

2026 NCAA Women's Lacrosse Championship

Thursday, May 21, 2026

Chicago, Illinois, USA

Martin Stadium at Northwestern

Johns Hopkins Blue Jays

Tim McCormack

Ava Angello

Reagan O'Brien

Semifinals Media Conference



So just working at those and coming into practice every day and working on getting better and becoming the best versions of our self has allowed this team to really thrive with all of the support that we have for each other, too. So it's really exciting to be here. Really, really great group.

Q. Three of the four teams in this final are from the Big Ten. What do you think that says about the quality of the conference this year?

TIM MCCORMACK: I mean, you know, we knew this throughout the course of this year. This conference was battle-tested. I think throughout the year, we challenged ourselves. If you looked at the out-of-conference scheduling from each team, everybody put their best foot forward and played a really, really tough schedule.

You know, we were able to all kind of do our part and -- and strive to be the best conference. That's what we're trying to, you know, when we set out in the beginning of season.

So when it works out like that and you have the teams that are competing at the highest level, it's a pretty exciting thing, and I think that, you know, it's just a testament to the league, to the conference, and the strength of it.

Q. You're about to play an opponent that you're so very familiar with. How do you balance all that familiarity but also maybe a fresh set of eyes?

REAGAN O'BRIEN: Yes, definitely. I think we just need to stay grounded in our values, like Ava mentioned earlier. We have core values that we follow every single day, and I think that will make us the strongest unit out there.

I think we are very excited and I think that could be our spark. It's our first time setting history. We have all of the alum supporting us. It's the 50th anniversary of Hopkins Lacrosse, too. So not only doing it for ourselves but doing it for the people that have done it before us and creating history, but also having fun doing it, and I think that will set us apart in the games to come.

Q. What are the challenges of playing their team on

TIM MCCORMACK: Really excited to be here, excited to have an opportunity to have some more days together with this really, really special group. You know, looking forward to making some life-long memories with their best friends and doing it all together. Something that we've strived to do all year long.

So you know, to have more days is a privilege. It's a blessing. And we're going to take advantage of every single one of them.

Q. Just knowing the family history and the background that you have on this campus, how special and fitting of a place is this to end your college career?

REAGAN O'BRIEN: Yeah, it's amazing. I can recall the amount of times I've been here. It's always been a great experience, and I'm hoping to make it an even better one this time around.

But I just love ending my career here, and hopefully it comes out with a huge win. Couple wins.

Q. This is the first time this team has gotten to this point, make the Final Four. What is the secret sauce that's enabled you guys to get to this point?

AVA ANGELLO: It's a really special group we have here and really exciting that we can put all the work in that we've been working at since September, really, to make it here. It's really all about kind of falling back on those foundations and pillars that we talk about every day. We have a really awesome safety net and group that we fall back on with our team values.

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their home field at this level of the tournament?

REAGAN O'BRIEN: Yeah, definitely, you can imagine, it's challenging. But I think that we're ready. We have fully prepared, field or no field. At the end of the day, it's the team that grounds us.

We are very focused on ourselves rather than who we are playing or where we are playing. We could play on the baseball field for all we are. We're just very excited to be out there and show everyone, like, what we're all about.

AVA ANGELLO: Yeah, and Reagan mentioned the alums and playing for the people who came before us. We got a bunch of texts after an exciting game last week of all the alums saying that they were going to come. They might have a home-field advantage, but we'll have a really about supporting cast out there.

Q. What can you recall of your first time watching championship weekend, and what does it mean to you to be on this stage for the final year of your career?

AVA ANGELLO: It's definitely a surreal moment. I went to a couple when I was in elementary and middle school, and those are the girls you always look up to, like the Nicole Levys and the Taylor Cummings. You watched them and you always want to be like them.

And now fast forward, and you're the girls in those shoes. It's definitely a surreal moment, and something that you'll cherish, really, for the rest of your life.

REAGAN O'BRIEN: Yeah, I was looking through my camera role the other day, and I was scrolling back and I had my filters on my old photos of the old NCAA Championship trophy, and I was like, wow, we made it here, and we did that.

I just think that we have had such great, remarkable leaders that have grown the sport to where it is today to even have a professional league, as well. Just being able to be a part of that growth and part of growing the sport that we all love is a remarkable feeling.

Q. You just mentioned the growth of game. This is the first time that the Final Four is happening outside of the Eastern time zone. What does that mean?

REAGAN O'BRIEN: Yeah, that's amazing. I think that it's just showing you how fast lacrosse is growing. I can only imagine the amount of little children that have wanted to go on the East Coast. It's a very far flight and very expensive. So just being able to bring it over a different time zone is awesome.

But it also just brings awareness to the sport of lacrosse here. I know that Northwestern had a Lacrosse Day earlier this season. That is an example. We're playing lacrosse in Japan this summer; another example. It just shows how fast lacrosse is growing, and it's a great thing to watch, and especially be a part of.

Q. For all the parity and balance that's going on this year, some chaos from time to time, is it a surprise that the Top-4 seeds made it this far, and no chaos happened on the way?

TIM McCORMACK: I mean, what a great year for lacrosse. What an absolute great year for lacrosse and our sport. You know, every single week, yeah, to really thoroughly look through each score, line, and double-check it, even, it's so exciting. It's a testament to the growth of the game.

