

2025 NCAA Men's Lacrosse Championship

Saturday, May 24, 2025

Boston, Massachusetts, USA

Gillette Stadium

Syracuse Orange

Gary Gait

Sam English

Media Conference



Maryland 14, Syracuse 8

GARY GAIT: That was quite a game. Coach Tillman and his team were outstanding today. They executed like a team that's been to a dozen Final Fours in the last, what, 14 years, 15 years, something like that. Lots of experience, and the execution was outstanding.

Unfortunately, we came in, we played the first half like it was the first time we've been here in 12 years. So you know, I give my guys a ton of credit. They never quit and they didn't quit today. They played till the last minute, and I'm proud of them. I thought we made some good strides this year in what we did. You know, winning the ACC Championship was a huge accomplishment for this team. It's been a while since we've done that as well.

And then to go into the playoffs and to get ourselves into a final four just shows, I think, the character of this team, the leadership of this team. You know, I thank my entire coaching staff, Syracuse University, the support that they have given, and most of all, the players for doing whatever we ask. Committing to the team, putting the team first always. I think that was the key to us at least getting here to this Final Four.

Unfortunately, we didn't have our best game today. We dug the hole a little too big, especially against a team that controls the ball, and makes it really difficult to make a comeback on them when they take -- they shoot within the last ten seconds of almost every possession, and then if they get resets, it's another 60.

So it really puts a lot of pressure on the defense, and our guys gave it everything they had. Certainly proud of them, and they didn't quit. But we'll turn our focus to wrapping up this year and moving on to next year.

Q. I know it's tough to think about right now, but what would your message be to this team, going forward, as you reflect on your few years with these guys?

SAM ENGLISH: Yeah, it's a really special group of guys in there, and it's a special group of guys that return, and you have a handful of leaders on that team that are killers and ballers. All those guys are animals in that dressing room. They have had a chance to taste it a little bit and be here and experience championship weekend.

Yeah, I mean, they are going to be back here, and I'm excited to watch those guys play.

Q. What do you kind of think went sideways for you there when they went eight in a row, and how much did them getting out in transition, which I know you guys wanted to do, how much do you think that ultimately hurt you guys?

SAM ENGLISH: Yeah, they have been here before. Coach Gait said it. They know how that play in these games, and they know how to strangle you when you're down. It's an unbelievable Maryland team that will give Cornell a game on Monday. I just think they know how to win, and then they know how to step on your throat when they have it.

Q. You alluded to the experience factor, in that 8-0 run that they went on, you talked about what Maryland did right. What do you feel like you guys left out there during that 8-0 run that could have helped stem the tide?

SAM ENGLISH: All over the field, you could point to play that is didn't go our way that I think could have changed the tide of that game, and I think shooting the ball, I think defending, I think all of it, all of the above, we were not good enough during that 8-0 run and it cost us.

Q. Talk about playing in Gillette Stadium.

SAM ENGLISH: It's incredibly special. It's putting on that orange and going out and playing in that environment is an unbelievable feeling, and playing in the dome. There's



nothing like it. It's something I'll remember forever. It's an experience I'll remember forever.

Q. It's really tough to go up against a team like Maryland that is not scared to hold the ball for all 80 seconds on offense and get deep into the shot clock. How frustrating is that on offense when you guys don't necessarily have the possession that you're used to and how tough that on defense when you're stuck out there for the entire shot clock?

SAM ENGLISH: You saw it firsthand, it's hard. You could see us get a little frustrated. You're sitting and watching those possessions go by, and you're feeling the life drain out of the game, it's tough. I think we gave it our all and we gave it our best, and it just wasn't enough.

Q. Seemed like the first half when you made a mistake, Maryland punched it with the goal. Walk me through how Maryland was able to capitalize on some of the mistakes you guys made?

GARY GAIT: A lot of times, we had some early mistakes on the clear and the midfield. Most of the time, they are deep in the shot clock and we got a save. Jimmy had a great first half, ten saves and kept giving us chances. But we need to get the ball out quicker and more consistently in that first half and we didn't do it.

Q. You mentioned during the week that you have to make tweaks when you play a team like Maryland. Is that half the battle? Is that half the challenge with Maryland that they make you alter your game plan; that you have to adjust to them?

GARY GAIT: You have to make plays because you know they are going to take the ball and sit on it. So, you know, I think that maybe was a little too much for our guys, that pressure of, I've got to go out and make a play. Then we've got to do this early and it kind of -- kind of what they did to us, we wanted to be able to do to them, build up a bit of a lead and play with them.

