

# 2023 NCAA Men's Lacrosse Championship

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Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Lincoln Financial Field

## Duke Blue Devils

## Dyson Williams

## John Danowski

## Kenny Brower

### Media Conference



fighting back to cut that lead down. I mean, it was 6-1. That's a pretty tough lead against a tough team like Notre Dame to get back there, and they just made a play when they needed to.

I mean, no question we continued to fight, but at the end of the day they just made a couple more plays than us.

**Q. Kenny, you've talked about getting Duke back to this point and expecting to be here. How meaningful is it to have had this experience, and how promising do you think that is for your program moving forward?**

DYSON WILLIAMS: Yeah, I think obviously getting a taste of the final four our sophomore year was important to make that step, and then I think it's just every season brings a new journey, and we try not to -- at Duke we try not to dwell too much on the past.

You just kind of start with a fresh mindset, and I thought this year we did a great job of that. We didn't think too much about -- didn't think at all about last year not making it, but kind of made this season its own.

Obviously didn't end up being a championship season for us, but I did think it was a great step moving forward, and our team showed a lot of character, and like I said, I'm very proud.

KENNY BROWER: Every year is a new journey, new guys, new team, but the standard doesn't change. This is always going to be our goal to get back here and eventually one day, win.

**Q. You guys scored the first possession, then nothing the rest of the way. What did you guys talk about at halftime?**

DYSON WILLIAMS: Yeah, like I said, they're a great team, and it doesn't always go your way. Halftime just got reminded that it's a lacrosse game.

Although it's part of -- we have more fans than normal and it's obviously a championship game, it's still just another lacrosse game. It was a good message that we took, and

Notre Dame 13, Duke 9

JOHN DANOWSKI: Well, congratulations to University of Notre Dame, Coach Kevin Corrigan, his staff, the players. A well-deserved run. They've been terrific all year from day one. We're proud of them being partners in the Atlantic Coast Conference. If we're going to lose to somebody, lose to somebody in our conference. Congratulations to the Fighting Irish.

**Q. Dyson, the first half you guys offensively had some issues there. What do you think kind of went into that, and what do you think flipped for you guys when you were able to have that run in the third quarter?**

DYSON WILLIAMS: Yeah, like Coach said, Notre Dame is obviously a great team. Defensively they are hard to beat. It's one of those things when you get to the big stage, and it's one game, and things don't always go your way, the way you want it to.

Obviously struggled the first half but then kind of take a deep breath the second half and do what we realized -- like there's no point in coming out and kind of sitting down, so gave it our all, and I'm unbelievably proud of all of guys on our team for not giving up and showing our fight all the way until the end.

**Q. Kenny, you guys got it back tied there and then they got the two goals late in the third quarter, particularly the Kavanaugh goal with less than a second left. How much did that take the air out a little bit with them being able to bump that thing right back to two?**

KENNY BROWER: I'm incredibly proud of our guys just

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we were able to come back and make it game.

Just shows our character and shows our pride, and I'm very proud.

**Q. Dyson, after that first half, how did you change your game plan to deal with Liam Entenmann who was making a lot of saves in that second quarter?**

DYSON WILLIAMS: Yeah, a player like him can really change the outcome of a game. Once again, just reminded it's a six-by-six net, and shooters gotta shoot, and you can't change the way you're playing just because things aren't going your way.

I thought we came out with more confidence, and that made it a better game.

**Q. How would you size up that first half, especially since defensively I'm sure you were irritated about a couple garbage goals, like ground balls off and whatnot. It felt like defensively you were okay --**

JOHN DANOWSKI: Defensively we were terrific. I thought we only gave up two goals in the box. Even though it was 6-1, two goals in the box against a dynamic team like Notre Dame, I felt pretty good even at halftime defensively. I kept saying that in the huddle.

But Notre Dame was very opportunistic. They've been like that all year. If you've watched them play before, they're terrific off the ground, ball bounced their way once or twice, and they'll take advantage of it.

Good for them.

But with all that being said, we did take 24 shots in the first half, and that's a pretty good day, too. But defensively they're very good. They're very disciplined.

We're not a very dynamic two-handed team, so if you have a good scouting report and you overplay guys' hands, and the guys did a nice job that way, too.

