

2024 NCAA Men's Lacrosse Championship

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Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Lincoln Financial Field

Maryland Terrapins

Coach John Tillman

Media Conference



So, again, on a quick turnaround, I think it's just a nice luxury to have. I think we all would like to be able to do it. I give them credit. They've done it. They've stuck to it. It certainly has helped them, not hurt them.

Q. I know it's been a crazy last 24 hours. Give an update about your team, how you're feeling going into tomorrow.

JOHN TILLMAN: Obviously very proud of this group and excited to have another opportunity to be together on a very special day for our country and what that day means for all the people that have given their life for our country and to have Maryland there in the championship.

Realize we are playing a really good team. So we're working our butts off to try to get prepared but also balance just getting rest and making sure that our guys' bodies are as up to speed as possible and try to make sure we go out and try to play our best game of the year against a terrific, really well-coached team.

Q. Wanted to ask a bit about their depth. You mentioned the three midfields that they run yesterday after the game. How valuable an asset is that in the modern game? And how significant do you think it can be for them on a quick turnaround and how do you deal with that?

JOHN TILLMAN: Yeah, you know, again, just it's great to have two good midfields. To have a third, I think it's huge. It's not just this weekend; it's throughout the year. I think your -- every game you're getting more people involved. You're creating that depth.

You also realize there may be some games where that third group could be your second group. They might just be clicking that day. So even during the course of the year, you're lightening the guys' load -- not by a ton but some. So that is nice.

Not only are they just giving you runs; they're scoring goals. They're being productive. It's another group you have to prepare for as well.

Q. In the past you've mentioned the team overcoming adversity with players coming back from injuries, some poor performances. Does this run make it especially rewarding for you and the players?

JOHN TILLMAN: Yeah, I think this road has been really bumpy. You guys have seen it firsthand, with -- not even just this year, too. Last year, very bumpy road with the injuries, with Logan and Ajax, obviously with Eric and Josh Coffman. We had some significant season-ending injuries last year, which were hard. So we kind of were very up and down last year.

And then this year it seemed like a lot of the same.

But obviously didn't get past weekend one in the playoffs last year, and for this team to keep it going, it's a credit to them that even though it's been bumpy, I think it, in a lot of ways, these are years where you're even more proud of the guys.

You appreciate it more just because it just wasn't easy. And, again, like I said yesterday, these kids are very successful. They're good students. They're popular. They're talented athletes. They haven't faced a lot of adversity, most of them, and their adversity is on a pretty relatively lower scale. And I think most of us are that way when we're young.

The guys now realize there's going to be ups and downs and there's a way you need to handle it. You need to support each other. You need to stay positive. You can't point the finger. You've got to go back to work. And, again, this will serve them well for down the road.

I also think it just brings you closer together when things don't go your way and guys look out for you. You support each other. Instead of splintering, you actually can go stronger, and I think that's what happened to this group. Like, everybody did decide to go all in. And I think we're

better for it.

Q. I think many of us in the media have kind of looked at this Notre Dame team and thought that they're pretty much unbeatable and this could be a team of destiny. In that sense, do you feel the pressure is more on them than you guys?

JOHN TILLMAN: Yeah, obviously it's pretty clear we're the underdog. Obviously they're the No. 1 seed. They're really good. Outside of one tough half against a really good Georgetown team, they've been not only good, they've been borderline dominant.

They've had games where they've won, but most of them, they've had kind of a big disparity with the score. So they're very talented.

If you don't play well, they can pour it on and pull away. It seems like that's what they've done. We know the spot we're in. We get it. The only thing we can do is control what we do.

Again, I know they're really good. But I have great faith in our guys. I have great faith in our coaches. We're going to go in and just prepare as hard as we can.

I feel like if we can play to our potential, we have a chance against anybody. And so that means we need to get ourselves ready and control the things we can. And then regardless of the opponent, the weather, whatever it may be tomorrow, we've got to go out, play hard.

Again, if things don't go well, we've got to stick together. We've seen that on a macro level with the season game to game. But now we need to do it on a micro level, just make sure that regardless of the game, we just stick together because they're going to make plays. They're going to score. They're going to win faceoffs. They're going to get saves.

We're going to get knocked down. Whatever it is, it's all about the next play and not getting too caught up in, hey, it's not going the way that we want.

I thought the kids did that last week against Duke. It certainly was a sizable hole, but they just kept clawing back and never gave up.

The momentum can shift in our game pretty quickly. And that's what you kind of have to believe in and make sure that we fall back on, regardless of what happens.

Q. When you look at two teams that have faceoff guys that are playing as well as they have in this

postseason, I think both Luke and Will Lynch are over 70 percent, do you feel that places a greater onus on possession when those two are going up against each other and their wing guys are going up against each other, or is that maybe overthinking things a little bit?

JOHN TILLMAN: No, not at all. We just had a team meeting. The last time we played was 50/50.

And Will Lynch is terrific. Their wing guys are excellent as well. And we mentioned to the guys listen we've had some luxury with (inaudible) and who knows how tomorrow -- (lost Zoom connection).

Q. I think you froze about the time where you were saying something along the lines of -- you were saying that we've had some luxuries or something like that.

JOHN TILLMAN: We've had the luxury obviously a lot more possessions than our opponent. And so that allows you to overcome maybe some turnovers or some mistakes.

It doesn't mean you have to be perfect, but you definitely need to be efficient and make the most of your opportunities because eventually, over the course of the year, you just can't expect your faceoff guy to be at that clip. It's just hard to do, and especially in the playoffs. And obviously against a guy like Lynch who's really, really good. And it's been impressive to see, for sure.

Q. This may be comparing apples and oranges, but does this Notre Dame team remind you of the 2022 team you had in terms of how they've dominated opponents?

JOHN TILLMAN: I haven't thought about it that way. Obviously the teams, just the makeup of the teams and such is a little different.

Obviously that '22 team was darned good, and Notre Dame's is really good, too. I could see why people might think that for sure because they just kind of do what they do. They do it really well.

They're definitely not the most complicated team. You kind of know what's coming, but they're so good that you know it's coming, it's just hard to stop because they are talented. The coaches have put in excellent schemes. Whether it's offense, defense, the middle of the field, they're really good there.

Their faceoff guy and goalie, they're very good there. So in a lot of games they're getting more saves and they're getting more faceoffs. So you add that to an elite offense, an elite defense, it makes for a tough 60 minutes. And you

have to execute on a really high level.

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