

2021 NCAA DIII Men's Lacrosse Championship

Sunday, May 30, 2021

Towson, Maryland, USA

RIT Tigers

Jake Coon

Media Conference



RIT - 15, Salisbury - 14

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by RIT national championship coach Jake Coon. Coach, an opening statement.

COACH COON: Well, first of all, that was an incredible game. Just looking through the stats here, it was a dogfight; it was a battle. Kind of knew it was two evenly matched teams coming into today. At least we felt so. We knew we were going to be in a game like that. The guys were resilient all day long. Handled some adversity throughout the second half and made some plays. And I'm so excited for them.

They put in a lot of time and effort, especially this year, it's been a challenging year. So just so happy for them. I'm happy for RIT. Everyone who is involved with RIT lacrosse, our alumni, Mr. Spiotti, retiring this year, couldn't think of a better finish for him. We had an interesting week. We had a player lose his mom. And he's back home. He couldn't even make this game. And these guys really rallied around him. It was really special.

We also had a birth with our assistant coach had a child, his first child. So what an amazing feeling for everybody involved with RIT lacrosse.

Q. With all the great teams you've had, it always ended with next year, we'll get it or we'll move up or we'll do whatever. Take us to the moment when you get the game winner. What's the first thing that hit you when you realized you finally had it?

COACH COON: I guess I turned to the crowd and just thanked them and was appreciative of all the support we get. Winning a national championship isn't something that is in my power. It's not me. It's not our coaches. It's not even just the players. It's an extended family. I've always said that. It's about all the alumni support. All of the staff at RIT.

We have an unbelievable support staff with our admin team. They've been great. And it makes for a special experience for all of these guys. So right when it happened, I'm super thrilled for our guys and really excited for our guys but I'm really excited for the 50 years of guys who have been waiting for this.

So, yeah, wow. What a game.

Q. When you look at the scramble there in the last 20 seconds or so, I mean you guys are down; you don't have a ball; they get the interference call and all that. Just how whacky was that? And your players both said basically that you guys do a lot of different game-type situations that are weird like that in practice. How much do you think that helped in dealing with the situation that was that frenetic?

COACH COON: Yeah, we've been practicing that a lot this year, just short time situations. We call it final 80. We work on a lot of final 80 situations.

No doubt about it, we're in our 10-man ride. To be honest, we caught a break. They pushed a guy in the back, and we got the ball back and were able to capitalize. Caught a break there.

Part of the whole experience and process of winning a title is a little bit of luck. And we caught a little bit of luck there. So I give our guys credit, however, we capitalized on the opportunity we had. Could have missed a cage or not finished or whatever, but they did.

And so I think we were prepared for any situation. The guys believed we were never out of it and that's half of it, that mental edge, that attitude that we'll get the next one and believe in each other has been there all year and I don't think that wavered throughout the end of the game.

Q. If you could just describe what you saw from the game-winning goal, and is that anything at all (indiscernible) or anything?

COACH COON: I have no idea what happened, to be



honest with you. All I know is they fed the crease and Barnable pumped it in the goal. The ironic piece to that is our leading scorer fed our leading assist guy, one of our leading assist guys. That's the ironic part about it all. I couldn't even recap the play, to be honest. I think we tried to run something up top and the ball ended up behind the net and he just stuffed it in there. And Barney handled it under pressure and finished it. Ryan Barnable is a tremendous competitor. He was having trouble finding the back of the net today. So I couldn't see a better person scoring that one.

Q. We made light of it earlier this week that I said how often are you asked what would a national championship mean to this program. What does it feel now to have that national championship and never have to answer that question again?

COACH COON: I think one other question you asked me was do I feel pressure to win one. And that's never been the case. I think we believe in each other. We have that support. Everything was there for the making. We just needed to make plays in a 60-minute game and we were able to do that today.

So, wow, it's a great feeling. Surreal. But really fired up for the team out there. We had a bunch of guys fifth-year guys come back for this. And man, I can't see a better finish for those guys. What a great group of fifth-year seniors, the leadership was wonderful.

Guys just made plays. I will also say I wanted to throw a shout out to Coach Mike, who is our mindset coach. We've been working with him from Z Winning Mindset throughout the course of the year.

And we were pretty dialed in these last two weeks with playing loose not playing with jitters and I think that gave us a real big edge. Guys with just excited to be out there playing and working with each other.

Q. You talk about the resiliency of your guys both with this crazy COVID season and then like the second half of today, rising up with their back against the wall. Just what is it about this team that is able to step up when the moment presents itself?

COACH COON: I think a lot of it is experience and just being a veteran group. We have fifth-year guys and a bunch of fourth-year seniors too. It's an interesting year. A lot of older, experienced guys on the field. I was watching the 2017 national championship. And I see Alex Moroney on the field. And here he is again starting today in the championship. So a lot of experience out there. I think that goes along way in a game like this. And Salisbury had

the same thing. Again, you look at the stats it's about as even a game as you'd ever see. We just happened to make the last play.

But, yeah, just top to bottom. A great performance by everybody. Walker came up with some huge saves. He didn't have 20 today, but he had some big ones down the stretch there. The defense played lights out all day long. Made stops when needed. And our 10-man ride was working well, too.

Q. What was that on-the-field celebration like in that moment? And following up getting to the hoist the national championship, what does it mean for the team?

COACH COON: It was an incredible feeling. It all happened pretty fast there. We had to work pretty hard to get the ball down to our end. All of a sudden the ball is in the back of the net. And I didn't blink and the whole team was out there rushing the field.

What a feeling. Haven't felt that in a long time. I've been waiting for it for quite a while.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much. Congratulations.

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