

2024 NCAA Men's Lacrosse Championship

Monday, May 27, 2024

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Lincoln Financial Field

Notre Dame Fighting Irish

Coach Kevin Corrigan

Liam Entenmann

Chris Kavanagh

Pat Kavanagh

Media Conference



LIAM ENTENMANN: It was a day filled with emotions regardless before the game even started. Win or lose, this was it for myself and a lot of guys on our team, Pat certainly included in that.

As happy as I am there's still a level of bittersweetness involved in this knowing that I'm not able to come back next year even though I would love to because I was blessed with the extra year, the extra opportunity.

And I'm kind of superstitious. I kind of got dog piled at the end of the game. I didn't get to do my pipe-tapping ritual at the end of the game. I had to do that in order to feel good about myself. More than anything, that's what I did.

Q. To play your last game for Notre Dame with Chris here and seeing him put on the show he did, the whole tournament really -- five goals today, named Most Outstanding Player -- what's that mean to you and just what was it like experiencing that with him to go back to back?

PAT KAVANAGH: It's incredible. Not bad for the 37th best player in the country ranked by Inside Lacrosse coming into the year.

He's been my best friend my entire life. And to do this the past four years with him or three years, and then to win back-to-back national championships with my little brother and best friend since he was born, it's incredible.

The kid is blossoming into a superstar, but he's always been one. He's kind of just played unselfishly his first few years and taken some time to grow and develop in areas that were a little weaker early on in his college career. You saw it this year, I think he had 16 total assists last year as a sophomore. Kind of just a pure goal scorer. And then this year almost 40 assists.

He took an incredible leap, and I'm so proud of him. I couldn't be happier for him and the rest of our team.

Q. You guys had a target on your back all season as defending champions. Now you're able to go back to back. How does it feel to now have the target off your

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KEVIN CORRIGAN: Super proud of our guys. And really the three guys here kind of exemplify the spirit of our team.

The leadership that we had from our seniors and older guys this year was phenomenal. The buy-in that we had from 1 through 60 and every day was phenomenal. It was an honor to coach this team.

Q. Liam, 3-3, and then you guys run off seven straight goals. And it was lights out on defense and you, specifically. You guys only gave up one goal in the second half. I want to hear how you felt you guys responded after it was tied at 3-3.

LIAM ENTENMANN: We knew Maryland is a really good team. They're the type of team that always does well in May. We knew it was going to be a battle, certainly to start.

Then we just stuck to making simple plays. That's what we've preached all year; that's a huge thing that Coach talks about -- not overthinking anything just making little plays one by one that adds up to big plays and big victories. So I think it wasn't anything that we did out of the ordinary; it was sticking to our system more than anything.

Q. Liam, I noticed after the game was over and the celebration was very much underway. You had the nets and the hats I saw you run down to the goal, take a moment for yourself. Would you be able to share with us maybe what was going through your head in that moment and what you were doing there?



back?

LIAM ENTENMANN: Feels great. This is what we play for. This is what we live for, these opportunities -- the big games, the big moments.

I guess the target's still on our back going into next year, but that's how we want it. We don't want to be anything other than the best. We showed that today. And I'm sure Coach, Chris and the rest of the team, we'll celebrate this for a bit and then it's back to square one, back to the bottom of the mountain and now they're chasing the repeat.

Q. Pat and Chris, the backhander was the highlight of the day. Wanted to hear from your perspective, is that something that comes from the backyard? And how does that kind of speak to the trust that you guys have that, Pat, you can just throw it to Chris and Chris will make some magic happen there?

PAT KAVANAGH: I think a lot of our game is just very instinctual. That stuff you see out there on game day is the crazy backhand, behind-the-back, around-the-world that me and Chris and also Jake Taylor like to throw. We practice that stuff. We don't just pull that out of our back pocket on Saturdays and Sundays. Whenever we pick up a stick, mess around on our lot or growing up on Long Island, we were always just practicing stuff like that, crazy trick shots and being creative.

Me and Chris kind of looked up to the Thompson brothers when we were growing up. We kind of wanted to steal some tricks out of their bag. They were a joy to watch.

Yeah, it also adds an element of fun to the game. That's always the goal for us to have fun and play hard.

CHRIS KAVANAGH: Said it best.

Q. Question off microphone.

CHRIS KAVANAGH: They've exemplified what leaders are. I've looked up to them my whole career. I was coming on the bus and I was looking at pictures of me and Pat when I was a freshman and sophomore and kind of crying for 25 minutes knowing it was my last game with 51, one of the best players if not the best player to ever play here alongside Liam.

It was a pretty emotional day, but we put in the work for a while. And this was the last (indiscernible) we had to get. And we dug down deep and got (indiscernible).

Q. On Saturday, Coach Tiffany from Virginia came in

and talked about how he couldn't get Maryland's defense to slide all game, their offense couldn't get Maryland's defense to slide. And it made it difficult for them. It felt like you guys had them rotating basically from the midway point of the first quarter on. What do you think made your offense successful today?

