



**2016 NCAA Men's College Cup
No. 2 Wake Forest vs. No. 5 Stanford**

Dec. 11, 2016 – BBVA Compass Stadium

Stanford Head Coach Jeremy Gunn

Opening remarks:

“Speechless. It’s a cracking final, I think Wake [Forest] played very, very well. It’s just tough to get going for both teams, obviously. We get to this stage and we can’t ever promise to play perfectly, we don’t expect to, but our boys they promised to work hard, they promised to compete and they promised to keep fighting, and I think they really did that today. We just always know in every game we got a chance if we work hard. Not too much more to say guys, I am pretty tired.”

On the grind-it-out style of play:

“It’s tough for these players, they played 36 hours ago. It was a whirlwind getting to here and so, Drew (Skundrich MF), who was sitting next to me, I think he covered 18,000 [steps] the other night, and so to turn around and do what they did today was incredible, how hard they worked. If you saw the MLS Cup last night, if you went up to any of those pros and told them ‘Ok, you’re lacing it back up in 36 hours at 1 o’clock the next day,’ they probably wouldn’t be too chuffed about it. It was hard to get going, the pitch conditions were pretty tough as well, but you know we have resilience, and I think it’s something we figure out, we have choices on how we want to approach things, and these are challenges but we get excited about the challenges and accept them. I don’t think we flowed as well as we maybe can do, I think we played better soccer the other night, but it’s common sense that you’re not going to play your best game in these situations. You’ve got to roll your sleeves up and today we just kept getting those tackles when we needed to, they had some good chances to win it, we had some good chances to win it – and then when it comes to the penalties, I’m English and I’ve spent years of my life crying over penalties and so, when I became a coach I figured we’d practice them and try to do our best. You still can’t guarantee anything, but we’re going to leave the field knowing that we prepared as well as we can do.”

On the playing conditions:

“I thought the weather was lovely, it was wonderful out there, it’s just that the pitch was a little bit bumpy in places, that’s it, but it wasn’t awful. It just makes it a little more difficult, we’re used to a little bit tighter grass and the ball zipping around a little bit more, but it’s part of it, it’s the same for both teams and same for both teams turning around to play again. I thought Wake (Forest) got to connect a few more passes than we did today whereas the other night I thought we had a lot more possession for sure.”

On the penalty shootouts in this and last year's tournaments:

"It's a closed environment skill, just like a free throw, or just like golf putting, something like that and so, we work hard on playing and trying to score goals, it's much easier on the heart and the grey hairs if you just take care of business. It is something that is part of the game, and while it's still how the game's decided we're going to practice it. We do work on our skills, we have routines for our players – it seems to be working. I think it's like with any sort of technique, or any type of thing you do, we can all have opinions on how to go about doing it, but we figure out a way of doing it and we work at it that way and we believe in it. Whatever you're going to choose, make sure you work at it so that you believe in the way that you do it, and I think that really gets into the guys. Certainly it wasn't an advantage having penalties in the semifinal because they got to see all of our players and they got to study them so, it is tough. It is difficult. It's a cruel way of deciding a game but our boys, you know we missed the target once out of sixteen so not too shabby."

On waiting for the outcome of the replay stoppage:

"I had 11 players who were absolutely positive it had gone in. I don't know, I don't think the angle they had for the refs was very good, they couldn't see the ball so, I've no idea whether it'd gone in or not. It's certainly something that if it's fair for both teams, and if it can help referees do already a really, really difficult job then I'm in favor of it. It actually gave the guys a little bit of a breather on a day like that when they're working hard, I thought it was ok. It certainly was weird, you get to talk to the players quickly, but you don't know what situation you're in so you've just got to get ready to go again. It makes sense to be able to use that when you can do, but they couldn't see the ball they said so they couldn't make a decision."

On his ideal NCAA approach to the playing surface:

"I don't want to focus on that. You go all over the world, sometimes you got a surface you like sometimes a surface you don't, it's just part of what we deal with in this [game]. We can't legislate for that, right now I'm not really worried about the surface. There's no excuses either way, we played in a great game against a great team. Obviously, we're happy and excited right now, it went our way, but the boys have got humility, they know it goes either way, and we won't always be in this position, that's for sure. They'll get to celebrate that, and I'm not really worried about any of those things right now."

