

# 2022 NCAA Men's Lacrosse Championship

Saturday, May 28, 2022

East Hartford, Connecticut, USA

Rentschler Field

## Rutgers Scarlet Knights

**Brian Brecht**

**Colin Kirst**

**Ryan Gallagher**

Media Conference



Cornell 17, Rutgers 10

**BRIAN BRECHT:** You know, I'm just very thankful for the two senior leaders, our captains that are sitting right next to me. Our senior leadership has been great all year. It's allowed us to have 15 wins, play in the first ever Final Four in school history, and it's a lot of credit to them and what they've done on and off the field for five and two years collectively and with their peers. Certainly very proud of everything they've accomplished this year and throughout their careers to get us here.

**Q. Colin, seemed like defensively communication was probably a little bit of an issue there in the first half between some of the pick plays and the failed gears. What went into that on your end? Was it a bad day on that end of things?**

**COLIN KIRST:** I wouldn't say it was a bad day. I think they just executed better than us at the end of the day. They were just a step quicker and a step just on top of it. Including myself, yeah, I think we definitely weren't as clean as we wanted to be, and that's going to come back and bite you in the butt this time of year.

**Q. Obviously not the way you wanted the season to end. Still undoubtedly the greatest season in Rutgers lacrosse history. How would you choose to remember this season?**

**RYAN GALLAGHER:** Yeah, I think I'm going to remember this year as the best year of my life. I think we've accomplished a lot. I think that in moments like this, you forget about what you've accomplished the entire season. We've really set a new bar for the program, and I hope that the guys that are younger on our team can get back here

and lead a team to this venue again.

Yeah, thankful to be a part of it.

**Q. For both Ryan and Colin, how did you manage the break? What did you do in the locker room during the three hours?**

**RYAN GALLAGHER:** Yeah, the break was a little weird. It's definitely something not -- it was a little unexpected. Honestly, I think that our locker room is a pretty close knit, pretty tight group. Really we brought the chairs out into the little area there, the runway, the tunnel, got some coffee, caked it, chatted, just kind of joking around. Really just time flies pretty fast when we're hanging around with all the guys.

**COLIN KIRST:** Yeah, I think on a vibe similar to our pre-practice, kind of when all the guys get in between 9:00 and 10:00 throughout the week, that's where we just spend time with each other talking. It kind of felt like that.

Yeah, it was halftime, but we were still focused and understood what was going on.

But yeah, it kind of felt like pre-practice, so nothing too crazy.

**Q. Colin, I talked to your brother earlier this week just about this matchup and what it meant to him. What did he say to you at the final point in the game? I saw him make a bee line to you before the team.**

**COLIN KIRST:** He said he loved me. CJ is my best friend, just like all my brothers. Been through a lot. Yeah, he's always there for me, and I know we were on different sides of the wall today, but he's my best friend, and yeah, it was a lot of fun today being here with him.

**Q. Colin, great year for you all together. Final year for you here, and the way you were able to lead this team, make this team defensively what it has become especially from a goaltending standpoint, what do you take away from your career here at Rutgers?**



COLIN KIRST: Just the locker room. I think the culture here is just so strong, and the history of the program, the support is really unmatched. We've got guys from the '70s showing up to our games and cheering as hard as the guys that graduated the year before this year.

There's just such a passion and care throughout the program, and that really starts with the guys in the locker room, but once you move on in the real world, that love for Rutgers lacrosse doesn't change. I think that's really something that each and every one of us bottle up and try and do at practice and every given day we're together.

RYAN GALLAGHER: Do you mind if I add on to that? I think that he's going to hate me for saying this, but when you look at where our team was in 2020, we were coming off of a 2-4 season right before COVID hit, and our program really needed a spark, and that spark was the Kirst brothers. It's very obvious to the people in our program what that was, and Connor and Colin now for two years have really, really been an inspiration to the guys in our locker room. They're the most competitive people I know. They're the happiest people I know. I just think that he deserves all the flowers he can get because he's incredible.

**Q. For both of the players, can you talk about what it means to make the Final Four, be part of the first team in Rutgers history to make the Final Four?**

RYAN GALLAGHER: Yeah, being the first to get here, I touched on it earlier, but it's a new bar for the program. I think when I came here to Rutgers in the fall of 2017, we were still in search for just making the tournament for the first time in a long time, and now that we've done that in back-to-back years, we've really raised the bar once more.

Yeah, I just think that it's a testament to the support staff that we have here. It's a testament to a lot of the guys that have come before me. You look at those of those classes in 2016, 2017, 2018. They really laid the foundation for this program. They're great mentors to me and are really close to the program to this day. Half of them were in the stands today being rowdy. Yeah, it's special.

