

2022 NCAA Women's Lacrosse Championship

Friday, May 27, 2022
Baltimore, Maryland, USA
Homewood Field

North Carolina Tar Heels

Jenny Levy

Sam Geiersbach

Taylor Moreno

Jamie Ortega

Ally Mastroianni

Media Conference



defenders was a nice reset for them, and it was also very nice for me to get an opportunity to reset myself as well. And then Coach kind of left it up to me, it was like, are you ready to go back in and I said absolutely.

I think the belief our defensive unit to basically embrace me coming back in obviously knowing that it was not necessarily my day, they really locked it in. And I think in the fourth quarter, the offensive foul that was going on, those guys gave us the kind of kick start we needed, and it's just a testament to this team and how continuously hard we'll work no matter what the circumstances.

Q. Sam, obviously a transfer, were you thinking about moments like this when you came to UNC, and how does it feel that it played out --

SAM GEIERSBACH: I came to UNC because I knew they would get here. So my plan coming here was based on the fact that UNC is an awesome school. These girls are the best girls I've ever met. And I knew that this was going to be their year, and I just wanted a piece of it, whether I was on the field or not. So it's all playing out pretty well in my eyes. [Inaudible] Thank God we did.

Q. Jamie, two games in a row against a pretty aggressive zone defense [inaudible], now Northwestern, how do you look [inaudible] that and change it up the during those last ten minutes [inaudible]?

JAMIE ORTEGA: I think it's less of what defense they throw at us and more of just believing in each and trusting each other. We practiced man. We practiced face guard, zone, backer, rover. You name it, we do it, and in that moment they keep adjusting. And I think even at the end they were in zone, Sam was still able to take the one win we wanted, which was so impressive. But it just stems from believing in each other and trusting each other. No matter what defense they throw at us, just take it one possession at a time. That's exactly what we did.

Q. [Inaudible]. Did you take some of that you had earlier in the season, you scored nine goals in the quarter, quite remarkable. At what point did you say

North Carolina 15, Northwestern 14

COACH LEVY: First of all, congratulations to Northwestern. Great season and great game today. They came out and punched us out clearly. That's on me. I didn't have the team ready to roll.

And luckily for me I got a lot of fabulous student-athletes who found a way to win today.

Q. Sam, what changed?

SAM GEIERSBACH: Not much in my mind at least. I think time is dwindling down. We realized this might be our last go at it. In the back of my head, I'm thinking about all the stories we've heard from these guys and other teammates about not making it to the national championship.

So for me it's just putting it all for them to be on the line and getting excited.

Q. Taylor, can you walk me through the emotions of your afternoon. We don't want to talk about the delay but everything else in between?

TAYLOR MORENO: Obviously it was not my day, and that's completely okay. I think one of the things I've worked on in my time at Carolina is how to mentally handle situations like that, and for me I think, first of all, kudos to Alecia, she went in there and she gave our defense the reset we needed. She's awesome. She's been awesome all year and I think her presence in the case of our



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we can win this?

SAM GEIERSBACH: I think the thing that makes this team so resilient is just our goal of trust and believing in each other. I think it was there the whole game for us to really get there. But after each goal we looked at each other, I believe in you, you've got this. One at a time. Jenny always says refuse to go away, and that relentlessness all over the field no matter who it is, no matter who is on the field, no matter where the ball is, everyone is relentless and striving with that goal and belief in one another, and at the end of the day, that's what leads us to greatness.

I also think after the 20-minute warning, the timeout, we come back out and we have the ball. We don't end up scoring, but the energy shifts. Everyone felt that. We needed -- that timeout actually helped us and that little break, we kind of got together and talked about what needed to be done. And we came out on the same page and moved forward in each quarter. We just kept being positive. We kept having our heads up high, taking it a possession at a time, just trusting in each other.

I think it stems from the sideline. They were so loud and so energetic, and the whole stadium you could hear Tar Heels chants and it was just an unreal experience. And I'm just really happy that we were able to push it out and do what we did and play Carolina lacrosse and be happy in a press conference and not crying.

Q. Ally, seemed like Northwestern took its foot off the pedal the last ten minutes and for you guys to double [inaudible], no fouls, double teams and turnovers, what did it take to execute that, and did you guys get a sense there was an opportunity there once Northwestern started slowing down?

