

2026 NCAA Men's Lacrosse Championship

Saturday, May 23, 2026
Charlottesville, Virginia, USA
Scott Stadium

Syracuse Orange
Coach Gary Gait
Billy Dwan III
Joey Spallina
Finn Thompson

Semifinals Media Conference

Notre Dame 9, Syracuse 4

THE MODERATOR: Syracuse has joined us. We have head coach Gary Gait, Billy Dwan III, Joey Spallina, and Finn Thompson. We'll take an opening statement from Coach Gait and open it up for questions for the players and questions for Coach Gait. Coach, your floor.

GARY GAIT: Well, unfortunately, we ran into a team that was ready to play and executed an awesome game plan, in Notre Dame. They demonstrated what a great team they are and how well they could play, and they took it to us.

And gotta say I'm proud of my guys. They didn't quit. They never quit. They got a lot of character, great culture amongst the team. I'm incredibly proud of all of them, especially the senior group that's helped make Syracuse a team that is the only team that's been back-to-back Final Fours this year.

We're all upset. We're all disappointed. We came up short, but I think we gotta give Notre Dame a lot of credit. They were very good today, and I wish them luck moving forward.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you, Coach. Take questions for the players.

Q. For both Billy and Joey since it happened at both ends of the field. Their special teams seemed to be a major difference today. What would you make, Billy, of their work on man-up and, Joey, their work --



JOEY SPALLINA: I feel like we got the looks we wanted to on man-up. Their goalie made some incredible saves. The one on Luke particularly sticks out. He was lunging to his left and made the save with his stick on the right side.

The one on the crease there from Greg, that one sticks out, too.

You know, I think we got the looks that we wanted to get. Maybe one of those five, right? We didn't get what we wanted to. But we got the looks that we wanted to. We just didn't score. It's just the way that it goes sometimes. That's just sports and life.

BILLY DWAN: Yeah. On the other end, they obviously got the looks they wanted. I think execution-wise we were I think 90 percent there. They capitalized. They're a great team. And they made plays where we had a little holes, little areas, and they obviously capitalized and did well.

Q. Joey, you close out your Syracuse career as the program's all time leader in points having gone back-to-back championship weekends. What has playing for Syracuse meant for you?

JOEY SPALLINA: The points don't mean anything, to be honest. It's an absolute honor to play here and play for Coach Gait and the incredible organization Syracuse crosses. I know not many people call their college programs organizations, but that's just the way that 'Cuse is.

I said when I was coming here that we were going to bring 'Cuse back and we were going to do the right things, and I think we were close. We obviously weren't all the way there. And it sucks, but that's the way sports is, the way life is. So luckily enough I'll be playing a game again in a week.

Q. Joey, I know the game is over and you're processing a lot of things, but you've said all along that all you cared about was the championship. Now that unfortunately that's not the case, how would you describe that you're not going to have that? Like how do you describe your career unfortunately not getting

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there?

JOEY SPALLINA: Sadly, I lied, frankly. I said I was going to bring it back and win a championship, and obviously we didn't get it done. That's just the way sports is, the way life is. Luckily enough for myself, I get to keep playing the sport that I love. Not luckily enough, I don't get to do it wearing a Syracuse jersey.

I love this place. I would do anything for it. There were some rough patches where I was thinking other things, but screw all that stuff. There's no where else I would have rather have played. This place is unbelievable. Just sucks we couldn't get it done.

Q. Joey, I know you do it after every game, but when you were circling the stadium and signing for folks, how difficult was it for you to sort of get composed to do that?

JOEY SPALLINA: Yeah. It sucks. But at the end of the day, right, those are the kids that come and support you, and those are the fans that want you to win and want you to do well.

It's tough, but that's just life, it's the way it is. The fans are the fans, right? You can't control those kids that are super excited just to see us. That might be the only chance that they get to see us play. So if I gotta stay out there for an extra five to ten just to sign an autograph for a kid that that might be the only time that he got to see me play in his life, I'm going to do it, and do it as much as I can.

Q. (Off microphone)?

JOEY SPALLINA: No. It's just going about what I do. Obviously it sucks, but it's the way it is.

Q. Finn and Billy, advice you give to the younger guys that have seen this senior class now win 46 games, to keep this rolling and not just be a two, three-year thing?

FINN THOMPSON: I would say just don't get fat and happy. You got back-to-back Final Fours. It's a definitely pretty special thing. But at the end of the day, that wasn't the goal and that wasn't the do-all, end-all. You gotta get that National Championship.

But what I would tell them is just carry the culture. When we got to this place, it was in rough shape, or rougher shape, and we've kind of built it back up to what it is now. And obviously we didn't get the job done, but we left it in a better spot than we found it.

