

2021 NCAA Men's Lacrosse Championship

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East Hartford, Connecticut, USA

Virginia Cavaliers

Alex Rode

Jared Conners

Media Conference



Virginia 17, Maryland 16

Q. Alex, can you take us through that game clinching save and kind of the elation following it?

ALEX RODE: Yeah, it was -- were winning the face-offs so they got in. I had a rough day. Wasn't my best day in goal, and our defense actually played great. FOGO took a shot and I was a little nervous, thought I owed my team a couple, and luckily it hit me in the body. Defense played great, shooting that FOGO down the middle and giving them a shot that I hopefully can save. Really all power to them.

Q. Jared, just knowing that you decided to come back after last season was shortened, what is this feeling like getting to hoist that trophy again?

JARED CONNERS: It's awesome. This is one of the greatest feelings ever. It's definitely the reason you come back for, and talking to Dox after the game, there's nowhere else we'd rather be. It's been an incredible experience, it's been an awesome ride. I love my team, and there's no one else I'd rather do it with. We've got a brotherhood like nothing else, and if you came in our locker room and spent a couple hours there, you would understand what I'm talking about.

Q. Considering everything that you've been through with COVID, with last season getting canceled and just how difficult all of that was, does that make this championship mean a little more?

ALEX RODE: Yeah, I think it means a little more. I know COVID has been going on, and every team has been dealing with it, so it's something every team had to deal with at length. It's also something the world is dealing with, so a championship is sweet, but it's definitely hard times for everyone, so this is a bright spot in our lives, which is very

fortunate for us.

JARED CONNERS: Yeah, I think that was well said by Alex. It's been tough for everybody. We've been fortunate enough to have a full season where other teams had to miss a couple games or deal with people testing positive and taking weeks off or whatnot. It's been tough for everybody, and we thank our athletic staff and medical staff for keeping us safe and healthy this whole season, but at the end of the day it's been an awesome year. It's been great.

Q. Jared, looking at the second half, you guys were just having fun playing together. Was there any message in the locker room from coach Tiffany that emphasized 30 more minutes of the season, and obviously scoring goals helps, but just the vibe on the sideline, the way the goal celebrations were happening? Was there anything specific that addressed that?

JARED CONNERS: Yeah, I would say that we addressed it. I was actually getting an IV during halftime because I've been cramping the past couple games. I wasn't fully a part of the conversation, but in the huddle on the field right before we went out, we definitely addressed it and said something we've had in the back of our minds is 60 minutes for the rest of our lives before the game and 30 minutes for the rest of our lives after. We were going to empty the tank and we weren't going to leave anything, any play out there on the field that we wish we would have made or anything like that.

The message was leave it all out there and we were going to come out with this thing.

Q. Jared, in a game like this where it seems like there's a four-goal run here and a five-goal run there seemingly every quarter, how hard was it to hold up at the defensive end and just withstand everything right down to the last moment?

JARED CONNERS: It's definitely tough. It's definitely tough. That's why you spend so much time with your defense and with the guys that you play next to, because it

all comes down to chemistry in that situation, knowing you can look your guys in the eye and say, we've got this, we're all right, we've been here before.

We've been tested like this all season. We've had our ups and downs. We've had losses. We've had teams go on runs like that. We knew it was going to be a dogfight. We knew Maryland wasn't just going to roll over. Especially after that 2019 game when we had that comeback, we knew that they were going to be hunting us down and looking to come back from behind coming in that second half.

Really at the end of the day it just came down to our chemistry and being able to look at each other and knowing that we could rely on each other and we were going to leave it all out there and give everything that we had.

Q. Jared, I know you're in a really good grad school program, and that was a big part of your decision to come back, but how much did your desire to try to win another National Championship play come into your decision?

JARED CONNERS: It was a huge part of the decision, and I think the biggest part, too, was just the guys that I would have been leaving behind. With the opportunity to win another championship, there's no -- there was no doubt that I was going to come back at some point one way or the other.

But being able to come back and be surrounded by the group of guys that we have is something that you dream about. It's been a crazy ride, and I'm so glad I made the decision to come back for sure.

Q. Seeing where this program was when you both came in and kind of what it took to win that first ACC game a couple years ago at UNC and now just to be in this moment where you have two National Championships, how has this -- kind of your careers, how have you seen it gone?

ALEX RODE: We're very fortunate. UVA is a historic program. UVA is always good. A lot of us were brought in by Dom Starsia, and we were lucky enough to be brought here, and I think him for that, and Coach Van Arsdale, and Coach Tiffany took over and we've got a couple good runs here but UVA has always been a historic program and one of the powerhouses and I'm lucky to be a part of this program.

JARED CONNERS: Like Alex said, we're very lucky, we're very fortunate. A lot of people work very hard and do all

the right things and never get to this spot. We've got to take into account the luck factor and being in the right place at the right time but also take into account that we haven't taken a day off and we're doing all the right things behind closed doors. A big part goes out to our whole team but also understand that we've got the right resources around us and a little bit of luck.

Q. I know Coach told you guys going into 2020 how difficult repeating was, gave you this kind of short list of who's done it. Now that you've been there and done it, how hard did it prove?

JARED CONNERS: It was tough, man. It was tough. Especially with -- I'm sure you guys have been hearing about all the COVID stuff, dealing with that. It's definitely been a grind, and knowing that you have a target on your back the whole season as the returning champions is something that we talked about throughout the whole season, but we weren't going to let the 2019 team be the 2021 team. We were going to have our own story and do everything that we could in our power to make this happen.

Q. I'm sure you guys see Shellenberger ball out in practice a lot, but how impressed were you guys just this playoff run and especially his play today?

JARED CONNERS: Yeah, he's just doing his thing. We've known he's this good. It was interesting last year, he was on the scout team and he was absolutely tearing us apart, and we were like, this kid is really going to red shirt? But his decision paid off and he's maturing into his own, and he's going to play a huge role next year with Matt coming back, and I'm really excited to see the man that he has become already and the man that he's going to continue to become and the role he's going to play in the next four years I think he's got or three years. I'm super excited for him. He's a dog. He's a workhorse.

ALEX RODE: Yeah, Connor is one of the best players I've ever seen and he's also an amazing kid which makes it even better. I'm so happy for him and I can't wait to see what he does next as the face of this program coming up.

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