

2025 NCAA Men's Lacrosse Championship

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Gillette Stadium

Penn State Nittany Lions

Jeff Tambroni

Kevin Parham

Matt Traynor

Media Conference



do a good job of trying to find guys on the inside, and they have some lethal shooters from the outside. We have to contract and expand as they send cutters in and still be aware of those outside shooters. I thought we did a pretty good job of that.

Q. Matt, you didn't play against this Cornell team the last time in the regular season. So what was going through your mind coming into today?

MATT TRAYNOR: I definitely wanted to get a feel of how they were going to play these different teams that play me super differently. But I don't think it was a huge thing in my mind. Just going out there, trying to play lacrosse and play with my teammates and see what we could do.

Q. Is there anything different about what Cornell threw you offensively compared to the last time? Obviously, teams evolve over the course of season, but anything fundamentally different?

KEVIN PARHAM: I wouldn't say anything fundamentally different. You know, as the season goes on, I think you just -- their offense starts to tighten things up a little bit and start playing together a little bit more, a little bit better.

So I wouldn't say that there's anything fundamentally different. I think they just, you know, evolve as a team and they grow stronger as did we throughout the course of the season.

Q. In the run early in the third quarter, what did you make of the fact that they were able to create some unsettled stuff given how well you guys had been containing them for the most part in a more settled situation?

JEFF TAMBRONI: We made a point to be sure we were getting back, getting bodies on bodies. To Kevin's point, I feel like we stopped supporting so there were some natural slide opportunities to get out and support the ball a little bit better and maybe just recover around him that we just -- we lost in the moment, and it definitely happens. Credit Cornell.

Cornell 11, Penn State 9

JEFF TAMBRONI: Congrats to coach and their team. It was an honor to complete and play a championship weekend against them today, and also really proud of, certainly, the gentleman to my right and left, two captains of our team, two of the three captains, and a just a thrill to be back in championship weekend. Just applaud their efforts all year long. They were warriors as leaders and did a terrific job. Sad that we could not move on this weekend, but really proud of everything that they have become as young men.

Q. Kevin, describe the dangers that their offense has and the way that you guys obviously were able to contain them for most of the first half, and then what you feel like happened there in the third quarter.

KEVIN PARHAM: I think they had a ton of talent, obviously, one of the best players in the country, and I thought we did a good job with our matchups as well as helping in that first half and we got a way from that a little bit in the second half, just being great teammates and helping out, and I thought that that's when they went on their little run in the third quarter.

Q. Can you speak about another comeback bid?

MATT TRAYNOR: I thought they did a pretty good job throwing us off our rhythm in that second half and I credit their defense. They did a good job defending us.

Q. Can you describe how effective their zone was?

KEVIN PARHAM: It forces us to play as one unit. I thought we did a really good job just communicating. They

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When it did happen, I thought they made the most of each of the situations, shot the ball really well and probably in a seven, eight-minute period, avalanched into that lead that became insurmountable. It was incredible, but too bad we couldn't have done it sooner or at least fragmented that stretch without a goal or two of our own.

Q. How much is that offense, a day where JC is not having his best day, but the rest of the defense is stepping up. How do you manage that?

JEFF TAMBRONI: I think you recognize they have fifth and sixth seniors. They have guys that sat out during the COVID year, and they did a good job of managing them and stayed healthy all year, and they are veteran offensive players. Rather than focus on Kirst, and the coaches have done a good job of that over the years. We have been able to limit an extremely talented player because we have not just gone overboard in highlighting him as arguably the best player in the country, and I think we tried to do that with all of their talent. They are all pretty good.

So that run was a product of their run. The third quarter, was more a product of any of our guys getting away from more of a team defensive team and on an island, and they took advantage of it. I think we really tried to do the best we can and it is cliché-ish to play super sound in the defense and not over think any one multiple.

Q. You spoke before about turning Penn State into a blue blood program. Can you speak about the progress that Penn State has made in men's lacrosse?

JEFF TAMBRONI: I'm proud of this particular group, the two guys that were sitting here, Kevin and Matt, were terrific leaders and Jack was a terrific leader as well. They never stopped believing. You know, if you would have asked us in the fall, or certainly when the season started, if we would be sitting right here, you'd like to dream, but that is a possibility. That's every year.

