

2026 DIV II NCAA Men's Lacrosse Championship

Sunday, May 24, 2026

Charlottesville, Virginia, USA

Scott Stadium

Tampa Bay Spartans

Coach JB Clarke

Tommy Ortega

Rex Kesselring

Finals Media Conference



Tampa 12, Adelphi 11

THE MODERATOR: All right, we are joined by the national champions, Tampa.

JB CLARKE: Has a nice ring to it.

THE MODERATOR: Yeah, it does. We have head coach JB Clarke, Rex Kesselring, and Tommy Ortega. We'll take an opening statement from Coach Clarke and we'll open up the questions from the media to the players.

Coach, an opening statement.

JB CLARKE: I think the first thing I have to do always on this weekend is thank our veterans and those that we've lost. It's because of them we're here. Everyone knows that in here, but I think it's important to say nonetheless.

Second thing is what a program Adelphi has. To put it together and win those two in a row is really, really hard, and to try to win three in a row -- winning three in a row is harder to win the first one. All my congratulations to them. I hope sooner than later they realize how great a run this was for them.

But I'm here and I couldn't be more proud of this group. A lot of things didn't go our way today and a lot of it had to do with Adelphi, but when it came down to the second half and towards the end we started to make the plays we weren't making in the first half.

The first quarter they got to some really tough grounders that gave them more possessions than we had in the first quarter.

But our guys never even wavered. Our halftime was very calm, cool, and collected. A lot of veteran players. And then you had two guys that really stood on their head offensively. There should be about two dozen guys up here, not me. But I'm proud of our guys, obviously. That goes without saying.

And thanks to everybody at University of Virginia for putting this on. Thanks to Coach Novotny, Coach Barrett and Coach Reich. You guys do a lot of work behind the scenes and to let us do this. We're very grateful.

MODERATOR: We'll now take questions for the players.

Q. Tommy, can you just take us through the game tying and then the overtime goal?

TOMMY ORTEGA: Yeah, in the start of the fourth quarter, I wanted to give special thanks to Grant Green. He is the backbone of our team. I just kind of went up to him and be like, we got your back. He was injured a game before and we just really wanted to do it for him.

So going into the fourth quarter I knew we had to step up, make some plays, not only for him, but also our coaches who do a great job of preparing us. Just scoring that goal was for them. And then in overtime we just knew we had to have it. We've been saying it all week, we have to have it, and that's what we did.

Q. Rex, there was a pretty long pause when the refs were giving the ruling on the Adelphi crease goal. Can you take us through your team's mindset and kind of waiting for the ruling there?

REX KESSELRING: Yeah. I mean, it's moments like that that can dictate a game. So you gotta wait and keep yourself level headed and react and respond to whatever the ref decides and whatever the call is.

Thankfully that one bounced our way.

Then it just came down to, all right, we knew that was going to happen. Now we gotta react and make something out of it, make that call work worth it, and we did, and we

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were able to turn it our way.

Q. For both of you, if you can touch on this. The way last year went, can you touch on how crazy it is kind of the identical nature of this game kind of followed and especially going down 5-1. How much did you draw on last year to fight back into this one?

REX KESSELRING: Yeah. Obviously last year was one of the craziest days in my life. That was our motivation this year. We try not to dwell too much on the past throughout the year, but with a loss like that and everything we felt that day, that was enough to fuel us every single day and push each other to be the best positive versions of ourselves that we can be, and understand that it can all go away in an instant. You gotta make the most of every single opportunity.

Yeah, going down 5-1 in the beginning doesn't happen to us much. It's crazy to say that and I'm grateful to say that that was shell shock for us. We had to look around and brace ourself for what's coming. We knew they were going to be a great team.

I mean, any team that puts you down 5-1, it's hard to bounce back from that. That's just a testimony to our culture and the belief we have in every single person, the faith that we have, and it just came down to us truly believing every ounce in ourselves that the guy to our left and right were going to do it.

Thankfully we were able to make it happen.

TOMMY ORTEGA: After that loss, that really hurt everybody on our team, and our preparation for this year started that next day. We knew they were a great team and they were all coming back that just kind of fueled out throughout the year. We had a great fall. We relied on each and every one of our teammates and coaches, and coming into this game we knew we had to have it.

We went down to 5-1 and it was a little shell shock like he said, but we were able to keep composure and lean on one another and make plays after plays.

We didn't want to get too low. We wanted to stay up and stay in the game.

Q. Years from now one of the visuals that I am sure I'll remember is of your fans rushing the field after the game. What was it like being able to celebrate on the field with them.