KEVIN CORRIGAN: It's something we were curious about. After watching that game Saturday, we felt like we could dodge their short sticks and make them slide. But we kind of left that game going, hmm. They played really, really well on Saturday and defended really well individually.

So I thought a huge part of the game was us being able to get leverage on their short sticks and cause them to slide around a little bit. That makes picks harder. That makes everything a little bit harder and gets our shooters a little space. So that was the big part of the game, I thought.

Q. We saw a little bit of struggle in the beginning, but what we saw on the sidelines was the lack of panic. Speak about that and the trust you have in each other that no matter what the score is, you're going to be able to come back and dominate.

KEVIN CORRIGAN: I mean, I would say some part of that is sort of like a duck. You look calm on the top, but underneath you're paddling like hell.

But we weren't worried at 2-0. First of all, you come off that rain delay and you're not sure what's going to happen. You're just hoping your guys are there. I felt emotionally our guys stayed pretty into it the whole time.

But, no, it's been a long season. I don't think anybody plays a harder schedule than us. I don't care what the strength of schedule stuff says and everything else. We open up the season with two games against local teams and then we play top 10 teams every single week from that point on.

So we're not prone to panic in the first quarter because we know it's going to be a 60-minute game and given what the kind of body of work of the season, we're confident that we're going to have a chance to make some plays and do that.

It's always nice when that first goal goes in, though. You see everybody kind of relax and take a deep breath after that first goal goes in and at 2-0 that was definitely true.

Q. I was so impressed with your midfield depth, your second midfield and third midfield, could you take me through that.

KEVIN CORRIGAN: Starting the year, two guys on our third were on our second midfield the first time we played Maryland.

Bryce Walker and Jalen Seymour were on our second midfield the first time we played them. I think the development of the guys of the other three midfielders that gave us a second and third midfielder of the quality and the depth we had was a big part of our development as a team.

And so you're always trying to figure out as you go through the year, when you feel like you have that depth -- early in the year it's cold out. You know, if you play three midfields, you've got guys standing on the sideline too long and they can't get into the game.

So trying to figure out how and when to use that depth was a thing for us. But certainly the last six games of the year, that was a big factor for us. And from that moment, two things about that: One is you see the difference it makes on the field and the course of the game on the other team, but the difference it makes in your locker room, too, there's that many more guys for everybody to cheer for.

I don't know if you saw our guys go crazy when Fisher Finley scored today. There's nothing greater than that than seeing guys celebrating each other and cheering for each other like that and that dynamic is huge, it was all year for our team. So that was another kind of bonus of that depth.

Q. Will Donovan again with another great game. Two caused turnovers today, two in the semifinal and a ground ball. A lot of LSMs come into programs and they're not always called on to support. They're kind of going back and forth, but obviously in your program it's a different way to do things. You're going by match-ups. You have to be able to do that. Can you talk a little bit about his ascension this past year?

KEVIN CORRIGAN: I'm glad you recognized that. There's a lot of the guys that get attention as defensive midfielders are offensive players who play some defense. But what they really do is they're transition plays. Not that that doesn't make them great players and very valuable, but that's what they do. They don't play that well defensively, but they're great in transition or whatever.

The thing about Will Donovan is he's a great ground ball guy. He's great getting the ball out and helping us get some transition and that stuff, but he's a great defender. He's a great one-on-one defender and team defender. He's terrific in our team defense.

So we feel that gives us a real leg up because we have

four long poles out there that are really good when he's on the field. So that's a huge part of our game.

And then we told our short stick D middies yesterday, we said, look, this game could come down to the short stick D middies on both sides of the ball. That's what I think both teams were going to look to generate off of.

I thought our guys, for the most part, did a really good job. When they didn't cover well, they played really, really well team in the team scheme and that allowed us to kind of get away with not covering well and we could slide and recover and they knew right what they were doing and played really smart.

So Will's a huge part of that but so are our short stick D middies. To have the depth to play five of those guys really helps over the course of not just today but two games in three days.

Q. Will Lynch has given you a big edge at the faceoff spot through the postseason here, but not as much today. He struggled at that spot where Wierman was very successful. In the early going, was that an area of concern as you were still doing fine on the scoreboard but not winning as many faceoffs as you have been used to?

KEVIN CORRIGAN: Two things: We said Wierman can only really hurt us if we give up transition goals. We almost did, and not kind of overjoyed with some of our wing play in terms of cutting him off in some things. But Will battled back and got back into the game; and then, one, when we made our run, I think he was getting us some possessions there, and he's terrific. I think him and our wing guys really kind of on a day like this, where their guy's very good and having a good day, they kind of keep us from really suffering in that area of the game.

