack Herring senior Outfielder, Colby Wallace junior Infielder/pitcher, Walker Barron junior catcher, Braden Burress sophomore infielder/outfielder, Austin Irby, sophomore infielder, Alex Peltier sophomore outfielder, Braxton Tramel sophomore Infielder, and

Michael Kalinich sophomore catcher, If the returning core can improve situational hitting with runners in scoring position, East Carolina has the potential to take a step forward offensively.

A factor shaping the Pirates' preseason outlook is their schedule. ECU once again challenges itself early with a non conference slate made to prepare the team for postseason baseball. Matchups against in-state rivals and nationally ranked opponents will test the pitching staff and provide immediate feedback on where the Pirates stand. Those games also carry weight in building an NCAA resume, especially for a program with hosting aspirations.

East Carolina was picked as the preseason favorite in the AAC. Conference weekends will feature competitive series against teams like The University of North Carolina at Charlotte, The University of Texas at San Antonio, Rice University, and Wichita State University, all of which have the ability to challenge for postseason spots. Avoiding slip-ups in those series will be essential as ECU balances conference goals with national ambitions.

Ultimately, the ceiling for this Pirates team will be determined by pitching depth and late-inning execution. With an established ace, an experienced lineup, and a coaching staff that has consistently navigated the pressures of postseason play, East Carolina enters the season with legitimate expectations of contending beyond the conference level.

If the bullpen solidifies and the offense continues to mature, ECU has the pieces to make another deep run. For a program accustomed to success, the goal remains unchanged. Win the conference, return to the NCAA Tournament, and push closer to Omaha.

ECU will open the 2026 season at home in Greenville, NC, at Clark-LeClair Stadium for a three game series against Xavier beginning Friday Feb, 13. at 4 p.m., followed by games on Saturday, Feb, 14. at 2 p.m. and Sunday Feb, 15. at 12:30 p.m., all three matchups are set to be broadcast on ESPN+ and available on the radio via 94.3 FM The Game.

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