



NCAA DIVISION I WOMEN'S TENNIS SEMIFINALS -- (5) PEPPERDINE DEF. (1) NORTH CAROLINA, 4-3

Pepperdine Head Coach Per Nilsson

On what it means to upset North Carolina and advance to the national championship...

"North Carolina has been so successful the last couple of years and we ran into them at the team indoor finals, I think two or three years ago, we ran into them this year indoors and they've gotten the best of us. They've had a really good run for a year and a half, two years now. So, I mean, it means a lot coming from Pepperdine, a lot of tradition on the men's side. And we've tried to get it going the last couple of years on the women's side. And so it really means a lot just to be up there with those guys."

On if his team was confident they were up to the challenge of North Carolina...

"Yes, for sure. On paper, we have a really good team. I think in the beginning of the year, a lot of people were talking about us. And just like everyone else, people have had injuries and COVID. But we've come together here at the end, we always say that we're going to try to peak in May and it's been getting better and better and we still haven't played our best. But each day this week, in practice and in matches, I think it's gotten better. So we feel good. We just got to take care of business and play free and we feel like we can beat anyone."

On the point during the match at which he knew they had a good chance to win...

When I saw that Lisa [Zaar] at No. 5 singles was digging in against Makenna [Jones], I started feeling like, 'OK, wait a minute, we can do this,' because that's a big point for them. And Makenna played Lisa in February and beat us pretty well. So when I saw that, I felt, 'OK, we can do this,' especially being up 1-0 after doubles. And with these guys in the middle of our lineup, we know we have a shot."

Pepperdine Freshman Taisiya Pachkaleva

On what she was thinking during the match...

"Thank you so it was really hard to play today, but I have a team and we are more than a team, we are friends. And it helped me so much because I know that they have my back and I just played for them and I tried my best."

North Carolina Head Coach Brian Kalbas

On the match and the team's incredible run coming to an end...

"It's been tremendous just to be with these guys for the last two years, this group. Last year we didn't get to finish what we started, but credit to Pepperdine they played an amazing match today. I'm really proud of our team. We fought really hard. Doubles point was key and some points here and there and when you don't win the doubles point, you have very little margin for error and they took advantage. They won some close first sets and we did a great job coming back, putting some points in the board. Sara [Daavettila] and Lex [Alexa Graham] at the top two spots and then Fiona at No. 6 gave us a fighting chance. And we fought; Cam [Cameron Morra] fought to the end, Makenna [Jones] fought to the end, and Scotty came back in the second. But Pepperdine really played well. They were confident. They didn't show any nerves and they deserve to win."

On the importance of the doubles point...

"Against our singles lineup, I think it's tough to win four singles matches the way we're lined up. I talked to Katrina Adams before the match and she asked me if the doubles point was essential for us and I said it's not essential because, you know, we can still win. And we have won four singles matches against really good teams. Texas, for example. But it makes it easier. And when you don't do that, at this point, you don't have any margin for error. And, you know, we just didn't quite find that fourth point, which we have in the past. So I think it was essential for them to get that doubles point because I think they knew that it was going to be hard for them to get for singles matches against us."

On his group of seniors...

It's been incredible. What they've done over the last four-plus years, three national indoor titles, four straight ACC titles, four ACC regular season titles. That's unprecedented. And the girl to my right [Sara Daavettila] won three Most Valuable Player national indoor awards. No one's won more than one. Now that's a record. Records are meant to be broken. That one's not going to be broken. I can tell you right now that's not going to be broken. No one's going to; no team is going to win three and no player, individual player, is going to win three. So I'm just really proud of that trio of players and they get to keep playing in the individual tournament. So I'm really pleased that this isn't their last match here."

North Carolina Senior Sara Daavettila

On being part of the run this team has been on over the last couple of years...

"I'm just I'm so proud to be a part of it. Honestly, it's been one of the biggest blessings of my life to be to represent Carolina and Carolina tennis and to represent coach and just to be a part of this team and our culture. And I wouldn't trade it for the world. I mean, we had an amazing season and the fact that I could come back for fifth year and even be here, I'm so grateful and nothing could take away from that. And I mean, this matchup today, obviously very tough, heartbreaking for our team. But I'm just I'm so proud of what we've accomplished and what we've done in my time here at Carolina."

On whether he was aware of the match points Johannus Monday saved on Court 2...

"I knew that there was a match point because of the chanting, the countdown of the chanting. So I knew there was a match point. Trying to stay focused on my court was difficult, but I was doing that as best as I

could, and my opponent was doing the same and we were just locked in. It really came down to a few points here or there, and it could have been us sitting in the winner's chair. So it is what it is.”