

2024 NCAA Men's Lacrosse Championship

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Lincoln Financial Field

Maryland Terrapins

Coach John Tillman

Jack McDonald

Daniel Kelly

Media Conference



Notre Dame - 15, Maryland - 5

JOHN TILLMAN: Congrats to Notre Dame, Kevin Corrigan and his staff and his team. Obviously to me, for the last two years has been the best team and they were the most consistent team all year. They proved it. They certainly were the best team today. So hats off to them.

I think way they play, they're just really, really good everywhere, whether it's the talent they have -- someone said they had 11 All-Americans; felt like it today. The way they placed they're poised and unselfish. They make great decisions.

At the other end, they're buttoned up defensively, super athletic. They're awesome in the goal, and they're really, really good at the faceoff X. Don't have any weaknesses.

I knew it would be a big challenge, having played them once before. But then putting on the film and watching them during the year they are awesome and they are worthy champions. They deserve it. They were better than us today.

But I love our guys. Obviously the locker room was really hard. It always is. We talked about it the other day -- at the end, win or lose, it's always so sad. We just have such a good group. I'm so proud of these guys.

It may sound like a cheesy cliché, but you go on the journey. It's filled with ups and downs. There's a lot of ways you can go off the tracks. And at times this year we were leaking some oil.

But our leadership, including these two guys, just never let it happen. So the way they handled all that, stuck together,

the way they kept fighting, to me I'm proud of them for that.

As I said the other day, these are the things they need to be able to do going forward because, as Dick Edell said, if this is the worst day of their lives, they're going to have amazing lives.

I know they hurt right now and it should hurt because they put so much in, but if I'm someone who loves Maryland lacrosse and Maryland sports like this group, they laid it all out.

Certainly if you want to look at us for 60 minutes you can judge us that way; I refuse to do it. I know what these guys have done since August. I love them. I'm excited for their next part of their lives because those guys are going to crush it.

Q. Jack, what did you think of their depth and how much did that kind of impact you guys on the defensive end?

JACK MCDONALD: They're an awesome team. With the firepower they have and with the Kavanaghs and running three midfields deep, it's tough. They have some awesome players.

And they capitalized on our mistakes and it was very apparent when we made those mistakes. Bunch of older guys and they just made plays.

Hats off to them. They were deep, a lot of older guys.

Q. Daniel, both of you guys, where you are to be here, 75 other teams aren't here. But, Daniel, got off to a great offensive start. Then two goals in a couple of minutes and then things slowed down. What was missing today?

DANIEL KELLY: I just think it was tough for us to draw slides at times. And they did a good job. Our hats off to Notre Dame. But I can't speak highly enough about the group we have in that locker room.

We've been through a lot, a lot of ups and downs, but we



stuck together and we never lost hope. And this is a group that believes in one another.

And I wouldn't trade anybody in that locker room for anybody else. I truly love all 50 of those guys. And Terps lacrosse, we'll be back next year.

Q. Daniel and Jack, after the game ended you guys had a long huddle off to the side, the entire team. What was said in that moment and just kind of reflecting back on it, what was that moment like when the result was finalized?

JACK MCDONALD: I think in that moment it just sucks. You look at 50 of your best friends and you strive to achieve one goal. We've done that since August. And just seeing everyone's face, I think it was kind of just looking at each other and realizing that we put everything we could into this year and for all that, we should just keep our heads high.

Notre Dame played a great game, but it should not take away from what this group was able to accomplish this year. And just going to suck. You're losing some of your best friends. I think we just looked at each other in that movement and embraced it.

DANIEL KELLY: You realize in that moment that it's over. That locker room will never be the same. All 50 of us will probably never be in the same room again. That's what's hard.

He said it, Jack said it. You lose some of your best buddies you've been through a lot with, a lot of ups and downs, especially in this group. But we're proud of what we were able to do. And nobody believed in this group besides the 50 guys and coaches we had in our locker room.

Q. You mentioned mistakes. You guys made 16 turnovers. Was that (lost audio) ball or was it something Notre Dame was doing or a combination?

