

2024 NCAA Women's Lacrosse Championship

Friday, May 24, 2024
Cary, North Carolina, USA
WakeMed Soccer Park

Boston College Eagles Acacia Walker-Weinstein Rachel Clark Shea Dolce

Media Conference

Boston College - 10, Syracuse - 7

THE MODERATOR: The Boston College Eagles, who just qualified for their seventh consecutive National Championship Game. That is a mark that is second all time behind eight for Northwestern and Maryland in previous years. We're joined by head coach Acacia Walker-Weinstein and student-athletes Rachel Clark and Shea Dolce.

Coach, congratulations on your victory. Please give us an opening statement.

ACACIA WALKER-WEINSTEIN: Thank you. I'm really proud of our team. Really difficult opponent. Syracuse can be a giant with all the talent that they have.

I'm really proud of the girls for coming out, following the game plan, sticking together. Rachel's five goals and Shea's 12 saves are just a representation of the successful unit behind them. I'm really proud of the coaching staff, worked really hard. I'm really excited. I'm really proud of the girls.

Q. Coach, when you go against a team like Syracuse or any team with such an excellent draw taker, what is the strategy to combat what might end up being a draw disadvantage like today?

ACACIA WALKER-WEINSTEIN: We were anticipating her being just really remarkable. She has a remarkable skill set. We just decided that the best strategy to combat that was to try to have all three people on the draw circle after every single ground ball. So the mission was to try to get the ball to the ground. It's really the only way to beat someone like her, and clearly we still didn't beat her. She's



incredible, and her skill set is off the chart.

I'm just proud of the girls. I think they just worked together to try to get the ball on the ground and come up with 50-50s.

Q. Your team held Syracuse to two scoring droughts, one at 17, one at the 24. What did you see from your defense through those droughts that helped you stop Syracuse?

ACACIA WALKER-WEINSTEIN: These guys work really hard, and they prepare really hard. They study. I can't say they work harder than anyone else because I don't know what anyone else does, but I do feel confident in the way these girls prepare.

There's a lot of ownership behind what they do because they're helping out with the game plan and creating strategy, along with my defensive coordinator Jen Kent. I think they did a nice job on the matchups. We played BC lacrosse. We played aggressive. We were attacking the first and second slides.

Any opportunity we have to get the ball back on a 50-50 we did. To have a stabilizer like Shea in cage, any slip up or any good offensive play we have, we have Shea back there to back everybody up.

Q. (Indiscernible). What was the game plan going into the game to limit her, and what did you see from Shea and the rest of the team?

ACACIA WALKER-WEINSTEIN: We put Shea Baker on her to start, but the nature of our defense, the matchups never really stick, but we just had everyone prepared to defend her tendencies. Again, it wasn't really all about Emma. There's seven really strong attackers.

It was our eight versus their seven. I think our girls did a nice job carrying out the game plan.

Q. Rachel, what's it been like now that you've been here a full season, you and Emma, to come in as transfers and make your mark on this team and kind of



become one with everyone else?

RACHEL CLARK: Honestly, it was such a seamless transition. Like Coach said, our offensive unit sets the team. We're so together. I really didn't feel any type of resistance from the first practice, honestly. It was like I felt like I played with this group forever.

Yeah, playing with McKenna and Emma and Kayla, we're a unit. Like we flow together. We play on a string. It's a pretty seamless transition.

Q. Shea, kind of a moment of deja vu with Syracuse then Princeton and Northwestern on Sunday. What do you think is just different about your team this year than when that happened?

SHEA DOLCE: I think we had an amazing defensive unit last year. I think we have an amazing defensive unit this year. I think some of the messages we're sending are a little different. We have such amazing leaders back there: Sydney Scales, Becky Browndorf, Lizzie O'Neill, Hunter Roman, and then we have freshmen like Lydia Colsante who are stepping up big time.

I think just the unit that we have and like Rachel said about the offense, we play on one string. I think we really carry that together from the start of the season till the end.

To be in this position again, I'm so grateful for it. Just so excited, and I feel really good about our unit.

Q. For either of the players, the Syracuse players heading into this game said a big reason why they can't get you guys is in-game adjustments. Was was there any moment in this game, timeout or not, when you guys got together, whether there was an adjustment or not, that you think paid off big time the rest of the way?

SHEA DOLCE: I think we come together in every timeout, and we always benefit from it. We always listen to what the coaches say, and we're constantly changing things because they're unbelievable at making adjustments. We really come together and make those adjustments. We come together as a team, and I think just coming out of all those timeouts, we change something, and it works.

RACHEL CLARK: Kind of going off that, like she said, every single time we call a timeout, like we have to make adjustments. The expectation is we don't go out there and do the same thing. There has to be a change.

On top of that, every single possession offensively, and I think defensively too, the units come together. I think we

just talk about it as a unit. I know, after each possession, every empty possession, we have to make a change if there's not a goal scored.

Q. For Rachel and Shea, you guys are very familiar with Syracuse, obviously playing them two times already this year. How did that help going into this game, if at all?