When you're playing catch up, it made it difficult to come back. But these guys are resilient, and they certainly didn't give up and tried to make a couple small runs and get back in it and unfortunately came up short.

Q. What are the next steps to making to the Championship game and eventually winning it?

GARY GAIT: I think this year we made the first step, and that was getting here. You know, I can tell you going into that locker room, the guys aren't happy just getting here. You know, they wanted to have a chance to play on

Memorial Day, and they believe they can do it. You know, only one team moves on and it wasn't us.

So we will go back and try and get some more depth in certain positions and start over again for next year.

Q. With that revitalization that was talked about, seems that the fan base has been reenergized. It was a sea of orange out there today. What do you want them to take away from today and from this postseason?

GARY GAIT: You know, that we're building our way back to where we need to be. They have been -- hopefully, they have seen the progress, and you know, they are buying into that; that we are -- this staff is getting the job done. You know, stick with us for at least another year and give us a chance.

But they are the best fans in lacrosse. It's nice to have them back here, helping fill the seats. But they also put a lot of pressure on these guys because they only expect championships. So you know, it's tough to put on that orange jersey and not play on Memorial Day.

You know, we were not there this year, but we'll be back.

Q. Joey got held to zero goals today. What the went wrong in trying to activate him today and what more do you think could have been done to potentially scheme him open throughout the game?

GARY GAIT: You know, we play our offense, and some days are tougher than others. You know, that's the No. 1 defense in the country, certainly in my opinion it is.

And it wasn't just Joey -- in general, until we made a couple runs in the second half, we were having a tough time. We weren't getting the possessions to get the offense going. Some games we need to get a few possessions to really get into the flow, and then we get a rhythm and then we can score in bunches. We did not get that at all in the first half, and you know, they obviously marked up Joey.

We play a team offense, so you know, he had some opportunities, he had some looks. He just wasn't able to get it. But that goes for everybody. Certainly not just him.

Q. What is the lesson that you hope the team has learned through this experience of making it to Memorial Day weekend and this big stage?

GARY GAIT: They definitely learned what it takes to get here. You know, I thought the discipline throughout the year that they showed was awesome, and the growth of

this team. There's a lot of really good teams in Division I, and I've heard you guys, the media, say several times: This year is the year, you know, eight teams could win it, type thing.

The fact is, you know, we were here. I'm just incredibly proud of all of them for doing what it takes and the growth of experience and being confident enough to make plays when we are down. And then to finish games the way we did from the beginning of the ACCs all the way through to here, that's something we can build on and build some confidence from. Hopefully, we start to notch up and go at it again next year.

Q. What's your parting words with some of your seniors that are obviously graduating class, Sam English, Owen, what's your message to them and what they have meant to the program?

GARY GAIT: They have been incredible. When I took over, they were here. There's been some turnover. I brought in some new guys with the mission of building Syracuse Lacrosse back and get back to championship weekend. That was the goal when I took over, and obviously from there, it's to win a National Championship again.

You know, those seniors work so hard over the last three, four years. They bought into everything we asked them to do. Their leadership was tremendous. The culture of the program and this team is second-to-none on and off the field, and I'm just very proud of what they have been able to do as leaders of this team.

Q. With the assist, Joey had 90 points, the fourth Syracuse player ever to have the 90 points in a season. What does that mean to you as a player and coach?

GARY GAIT: Doesn't mean -- it's great for him. You know, coaches, players, it's all about team success. He'll say if he was here, you know, he'd trade any individual award or any individual stat for a team win to be playing on Monday.

He works really hard. No one works harder than he does. And he does a lot for this team and 90 points is awesome. But he'll be back for another year to try and play on Memorial Day.

Q. You talked about the vibe in that locker room right now is not that they got here, but at the end of the day, a month from now, these guys are thinking about this, how much of a fire did today light for them next season?

GARY GAIT: I think it will go a long way. I know losing

last year in the quarterfinals really was something that these guys came back and said, we're not going to lose that quarterfinal again. And they found a way to get the job done there.

So I know they will put their foot down and say, we are going to commit even more to this team to make sure that we get to the final and we get a chance to win a National Championship. I know that they are going to be one of the most committed teams in the entire country to get that done.

Q. With the success Maryland has had -- what is it that they do?

GARY GAIT: It starts with a great coaching staff, and Coach Tillman does an excellent job. They have been able to fill their program the last few years with players they have recruited from the portal very well and find players to fill the spots. I know we have done that a little bit.

But you have to be able to recruit the freshman and you have to be able to recruit the portal. I think over the last few years, they have done a really good job of doing that.

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