COLIN KIRST: Yeah, I think Ryan really answered that question well. Yeah, I just think it definitely means something. It's a privilege to play Rutgers lacrosse, and I think every guy on our team knows that and every alum just cares so much.

You know, it's a credit to the guys in the locker room, our coaching staff, but also the guys that have come before us. Truly amazing.

**Q. Ryan, you've been here for a long time; take me through the overall process from where this team was when you got to Rutgers and how you've been able to walk out up to this moment now? You go from a team that was still building, now they make the Final Four. Take me through your overall career at Rutgers and the process that took place.**

RYAN GALLAGHER: It's kind of a loaded question. It's been a really awesome journey. It's been pretty beautiful to have everybody that has been in my corner since I've been here. I think when you look at some of our rosters when I was younger in the program, maybe there wasn't complete buy-in from the roster top to bottom, and I think that we needed some sparks and some new leadership to maybe get a little bit older, get a year older and get a year better like Coach likes to say.

I think that you look at some of those rosters in 2018, 2019, and I think we were pretty great at the top. I think that our starters could compete with anybody in the country, but I think that you look at our past two seasons, our scout teams have been incredible. Our scout defense really grinds every day. They give us great looks. You look at our scout offense, and there are some names on that scout offense that you guys are going to hear a lot in the next coming years.

Yeah, I think that all in all, it's been like an awesome journey, and it's going to take a long time for me to take this jersey off.

**Q. Can you speak to what Cornell did particularly well today against you defensively and offensively attacking you? What made them successful today?**

BRIAN BRECHT: I know going into the game, we focus a lot on taking care of ourselves and playing well within our systems. Give Cornell a lot of credit. They're a talented team. Their attack is very dynamic, and they've got a lot of tradition and certainly have played well today.

I don't know if we played the best Rutgers across today that we needed to to have success. Tip your hat to them; it was partly because of them.

But certainly proud of all the guys, of what they've done, and just needed to play a little better to be able to be successful in a big game like this.

**Q. Just to build off the idea of it being you guys, as well, in that mix, it seemed like defensively you were a little off in terms of catching picks and stuff like that and offensively probably didn't get into a rhythm. What do you think was behind that? Was it a team that**

**was just kind of stuck in the moment a little bit, or what do you feel like kind of was a theme for you guys there especially in the first half?**

BRIAN BRECHT: You know what, we had maybe two pick situations that I can remember, one big little behind an X and one down the alley where we kinda got under and didn't reattach. So I don't think it was that.

Defensively maybe just needed to -- I think early on maybe tried to do too much and not play within ourselves, going over ahead at goal line, and like you said, the two pick plays. But yeah, those are three goals.

I think the one thing that -- and just broadly, just taking a scan, walking over here a couple minutes ago, I would think it's about us. It's about what we do. We've been clean on the perimeter. We've been the best team in the country all year as far as turnovers, and we were way above that number in the first half with eight going into the break and 15 to finish out the game, which is over what we do consistently day in and day out.

We've been the best clearing team in the country, 93 percent clearing. We were 75 percent.

We were right around 50 percent, 48 percent facing off, so possessions matter, so it's not so much defensively the system, it's just we played more defense today than we did throughout the season, and that takes its toll against a talented team like Cornell.

**Q. Brian, how did the staff handle the extended break? What did you and your staff do and talk about during the break?**

BRIAN BRECHT: I mean, it was an extended halftime and pregame opportunity. So to be able to talk to the team in general right away, and then for positional work, offense, defense, face-off guys, watch a little film as far as some things that we can maybe be aware of for the second half of what we need to do a little better, be a little cleaner on. But it really -- we didn't have a three-hour chunk. It was like, meet at two, meet at three, meet at four. It was constantly just little chops.

I think it was more about getting the guys healthy, getting -- staying fresh with liquids and getting something to eat, get some nutrition in us and be ready to focus on the second half when the bell rang.

**Q. Can you talk about 27 for them and how he performed relative to your expectations, what your approach was?**

BRIAN BRECHT: Certainly I thought their first midfield of 11, 13 and 27 was very good. We prepared for them to do a lot of the heavy lifting, and we had two quick change-of-direction ball carrying initiators and a big hard charger. We've played some big middies before. If you're asking me strategy-wise, we like our rope unit a lot, we like our poles a lot, and we thought that putting the pole on 11 would take them out of their invert game and not have as much invert, and we just needed to crowd a little bit, not let the big runs from space. When he had big runs, he's a big, strong, hard charger. When we were able to get our hands on him and get up and crowd him, I thought we did a good job of containing him.

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