

# 2023 NCAA Men's Lacrosse Championship

Saturday, May 27, 2023

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Lincoln Financial Field

## Duke Blue Devils

## Coach John Danowski

## Jake Naso

## Garrett Leadmon

### Media Conference



can get inside.

GARRETT LEADMON: Yeah, well, I had the ball at the top of the key, and then I dodged, drew the switch, and then I knew I had a short stick on me. I feel like in those moments, teams are slow to go as far as bringing another guy to the ball, so I knew that that was probably going to be the case. That's when I knew that I could go.

**Q. Any adjustments that you made at halftime? It seemed like you really wore down their guys. Any adjustments you made, and what did it feel like to put two goals away on such a big stage?**

JAKE NASO: Yeah, definitely took me a little while to get used to what was going on out there, but I think the face-off unit collectively as a group, being myself and then the wing guys, really came together. We looked at the iPad what we were doing wrong in the first, second quarter, and just to work on that and focus on what we can do better, and I think the face-off unit as a whole turned it around in the second half, which led to some success on offense.

**Q. Garrett, their defense was able to kind of go between man and zone at times in this game. What did you see from those different looks, and particularly with Brennan having such a hot start and not really getting many shots toward the latter part of the game, what did you perceive there?**

GARRETT LEADMON: I think we just did a good job in the beginning of the game with the zone just stepping into seams and being patient. I think we knew if we were just patient enough, we worked the ball, threw hard passes to each other that we would be able to step into seams and shoot it dead.

But they're a really tough team when they -- they're a really tough man coverage team, and we just had to continue to wear them down and look for the best opportunities, not the first one, and I think that's what we did, and I think it was good and effective for us.

**Q. John, the goal, very apparently, he was in the crease at the end. Would you like to see those**

Duke 16, Penn State 15

JOHN DANOWSKI: First I want to congratulate Penn State, their players, Coach Tambroni, Coach Haus, the staff. They were just terrific. I can't imagine the hurt that they're feeling right now relative to our exhilaration. I really respect Coach and what he does, and they were just terrific today.

With that being said, while you look at the game from both ways, both sides, I don't know if it was our best game defensively or that Penn State just played lights out. I'd have to watch the film to see that.

Offensively we did enough. I thought we left a couple of opportunities on the field, but we did enough to be successful, and very proud of this group for playing in a very difficult atmosphere, very pro Penn State, and for figuring it out at the end.

**Q. Garrett, close call there. Did you have a sense of where you were relative to the crease on that play? Kind of go through what you were seeing on that and obviously at the end of regulation, too.**

GARRETT LEADMON: Yeah, it's something that we practice every day. Even the midfielders behind the cage was getting up to five and five, sitting there, absorbing that contact, and I knew that if I was able to just get like a good change of direction that I'd be able to get underneath, just put my foot in the ground and just go for it, dive in front of the cage and try to throw a fair play up, and that's what I did.

**Q. When did you feel that you could go? There's got to be something there that led you to say, it's time, I**



**reviewable? Women's are experimenting with it. Would you like to see that reviewable, or do you think there's too many reviews and replays right now?**

JOHN DANOWSKI: Not today. (Laughter.)

**Q. Garrett, when they were reviewing that, it obviously didn't take too long, but was there any doubt in your mind how that was going to shake out at that point?**

GARRETT LEADMON: I saw the referee put his hands up in the air, and I figured we won the game, and that's the end of that.

**Q. Jake, in addition to your proficiency in winning the ball, you also stayed on and either forced them to play 5-on-5 or got a couple in the sub game, as well. Can you speak to that element of the game plan?**

JAKE NASO: Yeah, I think it stems from practice every day, getting some reps in with the offense, shooting, really being able to take advantage of opponents if they're subbing off, just taking a look for a brief second, whether it's five seconds, ten seconds, just seeing if I can help us push some offense and get some opportunities there. But I thought we did a great job today in the subbing game, which ended up leading to a few goals.

**Q. When you score, is this a psychological thing to say I'm going to keep carrying on like I scored and didn't step on the line and make them not change their minds?**

GARRETT LEADMON: That was definitely not something that I was thinking. I just thought that the game was over and that we won. That's why I celebrated.

**Q. They kept coming at you guys, holding them off. How nerve-racking is it trying to keep the lead, and when they finally do tie it to not lose your poise there?**

JAKE NASO: Yeah, I mean, we've experienced a lot this year, and I think just taking one play at a time, not really thinking too much of it, kind of playing in the moment really helps us get through it and look to playing the next play.

GARRETT LEADMON: Playing with a lead is something we've had to do all year. We've had some hot starts, and I think all the experiences we had led up to today and it was what allowed us to win the game in the end.

**Q. Building on the earlier question about your goal, when you came out of the time-out, was that the look or was there a different look you guys were going for, or did it just end up where you became the guy?**

GARRETT LEADMON: I don't think that was supposed to be the look, but it ended up that way, and I felt like I had an opportunity to get underneath and score. Yeah, that's kind of how it played out.