JACK MCDONALD: It was definitely a combination, I think a little bit of the weather, just (indiscernible) and stuff like that. No excuse though. Definitely from our end and they did a great job riding. The Kavanaghs, they fly around. You think you're open for a second and you're not. But something that we preached and we just got away from it. So I would say it was a combination.

Q. Entenmann was a brick wall today in the cage, over 75 percent. What was difficult about the looks he was giving you guys as an offense?

DANIEL KELLY: Hats off to Liam. I don't think we shot particularly well, but he doesn't have any weaknesses. It's the hard part. You think you have a great look, but he closes in on it pretty quickly.

He's a big kid, too. He takes a lot of the net up. But there's a lot of those that we would want back.

Q. You guys jumped out to a 2-0 lead. Did Notre Dame show anything differently and you guys just didn't know how to respond to it?

DANIEL KELLY: I'm sure they made adjustments. We tried to as well. But it's tough. Haven't watched film. Tough to really say.

Q. Daniel, you mentioned being able to be back to this point. How much do you feel like the group that's going to be back next year it's going to be able to build off of being able to make this (indiscernible)?

DANIEL KELLY: I have no doubt in my mind that the group coming back will be a great team. Coach Tillman installed a culture at Maryland. And it's our job to live up to the standard every single day.

And that group coming back they will do that. We will do that.

And it's tough to talk about next year right now but I just can't tell you guys how proud I am of this group and how much love I have for each and every one of the guys in there. They truly put it all out there. And we went on an awesome run. It sucks to come up one game shot and not put our best out there today. But it doesn't take away the love and how much I truly care about each and every kid in that locker room.

Q. Coach, it was a tight game, 3-3, and they ran off seven straight goals. Their offensive execution was outstanding during that run. And what I wanted to ask you is defensive does win championships. You guys played a heck of a defense against Virginia. I thought Entenmann let a few goals in early, but then he just shut the door. And defensively they were at another level. Your comments.

JOHN TILLMAN: I think Patrick asked me the other day about comparing them to our '22 team. And I actually, thinking about it, they do remind me of that team. They really do.

They just, offensively, they don't do a lot of different things, but they do a lot of things that allow them to play to their strengths. And they have such a good feel for each other.

And everybody kind of plays to their strengths, and they just know where each other are.

But they can also beat you with the ball and they can beat you without the ball. They got some leverage on some picks that we made some mistakes on in the first half, but they really got us a lot off ball where we were trying to help too much. And they would just cut, and they have such a good feel for where guys are going to be. And they made us pay.

I just feel like, you mentioned it was 3-3, and then we just made some mistakes. 11 turnovers in the first half, like, you just can't do that with a team like that. You just can't. You can't keep giving them the ball back.

I felt like we got off to the start we were hoping for at 2-0. And I felt like they responded incredibly well. And then we just had all these short possessions. And really they flipped the possession battle. And our defense, like, towards the end of the first, we had a couple of huddles, it was, like, guys we need to help our defense and play complementary lacrosse because they are getting tired.

And when we started to get tired, we made some mistakes, and again they made us pay.

I thought they shot really well. I wouldn't trade Logan McNaney for anybody, I just wouldn't. And I know Liam is awesome. And he obviously is a first-team All-American (indiscernible) and was awesome today. But Logan's our guy. And I'm going to stick with my guy. And obviously we didn't let him see a lot of good shots to get him heated up.

I thought he did an awesome job in the second half. And I wish we had given him some better ones to get into a flow. But I give him credit; he didn't quit. And I give our kids the credit, because even to the whistle we just kept playing. We knew what was going to happen.

But at Maryland you've got to play. That's what people expect from the Terps and we weren't going to back down from that. We knew obviously late we weren't coming back, but we had to play to the whistle. It's what we're about, it's who they are and that's what they need to do forever.

Q. 10-4 at halftime, but you're extra man. You had that goal late in the first half. A little bit of momentum. Could you take me through what the message was, what you were looking for?

JOHN TILLMAN: We got 10-4 and then another man up. I felt good about what we were going to potentially run and maybe what the options were. I thought Jack made a great

pass to Eric to get one. And then if we could have gotten another one right there, maybe 10-5 going into the locker room. You just never know.

