

2025 NCAA Men's Lacrosse Championship

Monday, May 26, 2025

Boston, Massachusetts, USA

Gillette Stadium

Maryland Terrapins

Coach John Tillman

Will Schaller

Eric Kolar

Finals Media Conference



ERIC KOLAR: Yeah, I mean, frankly, it's just pretty sad that it's over. Just talking about -- sorry (fighting tears). It sucks its over. These guys are in there since day one for us. But it's something we're never going to forget. Last year we talked about it a lot, never forgetting, and we didn't. Every day we talked about it, what we want the year to look like.

It sucks because you get to the point -- and then it's not the outcome you want and like Coach said, you just wish there's more you could have done. But game's over, and frankly, they played the better game today. Like I said, it's just tough that it's over. We love each other so much. There's so much pride in that locker room. Nobody is going to go out with their head down. Everybody gave it their all this year. A lot of special dudes in the locker room, but like Will said, we've never going to forget it.

Q. What do you take forward from this, even if the result what you wanted, but the season, compared to when you were sitting in the same spot a year ago?

WILL SCHALLER: The goal is always to be here this weekend, and specifically this day. That's what you're signing up for when you come to Maryland, and that doesn't mean it's guaranteed. That means you sign up for climbing that mountain and what it takes to get here.

I will say that you won't forget this game, but we more specifically won't forget the guys on this team. I know for me personally, you look at some of the older guys, Colin, Logan J-Mac, those guys showed us the way when we got here. When you walk away from this place after the final whistle blows, you look into the stands, how many fans, family, friends, that's why you come to a place like this and that's what motivates me to get back here. And I think I can speak for a lot of the guys on the team.

We're doing it for Terp Nation. It's just a pleasure to be a part of it, and I'm super grateful for that. Like I said, we're not going to forget and do everything we can to get back here next year.

Q. Everyone knows the offense they have. What was it like for you watching the adjustments?

Cornell 13, Maryland 10

JOHN TILLMAN: First, congrats to Cornell and Connor Buczek and that staff. They have been the best team all year. They showed today they are the No. 1 seed, and they played very, very well today.

Hats off to them. Obviously I hurt for the guys because I love my guys and they are just such good guys, good people. They have been so selfless, worked so hard, couldn't ask for a better group to not only represent our program but represent our school on and off the field. I'm grateful for all they have done this year.

I'm disappointed for them. Obviously kicking myself trying to figure out how I could have been better to help them. But again, hats off to Cornell, and again, very worthy champions.

Q. CJ can get going. How hard is it to kind of control him, especially after you guys didn't do a decent job of keeping him in check in the first half?

WILL SCHALLER: Yeah, he's a fantastic player, and they do a really good job playing complementary to him, whether it's to get him going or he's getting other guys going. Like Coach said, you have to tip your cap to them, and they rode that wave today. We did our best but at the end of the day, they kind of just played a more complete game, their offense versus our defense, but you know, it's not something we're going to forget; I can promise you that.

Q. Can you share what Coach's message was for you guys in the locker room and as players, what you said to each other after today's result?

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JOHN TILLMAN: You know, obviously got off to a lead, and always kept the lead. They put pressure on you the whole game. In two days, it's tough to explain to the guys. Luckily we did scrimmage them in the fall, but the fall vibe is very different than the spring vibe. They didn't have a few guys in that game, so we didn't have everything.

But just watching on film, it's literally 60 minutes, they just keep coming. It's subtle offense, but they go from offense to defense faster than any team we play, and if you watch just about any game, people are with them, with them, with them, and then they go on a run.

So the goal today was try to avoid the big run and just avoid like they get out and they get a transition goal and they get a faceoff goal and what was a two-goal game is now a four-goal game. So we had to do a lot going from offense to defense to get settled.

And with that, now you have another dilemma. You get everybody back, they will do the subgames, and then all of a sudden you have odd-man rushes, and then on top of that, if you sub with them, you create like four-on-fours and three-on-threes with obviously the two guys today, Goldstein and Kirst, were excellent.

And two guys like that is hard. You know, one guy is hard, but to have two guys like that, and Long, you're talking about three guys that you could say deserve No. 1, and no one else has that in terms of dodging ability in the country.

So you're always feeling that pressure, and even on ground balls today, they are everywhere, clearing the ball, they are all over you there. So there's no breaks. You have to play as clean as possible. You have to can your opportunities. You have to be on point. And when we weren't, they made us pay. And it's a credit to them. Again, they have been the best team all year. You take away the penalty in the four or five minutes against Penn State, and you're talked about one of the best teams ever. They ran the table.

