

# 2021 NCAA Men's Lacrosse Championship

Saturday, May 29, 2021

East Hartford, Connecticut, USA

## Maryland Terrapins

## John Tillman

### Media Conference



Maryland - 14, Duke - 4

THE MODERATOR: We're joined by Coach John Tillman of Maryland. If you could make an opening statement about the game, please.

JOHN TILLMAN: Obviously, very proud of our guys to get a win against a great team like Duke, Coach Danowski and the staff are as good as it gets, and it's an outstanding team. To get here and bring Maryland to this weekend is really important to our school and our state and our alums.

Obviously, when you get here, you want to play well, and to have a chance to get back to Memorial Day on Monday and win, just so proud of the guys' team effort. I thought from defense to face-offs to goalie play to offense, that's probably the best 60 minutes we played all year.

**Q. I'm curious, if you're willing to think back, when the pandemic hit, you were scheduled to host Virginia. That was the game before it all kind of went down. I just was curious what you remember about that, how far along in your preparation you were, and just kind of what memories that might bring back.**

JOHN TILLMAN: I just remember kind of a surreal feel that week of something's going on. I remember getting ready. We lost a game against Navy a couple weeks prior that got cancelled, and then kind of moved into I think we had played Notre Dame and then Albany and Virginia was next. All of a sudden, something just didn't seem right. They started canceling -- I think the big thing that got me concerned was canceling, I think the NBA got put on hold. Then all of a sudden, the basketball tournaments got put on hold.

You just had a sense like all of a sudden things were going to sit still, and there was probably a chance this game wasn't going to be played. Then just again, very surreal, just telling the kids to go home and not knowing when we'd see them again, not really knowing the extent of what the

next 16 months would be. So very strange times.

I know obviously we were very excited about the game because we have so much respect for Virginia and their program and they're a talented team and defending national champions for a reason.

**Q. Is there anything tangible that you can point to late in the second quarter that allowed you guys to make that four-goal run before the half? And it seemed like it really springboarded your momentum heading into the second half.**

JOHN TILLMAN: I just felt like in that second quarter we were able to get face-offs. I thought Logan was playing well, so we were good in the special teams. You get a goal from your face-off guy, and we'd been okay. We'd been good at times, but not necessarily maybe at the standard we'd love to be, but in big moments, we've actually had some guys come through.

I thought Justin Shockey just gave us really great minutes today. Gets a goal, but more importantly, it just felt like we got possessions in that second quarter, and that was huge for us. Again, when you get one from your face-off guy, that's a big energy boost.

Then defensively, I just thought those guys kept giving us opportunities, and again, when you're getting the face-offs with that, you can get into a rhythm and a flow, and that helps so much.

**Q. John, defensively, what do you kind of make of what you guys were able to do against that particular offense? And did you sense that that was a group that felt like it was being challenged this week in maybe a way that it hadn't been previously or at least perception-wise anyway?**

JOHN TILLMAN: Looking at the tape, you kind of looked and said, all right, we played a very similar offense to a certain extent, and, again, that's a lot of respect to Duke and Notre Dame's offenses. You had a Tewaaron candidate, a very dangerous guy behind the goal. They set a lot of picks for him, dynamic player, makes guys



around him better, can score, very athletic and very organized.

I mean, we kind of joked at the beginning of the week, it was like getting ready for the NBA All-Star team, like the Western All-Stars. There's just so many good players out there that were dangerous, but we did feel like getting ready for Notre Dame, some of what they do did carry over, whether it's the big little picks behind and dynamic dasher, but also some of the wing action and the sets that they run.

And it helped, but to be honest with you, it kind of needed to because we were kind of gassed from the game on Sunday. It took us maybe three, four days to get beyond that physically, and that was very concerning, so we went super light this week. We felt we were going to trust Grill. We had all year. Michael Sowers is awesome. Such a good player. I remember watching him when he was younger. He's as good as advertised. We have so much confidence in Nick, and we have veteran short sticks, so we felt like that would help us.

We hoped that we could do okay at that matchup, and it turned out pretty well. When we didn't, I felt like Logan bailed us out a few times and made some timely saves that really helped us when maybe there were some opportunities for them.

**Q. To follow up on that on what you were saying about Logan, he's obviously had a fairly steady season, but do you feel like, to piggy-back off what you said earlier, this being as good a game as you've played 60 minutes wise, was that as good a game as he's played?**

JOHN TILLMAN: Yeah, I would say this would be his best game. We're not too far from it, and sometimes you can think too emotionally. He had a good year last year. So he's basically just completing almost a full year normally non-COVID, you're usually getting 13, 14 games and your conference tournament. It's amazing to think he's only started 16 games.

He just is super cool. He's a guy that, like, the guys love playing for, because he never points the finger. He never looks like he's rattled. So there's always a lot of confidence and faith out there.

What I loved last week was maybe it wasn't his best saving day, but he stole some possessions and was able to navigate some clears and get us out of trouble. I felt like he got some saves today and still continued to do that and then got some possessions back. Sometimes people don't see those ground balls, but those are as good as saves,

and that helped us big time.

**Q. Congratulations on making it to the championship game on Monday. What does this mean for the history of lacrosse for Maryland and Virginia having two schools playing each other on Monday?**

JOHN TILLMAN: Certainly speaking for our state where lacrosse is so important, and then our school, where lacrosse is obviously a premier sport and has just a great tradition of great players and great teams, we are really prideful to make sure that each year we live up to the standard of the program and add another chapter to it of the book of Maryland lacrosse, not only on the field, but off the field.

I had an alum text me yesterday with a little snapshot from the 1978 handbook from Bud Beardmore that talked about be the best. Again, a lot of what was in that handbook talked about being the best version of yourself on and off the field academically, being great members of our community. Again, trying to live up to that standard and make sure that -- a lot of guys created this tradition. We got to make sure we do our part.

Lars is a guy I respect a ton. That program, obviously, they're reigning national champions. They're a who's who in terms of recruits, and they're very talented and always have been. I think you look at how far away from each other we are, it's not too, too far. I think there's a lot of natural interest in that Mid-Atlantic just because of the history and then so many kids playing.

**Q. Anthony DeMaio, coming in, getting you started with a goal and two assists really early on, he's a player that explodes for you guys at different times. He's very unpredictable. How did you deploy him today so he had such success?**

JOHN TILLMAN: The way we play, a big part of it is trying to -- and we've kind of morphed into that over the last few years. You kind of look at what you have. In '17 and '16, we had Matt and Colin, and Connor Kelly and some of those guys, and we tried to devise schemes that kind of suited them, and we were a little bit more of kind of lining up and playing, and we were a little bit more predictable. It made it easy for looks, and we had guys that it suited pretty well and still talented players.

I think with this group there's a lot of versatile parts and flexible parts. We give them a lot of freedom because there's a lot of trust, there's a lot of decisions to be made. Anthony always seems to just find little windows. I think guys are looking for him. If you kind of help too much to him, he'll find the open guy.

Very crafty, was a high school attackman. So you're getting a guy coming out playing with an extra attackman, and obviously, you love having all that skill. He's a guy that, if he gets in good spots, we trust him so much shooting the ball. He's a sniper. Again, you saw some of his assists and things like that. He's just an awesome passer too.

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