And even with that last faceoff it was hard because we won the faceoff but it's 19 seconds left. And then by the time you get it you're really not getting much out. We did try to talk about getting off as quickly as possible and maybe getting a quick 6-on-5.

But you couldn't really run the man-up unit out there because you wouldn't have time to run a play. But again maybe we get one, and then again we get it to 10-5. And we didn't and they came down and scored.

And again give them credit. We were kind of hopefully finding maybe a little crack and, man, they just pounced on it. And they got another one and then just every time we seem to get an opportunity, a look, Liam would make a play.

And again every time maybe we felt like we were doing a good job defensively, they cut or they find somebody and get a good look. And again they always had an answer.

And credit to Notre Dame. They're an awesome team. That's why I like having done this for a long time, listen, I wish we had won. And we did everything we could to prepare to win, but we would have had to play incredibly clean and really, really high level to win this game just because I watch enough film and I know what they've done over the course of the year and they've been doing it to a lot of people.

Q. Talking about the seniors, Luke was unbelievable today to win 17 faceoffs out of 24. And Ajax, really, I'm not leaving out Koras and Siracusa and everybody else, but talk about Ajax and Luke Wierman?

JOHN TILLMAN: We could be in here forever if I told you everything I feel about them as people and players. It just makes the journey great when you are with kids you believe in and love. And those guys, their parents raised them right.

Neither of those guys were very highly recruited. I look at how hard they worked and just how much they put in, what great teammates they are, obviously the coaching staff has done a great job with them. Tim O'Branski has been doing our faceoff stuff. And it's been wonderful with Luke, and Luke's done a great job with that.

With Ajax, obviously means so much to us in so many different ways. Wearing the No. 1 is really hard. There's a lot of potential pressure with that, but we never thought that

would bother him, and that's a big part of wearing that number.

We know the passion he plays with and how hard he works every day. So I thought he added to the legacy of No. 1.

I'm going to miss those guys being around just because every day, seeing them, it brings a smile to their face. You enjoy being around. You really do respect those guys.

It's the thing about this group. This group was wonderful, great guys. I told them in there, I sleep on Saturday nights because I trust them and I know they're going to do the right things and we didn't have an issue all year.

Academically the guys do a great job. We're walking on the street yesterday and people are grabbing me saying, hey, I just want to let you know we walked by your kids. They all stopped. They signed autographs. They took pictures. They're really nice.

Those are things you really want to make sure you kids are doing on top of obviously getting their degree, representing the school the right way.

And obviously you always want to win. Like, listen, we keep score for a reason, but this is not professional lacrosse. You've got to make sure that, yeah, they're going to be good players but they need to be great people and be the best mentality. Bud Beardmore started it; we emphasized it. And the kids bought into it.

Were we the best lacrosse team? We weren't. But I'll tell you what -- we maxed out what we could. And I'm not going to sleep real well, but I'll sleep better knowing I know how much the staff, the kids, everybody put into it because it really wasn't much we left on the table.

And again, it doesn't take away the sting, but you also, you sleep better at night knowing we gave everything we could. We did. Notre Dame clearly was the best team. They proved it today. But they proved it all year.

Q. You made no secret of how difficult this season was in terms of just figuring things out. How much do you feel like this team has kind of flipped its legacy a bit over the last three weeks, and how much does that kind of provide a foundation in your mind for next year?

JOHN TILLMAN: You basically described my conversation with them. Each team is unique. You love the guys. Again, only one team is truly happy. And it's hard to get this far and lose, but most teams lose their last game. Either you're losing in the tournament, losing in your

conference tournament, or maybe you didn't get to your tournament. So unfortunately, unlike football, you don't get the bowl game, so you're going to lose.

So, listen, if you're going to lose a game, this is the one you want to lose because you've maxed your time with your kids. Sure, you've gotten to a certain point and you get this far and people are, it hurts so much.

Listen, we get more time together, sign me up. Sign me up, to get Maryland to final four weekend and see all those guys getting together. The guys like spending time together. Our fans, to get to championship weekend, it's a celebration, and that's not lost on me.