An excellent, excellent team. Disappointed for my guys. E-Rock (ph) got me. Sorry. I was doing okay, and then hit my heartstring there. But what an amazing group of kids. I think that's the hardest thing is these guys are phenomenal. They are like brothers. To see them hurt, catches you a little bit. But when the pain goes away, those guys will be appreciative of what an incredible journey and what a great group of guys they were surrounded with.

Q. There was a play early in the game when Staub came over the midline off a faceoff win and against

Penn State they scored a goal that was the goal that Goldstein scored. You solved it by having Kelly go over the line and there was no opportunity. That's an example of the lessons you try to teach in a 30-hour window. Can you describe some of the other things like that that you emphasized and also a couple things that you noticed in the game that if you had five days, you would have been able to get to that?

JOHN TILLMAN: You're looking at CJ in the second half, and I think having been in this tournament, playing two games in three days, if you have a guy that can put you on his back, and you look at all the championship teams, not every team has one, but you have a decided advantage when you have that guy to kind of pull you through, and CJ has been that guy. He just has all year. He's been amazing. I know he's been dinged up a little bit. But then you combine that with Ryan, and like, you know, you've got ten of your goals from those guys. I mean, it's really hard, and they are complemented by some really good guys.

But yeah, we tried to show the guys as much as we could. You know, they do a lot of that, basically, you're subbing, and you know, they will run over and before both of you have subbed your guys off, they will run a defenseman over.

So we talked to our attack men, like you have to go when they go. Same thing on faceoffs. The problem is, your guys get gassed. Spanos went back three times in the first quarter. So you have to, like, stay in line with that.

Same thing with faceoffs. We spent a lot of time on faceoffs because, I mean, that guy Cascadden will go forward and he can hammer the ball. I think he had ten goals on the year. He's doing a great job there.

We wanted to take away transition. The subgames, they will start running towards the midline, and if you don't do a good job, they will just plant, come back, and then look for that. So we kind of coach our guys up on that. Luckily we've seen some of that before, but not a lot of people do what you talked about with the defenseman coming over.

So that was something that we kind of walked through yesterday. And with them, again, reducing the numbers. If you don't give them breaks then you're caught with a lot of offensive guys on and they will go through the subgames. But even earlier in the game, I think they went three-on-three and I thought we did a great job, CJ went under, they got the ball back and they scored.

We had so many times where, one, we failed to clear, and it killed us, and that killed us. And there were a lot of ground balls today. I would say we got some of them but I



thought there were a lot of 50/50 grounders in the middle, and on those tough ones, I felt like they got more of those than we did. It's not lack of effort.

I think our kids cared and put their heart out there but Cornell just kept coming up with those. So you're feeling, all right, we're down, trying to come back but they just kept getting those ground balls. That's what they have been getting all year. They have been great.

Q. Going back to the fourth quarter, three of the first four were unsuccessful. What did they throw at the team which has been so successful with the clear this year that made things more difficult?

JOHN TILLMAN: Yeah, in the sun -- threw it to him and he just missed and he's like, yeah, I just lost it, kind of lofted it over and two games we just didn't do a good job with our spacing. Part of it was we were gassed. Our inside guys didn't move as well as we normally do. They ride you really well. They will give you one look and as you try to throw the ball across, CJ would sort of go down to the goalie, which would open up a guy, but instead of running down the middle and shortening that pass we try to throw a longer pass and somebody else did the same thing.

We watched it on film, and basically that's what they do. But their ride is so good. Those three guys are fast, they are athletic. And I mean, you know, when your best player is arguably the best rider, this rubs off on everybody, and again, that's just CJ being CJ and making plays.

Q. The last three hours, we heard CJ had a broken -- something was wrong with his shoulder, he had a leg injury. Did any thoughts go into as to who guarded who?

JOHN TILLMAN: I mean, you kind of look at it, choose your poison. Like, you know, the problem is you've got those two guys and you've got Long. You've got three guys that are pretty good and a couple years ago, Long was playing more of Goldstein's role.

I mean, all three of those guys are going to be a problem. CJ is their best guy, and he kind of showed it today. Goldstein is terrific, and I don't want him to be slighted, but one guy is the Player of the Year. The other guy down the road could be. He's that good. He was that good today.

The problem is if you pay too much attention to those guys, they are gifted in terms of passers and vision that they will open up things for everybody else.

Q. Seemed like we kept getting (inaudible). I don't remember a game like that that we've been involved in

where just we had to get that goal and a stop and it didn't happen.

JOHN TILLMAN: I was surprised, our guys got to within one period of time left, we had a shot. We didn't get it. Again, they come down. It seemed like they always answered and then just some self-inflicted wounds. Part of that could be fatigue. Our kids have been great all year. Like I said, I always look at myself and go what could I have done differently and how could I set them up for success. Our kids have done everything we have asked. They have been phenomenal. That's the hard part, E-Rock (ph) his emotion, these guys have been unreal.

