

# **2018 NCAA Men's Lacrosse Championship**

Saturday, May 26 2018

**Boston, Massachusetts**

**John Danowski**

**Danny Fowler**

**Justin Guterding**

**Duke Blue Devils**

Duke - 13, Maryland - 8

JOHN DANOWSKI: First we want to congratulate University of Maryland, Coach Tillman and his staff on a fabulous year. We have the utmost respect for Coach and the way he runs his program and who their kids are. It was an honor to compete with them today.

Very proud of our guys for jumping -- executing really well offensively early on, with standing the run that you knew that Maryland was going to make, and then again executing really well and with a lot of contributions from a lot of people. So I thought it was a real team effort, and we're delighted to be together for another two days.

**Q. What factored into your ability to have so much offensive success at the start of the game?**

JUSTIN GUTERDING: I thought we did an incredible job with our spacing today. Offensively we were -- it seemed like we were able to get pretty much whatever we wanted, but that was just executing the game plan and listening to the coaching staff. We were able to beat their short sticks and move it and have open shots. Dan Morris made a bunch of saves, but we knew if we kept shooting, they were going to fall.

**Q. Justin, what's it like to see the freshmen around you rise up? By now they're not playing like freshmen. What's that been like for you as the senior man on that group?**

JUSTIN GUTERDING: Yeah, Coach always says at this time of the year the freshmen aren't freshmen anymore, and you can really see that the way they're playing. They're playing confident, Nakeie and Joe offensively have done an incredible job. I think Nakeie had three goals in the first half, Joe finished with three, and one that doesn't really show up in the stat sheet was him riding it back in the fourth quarter. That was a huge play for us momentum-wise, and we were able to keep possession and take a little more clock off. So those guys are really coming into their role and starting to play like Duke men.

**Q. Danny, similar result from last week when you guys had a hot start, then Hopkins started to creep back up. Same thing happened this time around with Maryland and then another fast start. What did you guys tell the defense?**

DANNY FOWLER: Yeah, so when you get to this time of year, it's really just about making the next play, and when you play a team like Maryland, you're not going to hold them down for an entire game. So obviously they made their run, but I think we did a really good job, and the offense did a good job of possessing the ball. Brian Smyth, great job at the X. Guys made plays in the middle of the field. That helped us relax a little bit, and then defensively we were able to stick to our game plan and make the plays we needed to make and knew how to make and just execute. Really it was about focusing on the next play rather than thinking about what just happened.

**Q. Danny, you've been through some ups and downs through your career here, but can you talk about how you were seeing the ball today and what it's like being in this moment molding Maryland to under 10 goals for the first time all year?**

DANNY FOWLER: Yeah, it felt good. I was seeing the ball today. I try to keep things for me as simple as possible, just focusing on seeing the next shot, and yeah, so today defense played well, had made them settle for some outside shots, saw it, and I did my job.

**Q. Justin, you guys have had this habit of getting these spurts. What's kind of keyed that all season, and do you guys kind of know in the back of your minds or believe in the back of your minds that there's one of those three or four goals in five-minute stretches just around the corner pretty much any time?**

JUSTIN GUTERDING: Yeah, that starts with Brian Smyth at the face-off X and over the past couple games, it's kind of been a make-it-take-it situation. He's done an incredible job. Our wings are really scrapping. There was 50/50 groundballs all over the place at the face-offs, and it seemed like we came up with a little more than they did. But it starts with them, and even if they get the ball, we like to think that our defense going to make a stop and get it back to us. Offensively we like to play with the mindset that we can't really be stopped, and guys are starting to play like that with the utmost confidence, and it's really nice to see.