REX KESSELRING: Yeah that's kind of where it all sets in. All the sacrifices our family and friends make and just to

see the smile on their faces. As a team we always say we're not doing for ourselves. We're doing it for our family and everyone around us, fir your teammates.

It's truly an emotional thing to see your mom, dad, siblings rushing the field and they're crying, and really just puts everything in perspective. Just a great time to reflect and realize how blessed you are to be in that position.

And very grateful with that, for the fans we have. I mean, they popped out today, and it was truly just an incredible crowd. They definitely gave us the energy we needed to push us over the edge.

MODERATOR: Tommy, your thoughts on the field rush.

TOMMY ORTEGA: I think it was awesome to see everyone smiling and everyone so happy, all the alumni family and teammates on the side with us. Just amazing to see everyone so happy. The fans at home, the fans in the stands, and I feel like we traveled really well so I'm glad we could get it done for all those guys.

MODERATOR: Questions for Coach.

Q. Coach, after you kind of go down that 5-1, what did you say to your guys? Did you change anything? Did you say, we're going to stay the course, or what was kind of the message in that moment to start fighting back into the game?

JB CLARKE: It really was as simple as letting them know that we were doing fine except those really close contested ground balls were turning into possessions for them, and three of those times when it was a crazy grounder, we might have had it in our stick a couple of times. They scored on all three of those, so it was really trying to get our guys to focus on that.

I was also starting to sense it was getting a little warmer out there, and even in the first quarter they kept going to that first midfield. We kept going to our second midfield. So I think playing a few more guys helped us a lot. You could start to see that happen towards the end of the first quarter. But a great team with unbelievable skills. So that's not going to be the answer to it.

No. There was no magic possession. It was really just dig down, get over the grounder, and pick it up.

Q. I have to ask, did you consider a timeout at all in the overtime period?

JB CLARKE: (Laughing.) Thank you. You know, we're driving in today and we go by all the Adelphi people with



their 3-Peat shirts on and getting some nasty gestures, and one guy was giving me this on the way by as we're coming in on the bus. It made me laugh. It was good. It was a good job by him.

The timeout when Aaron Cho had the ball there, he was getting all tackled. I was convinced he was going to stand up and throw the open goal as soon as I called a timeout. No, that was the only time.

Q. Just to follow up on that quickly, Gordon was up here talking to us about how he really felt some grace watching you kind of break down positively last year with how you called timeout and how that kind of helped him deal with today's loss. What's it like coaching against Coach Purdie and what's that kind of mean to you?

JB CLARKE: Clearly one of the best that does this. He called me last summer, I don't know, a couple weeks after the game to say -- I guess in one of their -- maybe their semifinal game, one of their overtime games, he called -- he was trying to get a timeout, and the refs didn't give it to him and they scored to win the game.

So it was very nice of him to call me and say, look, this happens. It was the right time. In his words it was the right timeout to call. He got away with it week before and I didn't on that day.

He's a class act. That whole program is a class act, from the president -- their president approached me after the game, came down on the field, came over and congratulated us. I thought that was special.

And obviously their AD, Mr. McCabe is very kind. But it's a class program all around. So none of that surprised me about Coach Purdie.

Q. Coach, Westin didn't have a giant save total today, but he made that big one on man down to start the second half. It felt like he made the big save when you needed it. Can you speak to his performance today?

JB CLARKE: Coach, Sullivan our defensive coach, I think he's the best one out there. He should be a head coach now. He should probably be the head coach of this program. He does such a good job forcing our opponents to take shots that we want them to take, and that's an art.

He does such a good job with that that when they scored goals they were good goals. I never really felt like Wes definitely should have had that one. He's our guy. He got hurt a few weeks ago. We were able to put Kyle Rolley in there and he won a playoff game for us.

I never thought of pulling Wes. He's our guy. He made the saves in the second half. There was one high bounce shot that he got to. That would have been the end of us, I think. So that's a huge save.

He didn't have -- I don't know what the saves were. Probably didn't have as many as their guy, but I think we took more shots. They just really didn't get that many shots on goal and that's a testament to Coach Sullivan and what he does with our defense and our defensive players.

I thought our FOGO, face-off, get-off, was phenomenal today. It's a heck of a battle out there, and they put a lot pressure on you when you pick up the ground ball to face off.

And Pete Thomas, I think he took every one for us, didn't he? That was a war out there. So getting those possessions, we cleared it pretty well. They're a tough riding team. So first to be able to clear it, I think we failed maybe twice in the first half. But that helps that side of it too. You get more possessions.

Last year literally in this game they had one more possession than us. Our Anderson loss in March, they had one more possession than us. We practice. We put them in the situations and say, we gotta get this possession or else you lose. You don't have to give up a goal to get this. If you lose, you give up possessions. We try to focus.

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