ALLY MASTROIANNI: Yeah, I think the speed that we had all over the field and the discipline that we have to get our feet there and not make stupid fouls and put people where the ball is and trap them and then just believe in each other, know that that guard was going to be there. Know that you forced them (indiscernible), forced each other to the sideline, the same with -- Alyssa and Elle had an amazing double team and we got the ball back right way. Those little plays are really what creates the shifts and it gave us a lot of confidence going to the other end.

Q. Jenny, I feel like this season has been a true showcase for this sport. Feel like more and more people are watching. And after this incredible victory -- I know you had a lot of incredible victories -- could you talk what it means for the sport to have this kind of game, this kind of result?

COACH LEVY: I think it's great. I appreciate that. I'm not sure we were supposed to be on ESPNU, I'm not sure with the time change what happened with that. But last night, when we were at dinner, there was a bunch of little kids, first and third graders, who were there to meet us. We didn't know that. And they came through and they wanted to get their pictures with us. And they had things to sign. And little girls, you can inspire so many people through the game.

And these athletes that I have the privilege of working with are -- I know it sounds so cliché that they're role models, but they're caring, intelligent, fun, nice and talented, and it's something that people want to be around.

And so I'm not surprised that the game's growing. A game like today can show like there's a lot of excitement in our game. There's scoring in our game. You don't watch a 90-minute game and you have 0-to-0 finishes. It took the overtime and penalty kicks to figure out who the national champion was. No sport that might be like that.

But almost had 30 goals scored today. It was exciting. It's fun to watch. I think if we can continue to make some progress on our rules so that new people who are watching the game for the first time can continue to understand the game and it makes sense to them, I think we can continue to grow this game. And certainly all the coaches in Division I, it's a hard job. I know we're all very committed to growing this game. And starts with amazing student-athletes.

Q. Can you explain a little bit more the decision when to pull Taylor, when you say, okay, it's time to bring her back in and what you saw emotionally from her the entire game?

COACH LEVY: Well, I have Caylee Rogers on staff. She was a great goalkeeper for me at Four Island and on the U.S. national team with me. And I really rely on my staff quite a bit. And, by the way, Phil Barnes, Emily Parros, Caylee Waters, and [inaudible] did an unbelievable job today, all of us. We got our team in the hole and we all worked through it together and dug out.

But Caylee felt that Taylor needed to settle down a little bit. She wasn't relaxed enough. She was trying too hard. We brought her in and talked to her and went over the shots and loosened her up a little bit. Alecia went in, she's a freshman and really good goalkeeper, so we have a lot of confidence. We knew we wanted to put Taylor back in, just wanted her to settle down a little bit. She's a pro. She's done this for six years. She knows when she's playing well and when she's not. But she made the best save of the day at the very end to not have the game go get tied again.



So sometimes that's all you need is just one good save.

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Q. Last ten minutes, are you seeing something different in the press defense that you haven't seen in the previous 50 -- in those last few minutes?

COACH LEVY: Honestly, it's my student-athletes who just decided to attack the pitch. We got a goal from [inaudible] with Wurzburger, we got a goal from Jamie on the left side, and then Sam started taking some really great risks against their zone. And we just wanted to -- we needed to play with more intensity and more poise early.

We hit a lot of pipes in looking at the shot differential. Now, it is like that because they were scoring on their shots and we were hitting pipes.

But even in the second quarter, we walked out of there 2-2 in the second quarter, but we needed to make more progress because we were in the hole six. I felt we kept hitting pipes, and sometimes that's just being a little tight, and it's like relax, take an extra second, see the cage and bury it.

And Sam just went crazy and did a great job. We didn't seem any different. The difference was the intensity with which my offensive kids played with. But I think it also stemmed from the draw controls and giving the ball away and it also stemmed from the turnovers that we were creating without fouling. And so we also got some stops up and down defense. So our defense contributed to the opportunities to have more possessions and we got back in the game.

Q. Last year you felt like the players had a feeling of pressure to be perfect and those first few minutes today did you sense that same pressure?

COACH LEVY: I don't know if that's the pressure they feel. I think sometimes, with teams -- and this is my experience not just this year but all years -- you get to the point you want it so bad and you've got to put that want on the back burner and take care of the details, knowing that you know how to play and play together.

Not one kid is going to make or break the day, although Sam might have, but it's got to be a team effort. You've got to stick to what you do and you've got to believe that and trust each other and do the job on the field. I think the pressure comes not from the pressure of being undefeated. I think the pressure is because you want it so bad. So the mental skill of that is what goes into that and lucky today we had the time to work through it a little bit [inaudible].