You give the goalies some credit, but a lot of times the goalie deserves the credit when his defense is playing well in front of him. I thought it was a combination of both. I thought their defense was doing a really nice job, and I thought we were playing a little bit timidly, as well. I thought we were afraid to make mistakes, which happens in this kind of game, and you have to learn -- we came out and scored early in the second half, I thought that changed a little bit. We weren't as -- plus we had a little talking-to at halftime, as well.

**Q. You had some graduate students that wrapped up their Duke careers today, Wilson Stephenson, Garrett Leadmon just to name a couple. Any closing thoughts on them and their time at Duke?**

JOHN DANOWSKI: Yeah, I'm so proud of those guys. Last year after we lost to Notre Dame we had a film session the next day, and we really were very direct and very honest with the fifth years because that was their senior year. If they're going to come back, things they were going to have to change a little bit.

Right from day one, they've been awesome. They've been absolutely spectacular. Weight room, classroom, practice, leadership, on, off the field. They're just amazing.

I think we had seven graduate degrees, or eight, and the guys were just a joy to be around.

**Q. What was that halftime talk like to eventually spark a third quarter comeback?**

JOHN DANOWSKI: It was somewhat direct, somewhat challenging their character a little bit. It was typical coach stuff. Sometimes it requires a gentle hand, and sometimes it requires a little bit of tough love. I would say it was more on the tough love side.

**Q. Could you just talk about what did you tell your team in the locker room after the game was over?**

JOHN DANOWSKI: We love them. We love these guys. If this is the worst thing that's going to happen in your life, you're living a really good life.

You got to play in front of 60,000 people over three days. You got to be with your friends for another four days in Philadelphia. I mean, what a great experience.

Didn't win the game. The other team was better today. That happens. But let's not hang our heads. Let's be really proud of who you are and what you've accomplished and what you're going to accomplish going forward.

**Q. Notre Dame threw a lot of different looks at you from the face-off spot using multiple personnel against Jake, double pulling, moving guys all over the field, you saw Tevlin at attack for some of them. How much would you say that face-off ended up impacting the outcome of the game on the whole?**

JOHN DANOWSKI: Yeah, we knew all that was coming because that's how they play, so we knew that, and we knew that their guy was going to counter a lot, and he did a great job. They won 14 out of 24. Seemed worse than

that to me in the game. He won some really big face-offs and some timely ones, as well.

You know, he's a Chaminade kid and a Long Island guy. He's tough as nails. That's what happens. The face-off thing, sometimes it's about match-ups. Did a really good job of countering, of really driving Jake off the ball, and I thought a couple of times -- we don't see that that often, that kind of technique, but it was effective today for them for sure.

**Q. You finally get it tied up and then they get two goals in the last minute, and instead of being a chance to go to the fourth even, what did that do to you guys?**

JOHN DANOWSKI: Yeah, I don't think it bothered us. The last one bothered me, but I don't think it bothered the team in that they had just come back from a five-goal deficit. So two goals is not insurmountable. If you get that next one, 9-8.

I thought at one point we had a man-up opportunity and Charles Balsamo had a shot inside that could have cut it to one, and then they come down and score instead it was 11-9.

So we hung in there and kept fighting. You know, I don't think the team was deflated. I think they thought that two-goal lead is not the end of the world.

**Q. How would you size up the journey that this team went on here over the last few months? I know obviously missing the tournament last year is part of it, but also the standard that you guys have set over the last decade and a half of being in this spot on a fairly regular basis?**

JOHN DANOWSKI: Yeah, you know, getting a chance to be at Duke for me was a dream come true, and for these kids it is, as well. It's tremendous demands on them academically, socially, professionally, internships and what goes on afterwards.

So to be with them for those -- in the couple of hours in the afternoon is incredible. They're fun. They're witty. They're rambunctious. It keeps you young. It's not like going to work, that's for sure.

**Q. After having a difficult game against Penn State, Will Helm made a lot of key saves today to keep Duke in the game. Can you talk about his game today?**

JOHN DANOWSKI: Yeah, you know, we were very proud of Will Helm to get himself off the deck, so to speak, and played very, very well, cleared the ball well, maybe one of

his best performances of the season. Shots that Notre Dame hit, they hit some low corners, and they had some plays right on top of the crease that no goalie is going to make those saves.

I thought that was really -- I was really impressed with William today and really happy for him.

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