And we owe everything to this program, and we owe everything to these coaches and Coach Gait. It's the best place to play lacrosse. So they gotta understand that, and they just gotta carry that culture forward.

BILLY DWAN: I think Finn hit it on the head. Remember the culture. Remember the feeling, pit in your stomach, and come back next year hungry and get it done.

Q. Joey, obviously come up short today, and I know how bad you wanted that championship. But when you think macro about those kids and all the lives you changed with them in those stands watching you play and now they want to become you, there is going to be a kid that wants to be the next Joey Spallina in an Orange 22 jersey. In the past four years, what does that mean?

JOEY SPALLINA: Yeah. It means everything to me. A part of my promise, along with the National Championship, was to bring Syracuse and the No. 22 back to the appropriate spotlight and bring it back to what I think that it is right now.

It's all those kids going crazy for us, just getting to experience all this stuff with my best friends from here and my best friends from home as well, it's just been a special four years.

Just sucks that it didn't end the way that it probably should have or could have. But again, it's the way that life is I, the way sports is. And luckily enough I get to play in a week.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach Gait.

Q. I just asked Finn and Billy message to the younger guys, message that you give this team moving forward.

GARY GAIT: You know, we talked obviously as a team before we came up here, and the message of the team is that they should be proud of what they've been able to do. They've done something that the other teams here haven't done, and that's back-to-back Final Fours. And they've done a great job representing Syracuse lacrosse, Syracuse University.

I'm incredibly proud of the young men that they are, that the team is. They're a group of young men that are dedicated, committed, and sacrificed a lot for this team, for the university. And it makes me incredibly proud to be their coach. So I'm proud of them. They're good, fine young men.

Q. Coach, penalties have been an issue for most of

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the season. Obviously that penalty in the third quarter with Louis kind of swung the game with the three man-up goals Notre Dame scored. I guess I was wondering what challenges have you guys experienced trying to kind of rein in that aggressiveness and trying to get guys to play more disciplined throughout the year?

GARY GAIT: I think that's a fine line, and we talked about it a lot. We did a pretty good job during these playoffs of being smart, about playing tough, playing physical, but playing smart.

And we lost both the special teams battle on the man-up, not finishing on our end, and then giving up five goals on the other end, man-down. And their goalie play was outstanding. Their man-up was outstanding.

They shot with conviction. We had plenty of opportunities, and unfortunately just didn't hit the net when we needed to, and that's the way the ball goes sometimes.

Q. Gary, as it pertains to the No. 22, obviously as kind of the first, Joey has talked a lot about not only being a great player, but getting No. 22 back into a positive light. Now that it's over, what are your impressions of his impact and what's your feeling towards that as it pertains to No. 22?

GARY GAIT: Oh, it's been fun to watch Joey grow up as a young man and really become a great leader for this team. That's just being a great teammate. The fact that he wore 22 while doing it, you know, just added pressure to that. But his character came out, put the team first, and he did a great job representing, like I said, the university. The number, you know, is just a number.

He was proud, and he delivered. And we're going to miss him, and we're going to move forward.

Q. Coach, now that the season is over, kind of what are your reflections, what did it mean to coach this team, this group of seniors now that I guess the season has come to a close?

GARY GAIT: It's over, but just over. So I haven't sat and really reflected on it yet. I wasn't planning on going home after this game, but that's the way the ball bounced.

And it's just an incredible group, like I said. They've done amazing things, and I've been incredibly proud to coach 'em and to be their coach. I know that they're all going to go on in lacrosse, in life, and be successful. And I think that's due to my coaching staff and the leadership at Syracuse has really set an example, and these kids all

bought in, and they delivered in creating a culture second to none.

Q. Gary, so much of what you did this year was designed to win a championship, but what else do you get out of what you did this year with the tougher schedule? And you've mentioned a few times that Syracuse is relevant again. You didn't get a title, but what did you get out of this year?

GARY GAIT: You know, you compete, we had a heck of a year competing, and we're one of four teams left playing. We were one of four. Now there's only two. And at the benchmark, I know, I've been told by a few ADs, the benchmark if you consistently get to the Final Four, you're going to get a chance to win it all. You're going to get it done.

And that seems to be kind of the benchmark, and to get here two years in a row is amazing. There's a lot of great teams out there that aren't here, that thought they would be here, and our team was here.

So I'm proud of that, and that's really what we got out of it. We tested ourselves to provide that opportunity, to -- I thought we were well prepared for this game today. Unfortunately we just -- like I always say, we didn't make plays when we needed them.

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