It's just truly become that it's anybody's day. To get the Top-4 seeds to get to this point, I mean, I think so. You know, I do think so. I think nobody in the country would have been surprised if it didn't happen that way.

You know, it's -- again, it's just -- sport's grown so much in that regard. Even in the short time I've been in the sport, you know, I can remember where it was almost a sure thing when you went into this that, you know, top -- at least top three were in.

You know, you can't say the same thing anymore. That's a great thing for our sport, and excited for it and for the future of it.

Q. Your team has an interesting makeup in that a lot of your top players were recruited by Janine Tucker. What does it mean to have her across the journey this season, and also, how has this year's team that has reached a stage that this program has never done before at the Division I level built on the foundations laid by past groups?

TIM McCORMACK: Yeah, you can't put into words what Janine Tucker means to this program, what she means to me. Just as a mentor, as a supporter, as somebody who is there for myself but also this program at every turn. From the minute I accepted this position, she assured me that she would have my back through and through.

And the first call to action from her was to get her 29 years of alumni engaged and supportive and ready to back everything that we were doing.

So I owe her a ton for that. Those alums that you just



heard these young women describe have been instrumental in our success, in our journey, both as mentors, which they are paired with someone on our team, but also as role models, as well in, helping them get jobs and what their future is and such.

So I mean, the key to that support system was Janine. 29 years a long time. It's a long time. And she assured me, I'm not going to let -- I'm not going to let that go. So she's poured her heart and soul into this place, continues to do so, and I'm privileged to have her by our side.

Q. What did you take from your time as a coach here?

TIM McCORMACK: So much. I think the first thing you've got to look at is family. Kelly and Scott gave me an opportunity of a lifetime that changed the course of my entire life back in 2014. To come here and be an assistant coach from someone who didn't know much about the women's game, to take a chance on me and put me in that position, I'm forever grateful.

We went on to, I mean, you know, Kelly was there for the birth of my first son. She was at our wedding here. Her daughter was our flower girl there, both of her daughters. Family. You know, it's everything. I'll never forget any of that.

You know, from an on-field standpoint, always learn. Always grow. Don't ever get complacent. And I watched Kelly do that over the years. I got here, and I was so excited to learn from the best and so watch the best, just thinking, this is a script, right. She's got it. She's got this figured out.

But that was so far from the truth. She was always seeking to be better. So there was always a tweak, a change, something new that she was after, and to me, that was -- I took so much from that. Still do to this day.

To be honest with you, I couldn't even put into words to describe the amount of things I learned, the life -- the big-time life milestones that happened out here, it's a really, really special place, and so grateful for the opportunity to have done it.

Q. How do you balance familiarity with taking a fresh set of eyes at this?

TIM McCORMACK: Could I not say it better than Reagan said is. She took the word out of my mouth. It has been all year. We have not put an over-emphasis on anybody. We've prepared the right way. We've been ready for every single opponent just the same. But you know, we haven't made it bigger than it has to be. This is no different. For

us, similar opponent, so we have seen them do a lot of different things, so we are kind of ready for whatever is thrown our way. We've just got to be the more excited group. We've got to be the more enthusiastic group. We've got to come together. We've got to support each other. We've got to play for 60 minutes and do the things we've done all season long to get us to this point, and that's the controllable. That's what we're after.

Q. In your time at Northwestern, you saw the sacrifices it takes to reach this stage. What about this year's group at Hopkins, if anything reminds you of what you saw as Northwestern as an assistant coach?

TIM McCORMACK: The biggest one that comes to mind is love game. You have to have a love and passion for this sport like no other to be successful. That was something I took from my time here watching the players and watching our locker room, and the best groups we had truly loved the game.

We've got that in our locker room right now. Something from day one that when we got here that we were going to instill. But us wanting that and the team owning it are two very different things. This group of seniors led by this group of two young women that you just had here laid that foundation. They took that to the next level. They believed it. They owned it. They lived it every single day, and now we've got a locker room full of girls doing that and embodying it.

Q. What's it been like to navigate this historic season for you guys under the House settlement revenue sharing era, especially coming from a Division III athletic department?

TIM McCORMACK: For us, it's been business as usual. We've just kept the focus on the controllables, what's right in front of our face. Bringing great effort and energy every single day to our practice. Supporting each other. Competing for 60 minutes when we get the opportunity to do that, competing in practices every day, and striving to make ourselves better every single moment.

You know, so with the focus in those areas, I think that we've been able to kind of string a bunch of days together in which we've gotten better and better, and hopefully we can continue to do so looking ahead.

Q. Congrats on getting here. I have watched some of the games as a Floridian, and McKenzie Craig's role in the offense seems different from someone who spends a lot of time below GLE. Could you explain how she was used in the offense?

TIM McCORMACK: Yeah, I mean, she's a pivotal piece to everything that we're doing. You know, one of our main principles of play on offense is spacing, and for her role in what she does for us, being behind the cage and being integral in our shot backs ups and being integral in swinging the ball through X and handling it in those moments, or pinching an overload against a zone team. You know, she's done an excellent job in those areas. She.

Plays an enormous role in our man-up, setting on the righty, kind of front pipe, has had some big-time plays in that area, and is always ready for whatever is thrown her way.

So I've been really proud of her growth and think she's done a really good job of getting herself going in our system.

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