

2022 DIV III NCAA Men's Lacrosse Championship

Sunday, May 29, 2022

East Hartford, Connecticut, USA

Rentschler Field

RIT Tigers

Jake Coon

Ryan Barnable

Quinn Commandant

Drew Hutchison

Media Conference



RIT 12, Union 10

JAKE COON: Wow, that was another incredible game. Had a really tough start today, and I think our guys showed what they've done all year is just kept grinding and just played with a lot of heart, a lot of hustle, a lot of grit, a lot of toughness. We stuck together all day. We talked about it a bunch at halftime, just keep grinding away and chip away, and we did a nice job of that throughout the course of the game.

Again, got to give Hutchy a ton of credit. For the first half he bailed us out on a ton of really good looks from Union. I'll also say that Union, got to give them credit. They're a fantastic group, fantastic team, well coached. Derek does a great job.

Just proud of our guys for sticking with the plan, making some adjustments and getting the job done in the end. Really excited for all of the RIT community.

Q. For Drew, can you talk a little bit about your defense in front of you and how great of a job they did bouncing between looks and just making sure you were able to see lots of quality shots that you were happy with, as well?

DREW HUCHISON: Yeah, for sure. No, our whole D core is awesome. They let up the shots that they know I can save, and when we break down, we always reset. We're not worried about the next play. We know we're going to make stops, and especially in the first half when they came up on us, we just stayed positive at our end and knew that the offense would take over and we'd win the game.

Q. You guys obviously last year with the double OT win, how did the adversity of last year's championship game kind of help in the comeback today?

DREW HUCHISON: I think just at halftime we stayed positive the whole time. That's one thing our group is pretty resilient, and no matter what the score was, we were going to go out and make our plays, and the offense played great in the second half, and they were able to bury a couple more than they scored on us. It was awesome to see them do that.

Q. Quinn, the ability for you guys to get out in transition a little bit, they stymied you there I think probably for the first 25 minutes. How important was it to go going that way and get a few more opportunities that way?

QUINN COMMANDANT: Right, it was huge. I think RIT lacrosse, we want to get up-and-down, and not being able to do that early in the game kind of hurt us a little bit. But as we got going, Hutchy was getting the ball out real quick, we were able to get out and run. Pent and Andrew Powlin along with our LSMs and our other D middies did a very good job of breaking out of the hole real quick, and we were able to push in transition, score a couple goals.

Q. For all the guys, how does it feel to be back-to-back national champions?

QUINN COMMANDANT: To be honest, it's hard to put into words. It was hard to put into words last year. It's just as hard this year.

I think being fifth-year seniors, all three of us, we saw what those seniors last year went through, their last game going out on top, and we wanted to just do that ourselves, and it feels incredible. It's unbelievable.

DREW HUCHISON: Yeah, I think it's been our goal the whole year. I think every team in Division III, their goal at the start of the season is to win the National Championship, and like Coach said in our pregame, we didn't just come here to show up and lose it. Our goal was



to win the National Championship. It's awesome to be able to do it and raise that trophy again.

RYAN BARNABLE: Yeah, it's definitely a good feeling, but a little surreal right now. Like Coach and a couple of our other coaches do a great job of letting us treat every game like any other, so right now it's kind of a weird feeling not going to practice Monday.

Just definitely going to have fun tonight, and just really excited for our community and then all the Canadians who got to come down this year with the COVID, so just to get to celebrate with all our alumni and family and friends. It's just really exciting.

Q. Kind of building off of that, you guys all going out on top, back-to-back national champions, just talk about legacy, how proud are you guys of the legacy that you guys are leaving and obviously leaving this RIT program in really good hands?

RYAN BARNABLE: I don't think that comes down to us. I feel just Coach does a really good job of setting a good camaraderie and a good team atmosphere, and as we said before the game, like we have guys fill roles every year. Every year, every summer we hear RIT is down and out, we lost some guys, and guys find roles and step up in big ways. Credit to Coach and Coach Wilkins. They do a great job bringing in talent and developing that talent.

For this team, I don't think it's us, I think it's just the development of the team. I think it's in good hands.

Q. I wanted to ask, two parts really, the zone that you went to, it seemed like it slowed them down in terms of peppering you guys with shots. How important was that? And also the transition issue that I asked those guys, too. It seemed that really changed things for you guys.

JAKE COON: Yeah, no doubt about it. They were doing a great job coming up with a lot of ground balls in the first quarter. They dominated us in that area, and that's usually where we dominate. So it was 13-4 on the ground balls in the first quarter, so it was tough to get possessions at all. They had the ball the whole time. When you're on the field and grinding like that, guys are getting tired, so we went to the zone. We had confidence. We came into the game knowing that it worked for us last time that we played them this year, and we saw some flaws in their zone offenses. We were going to try it early on, and it seemed to be working, so we just went with it.

It was better than expected, I guess. We did create some turnovers out of it, and they seemed to hesitate, and more

importantly, like you said, just slowed them down and gave us a little bit of a break.

Yeah, just proud of the guys for being able to adjust and get the job done.

Q. Obviously last year the story was you guys had finally scaled the mountain after having gotten close. Now that you've done it a second time, I doubt it was easier the second time around, but did you guys draw from that having done it already, that it wasn't quite so insurmountable?

JAKE COON: Yeah, I get that question quite often. I've been telling everybody, this is a National Championship game, a National Championship venue. That was last year. Different personnel, different roles.

I will say that our guys, we have exit interviews every year, and a lot of our guys said this was an incredible experience, but some of the guys who didn't play like a Drew Hutchison who didn't get to play much really wanted to come back and kind of be more involved in the game and kind of leave their mark.

I'll give them credit for stepping up and filling those shoes and doing a great job all season game in and game out of coming in ready to go.

Q. What did you see in your guys as far as their energy, when you guys were down and their ability to keep positive?

JAKE COON: Yeah, and we talk about that a lot, and we talked about it last night in our meeting. Just that if things go awry, I think we said if we're down 6-2 -- we were talking about it last night. I think were we were talking about being down 6-2 and coming back. I don't know where those numbers came from, and I think we actually might have been down 6-2 today so that was kind of a weird feeling.

But I give the guys, again, a lot of credit for sticking with the game plan, changing the game plan when needed. It was a grind. It was a definite grind.

Think maybe the heat had a little bit of a factor at the end. We didn't run quite as many guys as we have, but I do feel that we're in great shape. We work hard, and I think maybe that had a little bit of a -- it was part of the outcome. I think we handled it a little bit better.

Q. Just a message about how important the community was to the team this year. Talk about the community and the surrounding area.



JAKE COON: Well, I've been in Rochester now a majority of my life, so I'm a Rochesterian through and through at this point. I'm an upstate New York guy anyway, but I've lived there a long time.

It's an unbelievable lacrosse community. They give us a ton of support, whether it's youth, high school, whatever. They give us a ton of support, and certainly Jacquie and our athletic department and our president right down through has given us what we need to succeed. We feel supported, and I'm just really happy for the entire community that we can bring home a second championship. It feels great.

Q. When do you think this feeling will sink in, or has it sunk in already for you?

JAKE COON: When the final bell rung there, I think it was immediate. You don't get these opportunities very often, and you'd better take advantage. We talked about that a lot, that this doesn't come around every year, don't expect it to. Certainly it's a goal of ours, but you need to kind of take it all in and cherish the moment.

I'm just super excited. I know we talked a bit about the legacy piece and kind of leaving our mark as I think the sixth team ever in Division III to be back-to-back, so that's incredible to be a part of just that small group of fantastic lacrosse communities and schools.

Just really excited. Didn't take long for me, let me tell you.

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