Q. You look like now you're building a dynasty with the lacrosse program. For us, Notre Dame is notorious for the football program and hockey, but you've done such a great job keeping these young guys just poised, I mean, on both sides of the ball. Offensively these guys score in transition. They're aggressive. On defense, they played a great, great man-to-man zone. And, of course, Liam was just a brick wall back there. What's the message in that locker room? (Inaudible)?

KEVIN CORRIGAN: Very nice assessment of our team. I'll remind you that I'm 2-34. So it's a lot more about those guys in that locker room than it is about me because they're the guys who have done this in the last two years.

Again, I'll go back to not just the outstanding play of these



guys because clearly you see how good they are, but their leadership has been phenomenal. One of the COVID effects that all of us have had the last few years is really large rosters. And when you've got 60 guys on a roster and a game like this, the NCAA only allows you to play 32.

You've got just as many guys who go into that game knowing they're not going to play a second as you have guys who are going to play.

And that dynamic, it's not something the coach creates. It's something they create. It's something that they are accountable for and to.

When you have great kids and great leaders, you just kind of take your hands off the wheel on a lot of things; let those guys handle it. They know how to handle it. When they don't, they'll come ask. So we're really, really fortunate to have those kinds of guys, and I think that's why we've made this run that we've made the last two and a half years.

Q. You said last week that Max Busenkell was someone who does little things that add up at the end of the game. What did you see from his performance? What's your outlook for his future with the program?

KEVIN CORRIGAN: Max is great. He just has such a calm demeanor. I kind of got on him about something the other day and got in his face a little bit. He just kind of looks at you with this bemused look like, "I got this. It's okay, I know. I got this."

And it kind of tickles me because he just is unflappable. And he plays that way. He doesn't make a lot of mistakes. He doesn't get caught up in things.

And when he does make a mistake, he fixes it. He's also got the highest GPA on our team. He's an unbelievable student. He's a great kid. He's a guy who is ascending into the leadership of our team just because of who he is and the way he handles himself. And so I see great things ahead for Max as a player and as a leader on our team.

Q. Following up on getting them to slide, one of the things that Coach Tillman said is how good you guys are off the ball. And that point right there made me think that the way you executed today. And the other thing I wanted to follow up in your answer is, when Luke did win faceoffs and came down the field with a transition, you guys slid on him like crazy to stop him from getting a quick goal so they could get into a little bit of a run. Could you talk about those two things?

KEVIN CORRIGAN: Offensively, I'm a huge believer that

really good offense -- and Chris Wojcik, our assistant coach, does a great job teaching and coaching our offense. But really good offense is a chicken-and-egg thing. It has to kind of build and when guys deliver the ball, when guys play with their head up and with great awareness, guys start to work harder off the ball to get open.

When guys work harder off the ball to get open, it creates more space for dodgers and more opportunities for feeders. And when feeders and dodgers are being effective, there's more lanes for people to cut and more movement of the defense for people to play in the margins and in the gaps and things that makes for great offense. So I think that's what's happened there.

Again, Pat Kavanagh, when you have a guy like that on the field every day, it just starts to roll and you see guys start to do things that maybe you didn't think were part of their game because they get rewarded.

It's a little bit like teams that love to run and push that ball up the field. You're like how come they can do that we can't do that we can't get those outlets. Their goalie is willing to take some risks and throw balls up there.

So those guys run like crazy to get up there and get the ball. They know they're going to get rewarded with the ball. I think that's what offense is like that as well. So I think that's a big part of that.

Again, our wing play, we were committed to shutting him down. If you noticed, we had our guy all the way in the hole. He was not going to -- we were not going to come up with -- we feel like could we get up there tighter to midfield and contest the ground balls a little bit more if we did that, yes, but then we become vulnerable to him popping one forward and scoring. We did not want to allow that to happen. We were like, hey, if he wins 60 percent and they don't score a goal in transition, that's a game we can win.

If he wins 60 percent and scores two goals like he did Saturday, then that becomes a much harder game to win. So we just wanted to limit the kind of damage he could do and I think our wing play gets a lot of credit, as does Will because he ties him up if he's not winning, he's not letting him pop it out.

Q. I know you've been loathe to look at big-picture things and all the legacies and all the questions we've been asking you. But now that the confetti has fallen and it's over, kind of, can you talk a little bit about what having Pat and Chris together for the last couple of years has been like, and now that it's over can you encapsulate what it means to you, what it means to the program?

KEVIN CORRIGAN: Well, I would include in that Matt, who, the last two times we went back-to-back final fours was when Matt was playing for us.

I think that whole family, the competitive drive that they have is really unique. And it's not just on game days. It's competitive drive to get better. So they're working on their skills. They're working on all the things that you need to do to be a great player.

It's the competitive drive that knows that in a game like this you're not going to be able to do it by yourself so you better bring everybody along with you and they do that on an everyday basis.

It would be hard to overstate the impact that the Kavanagh family has had on our program, in all honesty, and Pat and Chris, the past couple of years: We're sitting here, right?

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