But I told those guys at the end of the day we can always go forward now when things aren't going well and talk about the '24 team. Yeah, we were struggling at times. We were inconsistent. We didn't play as well as we would have liked.

That's on me, obviously I'm the leader, I'm in charge. I have to figure out how to be better all year long. But again the guys stuck with it and we can always go back to the '24 team, especially when things aren't going well and say those guys stuck together, they figured it out.

There were a lot of guys that made sacrifices. Nick Redd playing short stick, and George Stamos. And they were defensive guys within the last two years. So they got a short stick and played and did a really good job for us.

And Malever is running out of the box. And Erks is running out of the box. Now they're changing positions. The fact that the guys were so adaptable and unselfish, to me that's the culture and those are the things we need to build upon.

Again, I'm not going to let 60 minutes of not playing our best lacrosse take away from what those guys have given. And these younger guys, they can take with them just the kind of the approach and the attitude and sacrifices. And we can fall back on those things to try to obviously be better next year.

Q. Back to Ajax, from a pure lacrosse perspective, he once again held one of the best offensive players in the country to zero goals today. What example has he set for defensemen at Maryland going forward, and what are you going to remember about the season he put together?

JOHN TILLMAN: Long legacy of great ones and certainly he's added to the list. And again, Ajax was kind of a long stick middy, 5'10" guy coming out of high school. And what really -- we watched him. He did a good job. But his

intangibles were much greater at that point than maybe his measurables, because you look at -- we just played Virginia, and I think if you're not 6'6", I'm not sure you're getting on the field a lot.

I say that jokingly. And Lars does a great job. They just have so much length and they all seem to be super tall. I say that as a joke. But Ajax is a guy, his intangibles -- everybody in the recruiting process said I'm telling you, this guy is a winner, he works incredibly hard. He'll do whatever you need. And he's a winner.

And not only was he able to cover, but his ability to every day set a tone for practice, much like Brett Makar did. Losing Brett was a big concern, but what Ajax and obviously some of the other guys collectively were able to do, it really helped us every day, especially in those days where maybe we've lost a couple of games in a row.

The sense of urgency, the positivity, just keeping everybody focused was huge. But not only was he great on the ball, he was great off the ball. He was great in the clearing game. He scored some big goals.

But he's an incredible human being. And as good a player he is, he's a better young man. I think he wants to coach. That seems to be where he's interested. He'll be amazing.

Coaches are typically multipliers. Your kids go out and they possibly impact people. He will be an amazing coach because he will care about those kids. He will treat them the right way. He'll be tough on them, but, man, those kids will get better and they are lucky to be around him.

Q. You mentioned 11 first half turnovers. Was that more of a case of you not being as sharp as you would like with the ball or Notre Dame bothering you --

JOHN TILLMAN: I give credit to the opponent. Obviously they had a lot to say about it. They're long. They're athletic. They get to your hands.

They slide really quickly and recover. So if you do throw it inside and they check it, that can be a problem. You go to throw, they're on your hands and they make you turn the ball over.

The windows are super tight. So maybe he's open, but by the time you throw it, they get there. So I give them a lot of credit. Obviously strange day today, just the way it started. Seemed like it was almost fitting. It was such a crazy year with the bus breaking down and kind of the ups and downs, we were kind of embracing it.

I thought the kids were fantastic during the rain delay.

They stayed focused. They were excited. They came out and did a really good job. So again, couldn't sustain it. But, again, I think you've got to give Notre Dame credit. I'm not going to take anything away from our guys in terms of how much they wanted to do.

We did our best in the last 48 hours to prepare for the best team in the country. It's not a lot of time. We did the best we could. But I think with their depth, their talent, their experience, their coaching, they just proved they were the best team, obviously.

Don't want to end up on that side of it, but again, I'm thankful for the guys to get us here. And again, we'll be back. I'm proud of our guys. I love them. And right now I'm just going to try to hug them as much as I can and thank everybody for what they did and obviously thank them for what they did for our program and Terp Nation.

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