**Q. Justin, kind of piggy-backing off of that, they pulled the game within a goal or two there, the momentum was on their side. How much do you take it upon yourself to kind of steady the offense and continue and push for that second gear that you reached in the second half?**

JUSTIN GUTERDING: Yeah, there was a point where the game got a little tight, and I felt like I needed to kind of take over, and that wasn't the way we were playing in the first half. Matt Danowski came up to me and just said, remember, it's Duke versus Maryland, not you versus Maryland. Obviously he's done that to me in the past. It was just a couple-minute stretch where I turned it over or just wasn't really playing team offense. That's on me. But other than that, I thought we played for maybe 57 minutes together as a team, and the other three minutes is on me, and got to do a better job of that on Monday.

**Q. Danny, you mentioned this next-play mentality, taking it one play at a time. For you what was the one play in this game that had the biggest impact?**

DANNY FOWLER: It's a very tough to think of one play. I mean, there was just a bunch of different times. The team balances out where sometimes we'll be getting a little bit tight on defense and the offense will score a goal and that helps us settle down, or for me it'll be making the first save of the second half or just making plays like that. The game is a composition of 60 minutes so it's tough for me to pick one play. But yeah, it was really just a matter of making plays over the course of 60 minutes, and I can't really think of one in particular that really changed the game for us.

**Q. The game seemed very physical to me. Was that more physical than most games? Also I was surprised the whole way through there were no penalties called. How did it look to you?**

JUSTIN GUTERDING: We have a ton of respect for Maryland. We like to think of ourselves as a similar program, both two blue blood programs going at it. At this time of the year the ball is not going to be on the ground as much, and there's physical play, but for the most part it was very clean, and I think there was only one penalty on each team called, and I thought the officiating was great, and I think they let us play. Overall I thought it was a clean game. But Maryland and Duke have that rivalry. Other than that, it was definitely a clean and respectable game.

**Q. What does it mean to play one last game with this group of guys?**

DANNY FOWLER: Yeah, I mean, when you set out at the beginning of the year, the goal -- Justin has been a big proponent of it. We never really shy away from setting our goal to win a national championship. So to get another two days with this group of guys and to get a chance in both of our last year to play for that goal

that we set in really what is the epitome of greatness in college lacrosse is you really couldn't ask for more. You couldn't ask for a better group of guys to do it with and couldn't ask for a better place to do it.

**Q. Danny, you've played in a lot of stadiums as a goalie, and this is probably your first in an NFL stadium. Did you have any sight line challenges from seeing the other offense working along, any of the challenges you see compared to different stadiums?**

DANNY FOWLER: No, not really, especially because the backdrop here is all dark, yeah, that wasn't a problem at all for me. But you know, it was fine, no problems there. I didn't even really think about it today.

**Q. Coach, you've been in a lot of big wins throughout this year against Denver, a couple ACC wins, but you guys seemed squarely in control from the very beginning throughout the end of the game. What did it take to get to this point mentally and as a team?**

JOHN DANOWSKI: This has been a challenging group to work with this year. I mean, they're absolutely incredibly, incredible high-character kids. But it takes time. You know, there's this mesh of a couple of transfer graduate students, fifth-years, freshmen, returners, and so it takes a while. But I would have to tip my cap today to both Coach Caputo and Matt, who really did a terrific job all year, but especially this week, and I think it showed today in terms of the construction of what we were doing in the box, both offensively and defensively. They've done a great job. They're tough and they're mean sometimes, but it's really -- today I think you saw the end product of that.

**Q. Coach, he was big last week, Nakeie Montgomery. He seemed to give you the momentum basically to start this game. One, kind of where does this run -- he's got eight goals in three games in the NCAA tournament, and two, how much emphasis did you put on getting him going early?**

JOHN DANOWSKI: I think part of that had to do with who Maryland was going to pull early. When Nakeie got the short stick, it just seemed that was going to be an obvious way to start. But you go into a game plan offensively with an idea about what you'd like to accomplish or where you'd like to initiate from, and then it's up to guys to make plays. You know, they didn't slide the first time or they slid late, I think, if I remember, and so Nakeie hammers it and scores. The goal at the end, if he would have slid early, then we would have moved the wall. It's just kids at this time of year making plays that lacrosse players do. You kind of put them in situations, but now it's up to them. That's the beauty of our game. The game happens very quickly, and that's the fun. We call it the gray. There's the black and white and X's and O's, but the game is won in the gray.