RACHEL CLARK: I think we were expecting, like we played them twice, but they're an incredibly well coached team. They're going to make adjustments. I think we went into it prepared for everything, like our scout units prepared us in a lot of different ways. I think we just -- we studied. We watched so much film, more than I've ever watched before. We repped out every single look. I feel like we were ready for everything. We just talked about making adjustments.

SHEA DOLCE: I think after we played them twice, you might think there's not much more you can learn and study from them, but it's always the opposite. There's always more you can learn. Our coach is amazing at making us find those things that we didn't see before ourselves, and we translate it on the field.

We're always digging for more. We knew that, although we played them two times, there's always more to find. Yeah, we really showed up.

Q. You've obviously known Kayla for a while. I'm curious in your matchups with her this season where you've maybe seen her grow as a coach.

ACACIA WALKER-WEINSTEIN: I've seen her grow so much. I'm so proud of her. I have so much love for Kayla and so much deep respect. I think she's one of the best out there.

I think just how she has these guys so consistently performing at such a young age, it's really hard to do, and she continues to do it. She's really smart. She's a very creative coach, and I think she also has great in-game adjustments, which sort of separates her from other coaches. I witnessed it with me, and I witnessed it with the teams she has now.

But I just think she's a really special lacrosse mind, and I think her players love her. I'm really proud of her. It's hard to see her so sad because I do have such a deep respect for her. But she's just getting started. I think that's clear with the product that she has.

Q. When it comes to preparing for Northwestern now, do you, so to speak, throw away February, throw away



last May, and just kind of look at what's happened more recently to prepare? Do you take into account how they've played you in the past? What's your mindset when you look at film and things like that?

ACACIA WALKER-WEINSTEIN: It's so long ago, I think we'll utilize the experiences we've had the last few years to kind of harden us and get smart. But no, we'll do what we always do. We'll study the recent film or maybe all of the film, and we'll look at what they're doing differently as of lately and create our game plan from probably more last month or so.

No, we won't be talking about years past. It's already in our hearts. It's already in our head. We'll stick to game planning.

Q. Coach, you talk a lot about controlling the controllables. You guys had an hour and a half delay tonight before the game. How did you kind of handle that? How did you think the team handled that as well?

ACACIA WALKER-WEINSTEIN: Well, we made sure the girls stayed loose and had a little bit of fun. We figured out what they needed for nutrition and hydration. Then we really just gathered them back together about 15 minutes until we were going to start to play and just reviewed the game plan again. Got stable, got grounded, and then just refocused.

It was fine. It wasn't a big deal. I asked them to allow the rain delay to serve us and to help us, and I think they really locked in and got focused.

Q. Coach, you mentioned the ground balls or putting the ball on the ground with the draw controls. What are the fundamentals you stressed with your players, and what are some of the things offensively and defensively when you're in those situations that you look for to gain possession when you're putting the ball on the ground?

ACACIA WALKER-WEINSTEIN: We won ground balls, but we did not win draw controls, but I think it sort of evened out over the course of the game. I just think, again, going against Kate, we have to figure out how we can gain possessions when we can't win the draw. So any 50-50 battle inside the 8-meter, we have to consider that equally, if not more important, than a draw control, and we have to find ways to gain possess in the 8 meters if we can't collect the draw controls, and I think our girls did a nice job of that.

That and for inline runouts, swarming on ground balls, but it really is the only way to beat someone as skilled as Kate,

so we did a good job. Happy with it.

Q. I'm from The Heights, and I've been covering lacrosse for the season. One of my questions that I had is McKenna Davis is really an anchor for your team's offense. Coach and Rachel and Shea, what are some things as coach and as a teammate that you really notice in her style?

RACHEL CLARK: With McKenna has become one of my best friends this year, and I think her selflessness is something that really stands out to me. Also her IQ for the game.

That girl is never not thinking about lacrosse. We're roommates, so I live with her, so I get it all the time. She's always -- she's so creative, and she's always working on figuring out ways to get other people open so she can feed them the ball. Her stick work is like nothing I've ever seen before, but she uses it to create plays for other people.

She's just so creative, selfless teammate, will do anything to win.

SHEA DOLCE: She's just such a threat. You might think she's feeding, you might think she's going on goal, and she's feeding. You see at the end of the game that she's running the ball all across the field. She really has it all in here, and she would do anything to win, and I think she played all in today.

ACACIA WALKER-WEINSTEIN: The other thing about McKenna, she's been a quiet leader for three years, but I think people are recognizing her now. Last year, like Rachel said, she would come off the field in between games, in between quarters, on weekends, and she would have all these solutions to the problems.

But we challenged her this fall to tell her to be a problem solver in the moment so it's not like a Monday morning quarterback kind of thing, and she took that. Now she's out there in the moment in the plays problem solving for our offense, which I think is a huge distinguishing factor about her.

It really helps the team because that's a difficult thing to do. It's easy to go and watch film later or to pal around with your coaches in between quarters, but she's out there problem solving in the middle of the moment.

So much credit to McKenna. She studies and works really hard.

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