Again the best team all year has been Cornell, but obviously you go into a game believing you could do it, and we never do anything other than that. We're just going to prepare like we're going to win. When it doesn't go that way, you feel for the kids, especially a group like this that so much pride, so much effort, so much sacrifice.

But I know this, these guys, and I told all the seniors, try to get them one-on-one. These guys are so ready for five. They are going to crush it. They know how to work hard and they know how to treat people, fix problems, find solutions, work with each other, they are good leaders, and they care about others. And that's a big part what have we do, get them ready for what's next.

Q. How has this season ultimately been given you find yourselves in the same spot but a different kind of game and season this year?

JOHN TILLMAN: Yeah, obviously the expectations and standards don't change. You know, you have an ultimate goal in mind and you have a lot of goals along the way. But you kind of look at it, right, you try to be a realist. It's hard to get here every year. It's hard -- I don't ever take it for granted. You just never know if you'll make it. But these guys believed. You kind of look back, we lose the Player of the Year in Ajax. We lose a generational faceoff guy. We lose 7 out of our top 11 scorers. So we kind of rebuild things.

You know, those guys, they believe. Again, we have different dudes but we're going to obviously maximize, be our best, and if we are, hey, who knows. And so I appreciate the guys, their mindset. Our coaches did a phenomenal job. They do -- our staff, our administration, they are very supportive. Lacrosse means so much here. It drives to you really put your best foot forward. It means a lot to assumes in the state.

For those guys to come out as hot as we did, I felt like early on we were probably a little ahead of schedule with

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that schedule we played. But these guys believed and they believed all year, and that's a credit to those guys. We lose a couple guys, but the guys are like, yeah, let's go, let's do it.

It will be the same next year. It will hurt for a while. We'll go away and then next year we'll come back and we'll try to do it all over again. To your point, you try to look at some things, look at the film. We'll talk to the guys, where could we be better.

I know this: This year we were definitely more unified and on the same page than last year, and that was something -- I mean, we were at times last year a disaster. We just were. We were good when we were good, and when we were bad, we were bad. We had a couple bad moments for sure. But for the most part we responded and it didn't get too far off track.

That's a credit to the seniors that we had. Everybody was on the same page, and there was never a moment all year where we had issues. I had no off-the-field issues. The guys, we were a top male GPA team in the fall. The guys were unified.

I mean, it's Saturday morning before the playoffs, and Camden, our boy from Team IMPACT, is in the hotel, and our guys are hanging out with him. They could be getting ready for the game or focused on themselves, and they are focused on a young guy that's battling through an illness. To me, that's pretty awesome.

Q. Logan McNaney obviously has been a staple of this team for so long. Being a guy from Corning, what has he meant?

JOHN TILLMAN: He's from a special family and from a special place. I'm so thankful for where I grew up. Just great people, great values, and Logan represents that town so well. Again, hard-working people but really good people with good values, and Logan exemplifies that. He's ultra competitive. He's going to go out there and obviously do a great job and try to do his best.

Yet he takes off that helmet and you see that boyish face, this young guy and you're like, how is that you? Consistent, modest, team-first guy. Will do anything for his teammates. Gave us always when we were doing well, he gave us confidence. You have some moments, whether it's today or other days, but bring it in and it's like having that quarterback that's like, guys, I got you. That definitely meant a lot to the guys. Great role model. Set up really well down the road, the goalies, how to prepare, the right type of human being to be and right type of leader that everybody can look up to. I'm going to miss him.

But like I told those guys, it's time for you to go out and go on and live your life and make us proud, which I know those guys will. It will definitely be different, but the great thing is those guys always come back. It's never good-bye; it's see you later.

Those guys will kill it. But I'm a hundred percent confident. They are made of the right stuff. They are going to look back with so much pride and so many awesome moments. Sure, you lose a game like this, and that's part of stepping in the ring, but I wouldn't want it any other way.

If we're going to lose, lose this game because we stole three more weeks. And if you think about it, what we have done since we got here, you take three extra weeks that many times, you're talking almost half a year of extra lacrosse and that is like gold. That time is over and we maxed it out because we never get it back and how is how much everybody loved each other, whether it was staff or the kids. Grateful for that. Like I said, you've got to give Cornell credit.

This is competition. We could have lost Saturday and could have lost last week so it's going to be over at some point. Wish I had done a better job getting them ready, yet you have to tip your hat to Cornell. Again, they were the best team, they just were and they showed it today. They played a bunch of guys that came back for a purpose, motivated and again, like a lot of those guys, we played against in '22. They are all grown up. They reminded me of our '22 team in a lot of ways for sure.

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