

# 2023 NCAA Women's Lacrosse Championship

Friday, May 26, 2023  
Cary, North Carolina, USA  
WakeMed Soccer Park

**Denver Pioneers**

**Liza Kelly**

**Kayla DeRose**

**Gracie DeRose**

**Sam Thacker**

Media Conference



families have come to everything. We have been on the road a ton this year, and we couldn't be more grateful for the support of our friends, our loved ones, our family.

Honestly, any little girl wearing a pink hat it's been unreal to see it, and I just think it's super cool being able to come play on the East Coast. A bunch of us are from the East Coast. Bringing the fans all the way around here, we are all around the country and spread out but they congregate together and it's a great feeling seeing them and the support in the crowd.

Northwestern 15, Denver 7

THE MODERATOR: We are going to start out with Denver which had an historic 22-0 season.

If you could start with some thoughts on the season.

LIZA KELLY: I told them in the locker room that I absolutely hate losing and feel really happy that we have not done it yet this season. Only one team wins at the end of the year and Northwestern played a great game next year. I'm just so proud of everything this team has done in particular the senior class. They have led us every step of the way with their heart, their work, their passion, their love for all things Denver and they have left an incredible legacy behind them.

**Q. You had a great run the last few years. What was the difference this year?**

LIZA KELLY: These guys. Senior class. They bought in from last year on. They have been hard workers. I think they have been part of building this program since they came in their freshmen year. They set the tone for leadership and got buy-in from every single player. I think we really had a bench that understood their roles and appreciated being part of this team, and felt appreciation from the senior class in particular.

**Q. You guys have wonderful fans out there. It was really great to see them support you. Talk about that.**

SAM THACKER: Yeah, it's been unreal. I think we have literally the best support of any team. It's unreal. Our

KAYLA DeROSE: I don't know if you guys were aware but this season we didn't have a whole lot of -- inaudible. However the ones we did have, our fans showed up like never before. I don't think I've ever in my five years here at Denver witnessed a packed stand like that; it was only for the guy's game.

But once they started pooling in for a few home games, it was crazy and they would lineup and give us high fives waiting for us to come off the field, just a surreal, such a special feeling, something I'll never forget.

**Q. How does it feel to be part of something so ground breaking?**

GRACIE DeROSE: It's really surreal and amazing, I think are the two words that I've used throughout this entire experience. I think that being a fifth-year and having been in to an NCAA Tournament all five years, it's something truly special and I really am I'm so grateful to be a part of, and I think this is only, you know, start of what our success will look like in the future. And I just think that it's really amazing to see everyone out West come this far and something that I will definitely be coming to in the future.

**Q. What did Northwestern do differently after the first quarter?**

LIZA KELLY: Yeah, I just think they started to get rolling and I think they got their confidence a little bit going into the third. You know, they are great shooters. They are great players. I think once they kind of start trusting themselves, they were taking more risks offensively.



**Q. Did the charge codes change the way you attack the defense?**

LIZA KELLY: No. I mean, the three officials have a job to do out there and I thought they were doing the best they could with what was in front of them.

**Q. For the seniors, what kind of life lessons will you take away from this whole experience?**

KAYLA DeROSE: For the final four weekend in general, you don't realize how fast these moments are going to go until you're submerged in it, so I think just taking every thing that comes to you, living in the moment, is a lesson I've learned not only this weekend, but hopefully it will carry throughout the rest of my life.

SAM THACKER: I definitely learned the value of having love and trust with your teammates. This is one of the closest teams or organizations I've ever been a part of. This year, from the second we stepped in fall -- or lost last year, even, we've had each other's backs. When you can have your sisters back, your best friend, whatever it is, you can go a long way. And I think we showed that this year, and I think the unspoken trust and love we have for every single one of our teammates is really what carried us this far.

GRACIE DeROSE: I agree with what they said, and I think the connections we built this whole process is something that will be part of my life forever, and I just think that the love and support from our fans was incredible to have in this tournament, and I'm so grateful to be a part of this program. You know, to leave a legacy of Denver Lacrosse.

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