On repeating as national champions:

"We're pretty proud right now, you know, the only thing constant with being a college coach is the change. You get to meet incredible student athletes, you fall in love with them, spend every day with them, and then they move on into bigger and better things, and so it's an exciting journey every year a college coach starts the year with a team, and we've been fortunate to be standing at the end of the season a couple times. We'll celebrate, we're excited, we're proud, and then we'll go back and do what we do which is going out and loving being together and loving the challenge of training. Whether you win or lose the last game, all you can ever hope for is to work hard to just improve a little bit. That's the way we've always looked at it, whether we've had success or whether we've failed it's just focusing on working hard and focusing on improving, then we'll have a happy life."

Junior goalkeeper Andrew Epstein***On winning his third College Cup game on pk's:***

“I haven’t even started thinking about it yet. It’s where you want to be and with the people you want to be. I am just happy right now. When you step out onto a soccer field you are hoping to put yourself in a position to be playing today and when you step out today – you are hoping to be on the winning side at the end, and we have done that and there is nothing more you can ask for.”

On the emotions a penalty shootout brings:

“Like I said the other night, in a shootout I just try to think about the next play, the next shot. So, when Thomas (Hillard-Arce) missed his [penalty], I was like – alright I have two chances to make it up, and I didn’t make up the first one. But Corey (Baird) talked right after he made his and going to the last and fifth shot I was feeling pretty good, saw his run-up and got pretty excited because I thought I could read it. Once I made that save I was feeling really confident, like I was back in it. Obviously, I got a bunch of them put pass me the other night, so when you finally get your hands on one it gives you a certain confidence.”

On how he stopped the penalty kicks:

“The fifth, he was just a little tighter so it was just hard to hit it across his body, so I felt good going to my left. Then, the sixth, I don’t know if I read it, if I saw it, if I felt, I don’t know. It felt good to go that way, so I did.”

On his reaction after seeing his teammates celebrate:

“I think the first thing that went through my head actually was, ‘No, no it’s not over yet. Stop running they are going to call it back for some reason.’ Then, when they were 20 yards into the run I was feeling pretty confident that it was for real. At that point, you are just so happy. Your favorite friends walking up the field towards you, I don’t know it is a pretty special sight and [I am] lucky to have seen that, now two years in row with my teammates flying at me.”

Senior defender Brian Nana-Sinkam

On Andrew Epstein as a leader in the penalty shootout:

“From our perspective from half-field we seen Andrew (Epstein) make saves like those. We practice pks most every day as we move onto the preseason and Andrew gets a lot of reps. Honestly, he prepares us for these moments taking them on these big finals and semifinals because it is so hard to get the ball passed him. As we are standing there with our arms locked, we are just saying, ‘He is going to save this, we believe in him.’ We’ve seen him save pks like this before and he did exactly that.”

On working with Thomas Hillard-Arce:

“First of all, we are so good at the back, full-backs and Andy (Epstein) included, because our midfield and our forwards are working their butt off every single play. It’s that never stop mentality. So, those guys never stop running so it makes our job very, very easy. Speaking specifically about Thomas, I trust him completely, 100 percent. He is amazing in the air, he’s gotten way quicker over the years. He came in as a center mid and then converted to center back, ever since then it’s been like playing next to a brother. He’s an amazing player, I am lucky to be next to him. I wish him all the best next year, I am sure he is going to have a good senior year as he did junior year, which is hard to believe.”

Junior midfielder Drew Skundrich

On the team's unity after Thomas Hillard-Arce missed his penalty kick:

"I'd like to add just a little something too, I am sure some of you know that I miss my penalty kick in the semifinal against Akron [in 2015]. When I came back every single guy that was standing there in line to take a pk was encouraging me, saying that they have my back, that we are brothers, that we deserved this and they went out there and they had my back; we ended up winning that game advancing to win the national championship. When Thomas (Hillard-Arce) missed his, we just had that same feeling we had his back, Andrew had his back, every single guy out there was ready to take a pk, to do their best and just put it up on frame and get that W."

On winning back-to-back National Championships:

"For me, it is very, very special. I think, we look at the squad we had last year and said, 'Wow, we had some incredible individual players, some incredible talent all over the field.' Going into winter something just felt like a little missing, we just had to take that time to encourage and develop every single one of our players into something special like those guys were last year. Over time we did that, we did very well in spring, everyone trained hard over summer and we got after it right away during preseason and dropping those first few games it just made us realize that this is a new year, new team, new challenges and we need to take everything we can to get back to this stage and that's what we did."