**Q. What did Danny Fowler mean to you today?**

JOHN DANOWSKI: I said right after the game in an interview, I thought this was Danny's best game of his career. This is not easy, and Connor Kelly is a great shooter, and Bernhardt, and they've got tremendous amounts of weapons, and I thought Danny was relaxed and comfortable. Not only did he make saves that we needed but cleared the ball really effectively today. A combination of those two things -- we'd like to see him get better for Monday, to continue to work, since he's sitting right here, but the idea is that I thought this was the best game of his career.

**Q. First five goals of the game were your midfielders against Maryland's short stick middies and even some offensive middies. Was that the game plan to start off with, to expose those short stick D-middies?**

JOHN DANOWSKI: Absolutely. The two kids down low are terrific athletes, so let's not do that. Let's try to -- let's see what happens. Let's try to get them to slide and see how they rotate, and if they rotate into the ball or if they recover back inside, and we were prepared to make one, two, three passes and then dodge again, depending upon the situation. That was the plan.

And I thought our kids -- Justin said it before, I thought our spacing was terrific, but we also were unselfish. Not only did Nakeie score early but he got a second assist where he started by throwing it to Brad who maybe threw it to Joe up the hash, and so that was a big part of today.

**Q. One of the things Justin mentioned was how he would get into those situations of him versus a team as opposed to Duke versus a team. Did the fact that he got over that pretty quick, is that a reflection do you feel of how far he's come maturity-wise over the course of his career and even over the course of the season?**

JOHN DANOWSKI: I think the fact that Justin shared that with you, among all these strangers in this room, is an example of that. He's very comfortable. He's becoming very comfortable in who he is. Justin wants to win. You know, it's -- the great ones, the thoroughbreds that we've been really allowed to coach here, they all have that in them. They have this drive, this belief that they can get it done, and every once in a while, they just need to be refocused a little bit. But at the end of the day, they want to win.

**Q. Just how beneficial is the depth that you have, especially in a game of this magnitude?**

JOHN DANOWSKI: Well, that's something that was really important to us all year, both at offensive midfield and short stick D-middie and rope, that we were able to run six -- four D-middies. Actually we ran a fifth today, and two poles. Ran six offensive players, even Mitch Russell played at the end, and that is really

important to what we do. One, it makes for a really happy locker room, but two, they're really capable, and they all feel part of -- that they make a difference on the team. You know, today Kevin Quigley and Reilly Walsh and Sean Cerrone and there's a lot of guys who made plays. It wasn't just Nakeie or just Justin or just Brad Smith. We got a contribution when Lowrie scored early, which was huge. Because a kid from Foxboro is either going to play really poorly or he's going to play great. But we said to him beforehand, just don't hide. Just don't try not to make a mistake. Go out and play. I think when he scored, that gave the team a huge lift because of who he is and what he means to the team.

**Q. When Coach Tillman was in here, he talked about how his senior class last year were alpha males, never afraid of the moment. How has this senior class set the tone for the program?**

JOHN DANOWSKI: This senior class for me will go down as one of the most incredible that I've ever been around because they are not all contributors game day. But I've never seen a group of kids be as selfless as they've been and watched them grow up and how hard they work mid-week. We practice Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. David Gill, Matt Giampetroni, Jake Seau, these kids, Tommy Palisi, who works with our face-off guys. These kids worked their tails off daily and don't get the rewards that the other kids get. Freshmen come in, transfers come in, it's not easy. It's hard for young men to face that and still want to be part of what we're doing.

But I've never been so impressed with a group of young men who have handled this and led collectively. They've been -- it's been a joy, and it's really opened my eyes, in my experience.