But as the season was going on, we lost a couple of tough games to Ohio State and Maryland, and to know that these guys continued to keep grinding, said a lot about their character, their belief. And in the last six years, Penn State has been back to championship week. If you want to be a blue blood, you want to get over the hump and get into the championship game, you're going to have to win one or two of these to put yourself in that landscape.

But we've got a lot of respect for those who have done it and recognize that tradition, it's not built in a day and it doesn't go away in a day, but we're getting closer to the expectation that when the season starts, this is where we should be. I think these guys helped us keep that

momentum going in the right direction.

Q. The work Kelleher was able to do for them as one of the other options, a really good one, what were the challenges that he presented as just a big guy that could, basically, a Big Ten guy?

JEFF TAMBRONI: You answered in your question. He's like an NFL body playing lacrosse. He got on top of us so quickly in a couple scenarios, and he shot the ball well today. Seemed like we were having trouble picking up the ball coming out of his stick, and he's a first-team All-American. It's not like he's an also-ran within their offense, and certainly, we knew how talented he was.

The first time around, we actually short-sticked him and he scored a couple goals and we put the pole on him today, and he still had some success. Credit to him. I thought Hugh did a great job today, and he provided some really good juice goals because he's shooting from long range and kept their momentum going, even when things weren't going that well for them.

Q. Can you tell me what it means to be on this stage surrounded by so many connections?

JEFF TAMBRONI: Yeah, the weekend was a little bit surreal. My father took me to final fours as long as I can remember, way back when, growing up in Camillus, New York. You're just surrounded by some of the legends of the game of lacrosse, Cornell, Syracuse. We grew up with it our entire lives and recognized the tradition of success at all those schools, all of them were National Championship-caliber schools. It was the dream, sitting around, knowing those schools are here. And I think our team, we just shut off all social media the last couple weeks and tried to stay away from it. It's a neat experience to be a part of, and I do not take it for granted.

Any time we are able to win one round of the playoffs, win in the quarterfinals, we recognize how hard it is. At the same time, it's an honor to compete and play with that group and know the connections of upstate. It was a fun championship weekend to be a part of, just all too short.

Q. Given you've known Connor for two decades, anything you shared post game about his opportunity to play on Monday?

JEFF TAMBRONI: A sense of respect. I know when we got his commitment as a coach to play, we were thrilled because we thought he was going to be an elite player, and he ended up being all of that and then some. One thing that he has done at Cornell that has put him in a good position as a successful coach, for sure, he's proven it in



such a short teen your, but he fit the mold of Cornell when he committed.

Yes, he was talented but we were more excited about how well he fit, blue-collar, great respect for things that Cornell had done before him and his staff; to see the respect and reverence to yesterday, the ancestors that played before him, George Boiardi, it is unquestionably the connection in their success.

Not only do I respect who he is and the way he goes about his business, but I have a great deal of admiration and appreciation for the way he carries on the legacy of Cornell in the manner that he does, because sometimes that gets lost when a new generation of coaches or staff comes in.

Q. I hate to bring us out of the philosophical point, you talk about your zone, and obviously, it's not one individual stepping up in different points, but when you are playing against a guy like CJ, how did Alex Ross do in your mind today, and how big of an impact, maybe silently, was he to your team?

JEFF TAMBRONI: Alex was terrific. I just think Alex is just so undervalued out there, like, I don't know, like, he's an All-American -- sometimes that can be screwed based on who votes, but he is, in my opinion, one of best defense men in the country. He does it day-in, day-out, week-in, week-out, covers the opponent's top players.

In two games, 120 -- against unquestionably the best offensive player in the country, holds him to two goals in 120 minutes. And you know, whether it's man or zone, he's got his hands full. But I do think that Alex also relied on his teammates because he recognizes that he's not going to cover him on his own.

And so I think they did a great job. They all did a great job of supporting Alex in making sure that he was not on his own. That is not a wise decision as good as Alex is, I don't think anyone wants to see just a straight one-on-one on open field with that young man.

But he did a great job, and it was just one of the four to five pieces because Goldstein is just as good behind, gets everybody involved. So everybody had to fulfill their role in order for it to be successful.

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