**Q. What was your message to your team following the game after a very high intense type of matchup there was?**

JOHN DANOWSKI: There was so much to learn from today. There were some guys, for example, Jake Naso, has two goals and an assist, which is a lot for a face-off guy, Jadon Kerry, fifth-year senior who hasn't played a lot of lacrosse for us, comes in and scores a goal. Aidan Maguire picks up a big ground ball on the wing in the fourth quarter.

There was so many small plays, but again, you have to kind of be -- we have to be overly critical with ourselves if we want to get better for Monday, and to recognize some of the things that we weren't good at today and why we weren't good at them. That was really the message.

Again, I was really proud of their -- sounds cliché, but their character. They hung in there, had the lead. Penn State fights valiantly, they tie it up, and the game kind of -- and that man down, we hadn't played well, and all of a sudden we stopped them on man down and get the ball back and get an opportunity to win the game in regulation.

Even when the day is not going the way you think it was going to go or you'd like it to go, the guys I thought did a great job.

**Q. Jake, for a layman who doesn't know anything about face-offs, especially the last one that you won which looked like a real grinder, what's that like in there and what's your mindset to figure out a way to get it?**

JAKE NASO: Yeah, that last one was a little bit like a wrestling match. Ball is flying around everywhere, and just trying to put it into space to where I could pick it up and give my team the best chance to score.

But yeah, just trying to play in the moment, like I said before, and realizing that all the preparation we've done this week and going back months helped us get the win there at the end.

**Q. Were there any points in that game that you considered pulling Will, and what made you stick with him?**

JOHN DANOWSKI: He's been our guy all year. Against Syracuse we did do that. That was my decision, and Andrew Bonafede came in and did a great job in the second Syracuse game.

Yes, there was some discussion on the sideline, but Coach Ready, who I trust implicitly, said that he thought that he was fine, and Coach Caputo seconded that. I got out-voted two to one. But there was a little discussion.

**Q. Every time you guys look the lead, Penn State would tie it up with you guys. What was your message to keep the guys calm, poised to extend the lead? What was your message?**

JOHN DANOWSKI: At that point it was always about letting it go, letting that last play go, learning from it, and then let's make the next play. So at some point I turned to somebody and said, this is going to be a 60-minute bar fight. And it felt that way. It just felt like this was going to be like they were going to take a punch, we were going to take a punch, we were going to have to absorb a couple, and again, I thought Penn State was terrific. They shot the ball lights out.

But we had to figure out how to match that. Again, I was really proud of our guys for doing so.

**Q. Garrett and Jake, when you look ahead to Monday, what that's going to be like for you to play the championship?**

GARRETT LEADMON: Yeah, I think it's just an unbelievable opportunity, and I think we're both just so grateful to be able to play in it. This is just the most cohesive team that I've ever been on, and just another opportunity to spend a couple more nights in the hotel with these guys and to just continue this run, that's what means the most to me. Just being in the locker room for another two days with these guys, being in this city, and yeah, just really looking forward to it.

JAKE NASO: Yeah, I agree with Garrett. Just being able to spend two more days with these guys, this is the most special team I've been a part of, and just two more days with them is going to be real surreal, and I'm looking forward to it.

**Q. Coach Danowski, you played a lot of games this year, and maybe some of them - I'm not going to criticize opponents or whatever, but is your philosophy to play those extra games to get more guys experience so when you face, when you need more people like today, it came through for you? Is that part of the reason you do it?**

JOHN DANOWSKI: Absolutely. One, kids prefer to play games instead of practice. If I said to somebody, would you like to play on Tuesday or would you like to practice on Tuesday, yeah, I know the answer.

GARRETT LEADMON: Play.

JOHN DANOWSKI: That's number one.

Number two, you have 51 young men on your roster who work -- school begins in August. They're in the weight room four days a week. It's hard to get guys in games. It's really difficult.

So you're hoping that there are opportunities to get people in games to contribute, and it's hard with the bloated rosters because of the pandemic, but that is one of the reasons we do that. It's game experience.

**Q. I didn't know if you wanted to just expand on the replay and the last goal question, just what your perspective of that goal was.**

JOHN DANOWSKI: I've been doing this for a while, been on both ends of this, I've been on ends where Dyson Williams' goal was called back and we thought that might have been -- but I don't want to say anything negative about the officiating. But we thought that might have been a call that went against us.

But the nature of the game is -- we didn't play man up today. I'm sure somebody got fouled somewhere. But it's a human -- the beauty of our sport, we're not commercial. We're not doing it for the money. These kids play because they love the sport, and you have three officials out there who are doing the best they can, and that's true every week.

We have a hard enough time getting officials to work the college game. It's one of those things. That's for greater minds than mine.

But I even thought today the music at every face-off I thought really slowed the pace of the game down quite a bit, whether that was for television and for the replays that they're showing, but the game, it just seemed like -- a normal college lacrosse game is about two hours from start to finish, and that television window I would assume today was a lot longer than that with a 15-minute halftime.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports