

John Boccacino: Hello and welcome back to the Conversations podcast. I'm John Boccacino, Senior Internal Communications Specialist at Syracuse University.

Ian McIntyre: We really started thinking about maybe doing something not just magical, but legendary when we drove back from Clemson and as ACC champions. It's been a lot of fun to watch video and have videos shared with us of how much enjoyment, drama, and the emotions that went with securing a national championship via a penalty shootout. But yes, it's been a whirlwind last week, but very humbling to see just how everyone has embraced this terrific group of young men. And it was very special to bring a national championship back to Syracuse.

John Boccacino: Our guest today on the Cuse Conversations podcast is Ian McIntyre, the head coach of the Syracuse University men's soccer team, which as you know claimed the school's first national championship. A thriller over Indiana University in penalty kicks to win the college cup and claim the program's first national title. Ian McIntyre has been the coach at Syracuse since 2010 and he and his team of student athletes just capped the best season in school history. The Syracuse program also won the ACC post-season title and the regular season division championship. McIntyre's Orange saved the best for last, knocking off those Hoosiers seven to six in penalty kicks. Senior Captain Anphrony Sinclair buried his shot past a sprawling Hoosier's goalie. Ian, it was a game where all of us in Orange Nation, we were on the edge of our seats to see if we could pull off this championship. I'm sure you were just as nervous as we were. Right?

Ian McIntyre: Yeah. It's been a lot of fun to watch video and have videos shared with us of how much enjoyment and yeah, you're right, the drama and the emotions that went with securing a national championship via a penalty shootout. But yes, it's been a whirlwind last week, but very humbling to see just how everyone has embraced this terrific group of young men. And it was very special to bring a national championship back to Syracuse.

John Boccacino: I know you told the ESPN commentators at the time that it hadn't quite sunk in yet and that was pretty raw and right in the moment, more than a week later, has it sunk in that your team won the championship?

Ian McIntyre: It's been a lot of fun. So yes and no. Look, you see, you have conversations, you'll talk to your equipment manager and he'd say things like, "Where are we going to put that national championship star on our jerseys next year?" And you're like, oh yeah, we need to do that. Or updating our banners at the stadium. So, as I said, it's starting to hit and I think just enjoying being with our staff and our players before they left campus, that was a big moment and for us all to just try to figuratively drink all this in.

John Boccacino: Yeah, I was going to ask you about the community response. It was all over social media when your team pulled back into Manley on the buses, you have a

throng of Orange Faithful that are cheering you on. Can you describe what that experience was like?

Ian McIntyre: Very special, surreal. It's 2:30 in the morning. It's snowing, it's nine degrees out and you see Jesse Edwards and the guys just wanting to be part of that moment with our boys. And so when they walked off the bus, local hero, [Giorgio Kachesky 00:03:55] with a trophy. It was just very, very special to be with our guys, our family and then just see our crazy Syracuse fan base there.

I'm not smart enough to come up with better words than special because that's how we all feel. And to be able to share this with a fan group and a fan base that have been there with us every single step of the way. Braving the elements out at the soccer stadium. It's been frigid conditions during our playoff run and they've been there and not just in attendance, but they've been a big part of being, they're participating in the soccer match. Vocal, getting behind the team and big reason why we've gone on this run. And then to see a group down in Cary, North Carolina was a big advantage for our guys.

John Boccacino: Now I want to go back to that national championship game. In the moment you go to penalty kicks, what's going through your mind? Those are such a nerve-racking moment to begin with. What is a veteran coach like yourself thinking about when it goes to PKs?

Ian McIntyre: There's not a lot a coach can do other than hopefully provide a little bit of calmness. And so it's when you get the group together, it's trusting the group and you pick your shooters, you have a conversation with your team about who's physically, mentally, emotionally ready to take a penalty. And then you trust your guys, you put them out there, you tell them that you love them, you wish them all the best, the guys huddle up and then you trust the guys to step up. And certainly in the biggest of moments on the biggest stage, our guys stepped up and just showed that courage to want to perform. The moment certainly wasn't too big for them.

John Boccacino: Your boys obviously had some experience with penalty kicks, you beat Virginia to advance in the ACC tournament on PKs as well. What exactly does it take that mindset to step up and know that this is UV the keeper and we will see what happens.

Ian McIntyre: We went through it with Virginia. We've also shown a real toughness, a resilience to bounce back in difficult moments during the game. So that UVA game we're down late when Lorenzo Boselli scores to tie it up, it then goes to overtime and penalties and our guys in that moment were fantastic. So we had confidence with our shooters that you beat a perennial champion in Virginia. You have, well I'd call it a pitch invasion, but your storming of the field afterwards was a very special moment for our program. We had a couple of different shooters this time, but these were big personalities and captains Noah Singelmann, Anthony Sinclair, we'd had Levonte Johnson all first team, all

American. So big characters stepped up and then obviously what Shealy did at the other end, you need your goalkeeper to make a save or two. And then I believed and knew that we had the right technique and the right character and the right courage from players to be able to embrace that moment.

John Boccacino: And with your lineup playing out the way it did, getting the senior captain Anthony Sinclair to step up after Russell Shealy makes a big save, it was Indiana's eighth kick that he turns away that sets the stage for the senior to step up and bury the shot. What do you remember of Sinclair's game-winning goal and the celebration that followed?

Ian McIntyre: The guys have said afterwards and immediately in the locker room, it was as if it was written. In sport, you have these really special moment or an opportunity and Shealy steps up and makes that save. And then it was written for our captain that wasn't part of the 10 shooters that was going to take a penalty against Virginia. He'll be the one to tell you that he's not one of our traditional normal penalty takers, but he wanted it. When we huddled up beforehand, I asked the guys, who wants a penalty? And both him and Noah Singelmann, Levonte Johnson all stepped up and said, hey coach, I got this. And at times it's very important, I believe that you trust your group and there was a rollercoaster of emotions to get to Anthony's penalty. Julius Rauch, another guy who didn't play a ton to take a penalty to have to retake that penalty because the whistle wasn't blown.

That is so difficult. It's Levonte Johnson who stepped up and had missed the penalty during the regular season, stepped up and when he hits the bar and it comes down Indiana or on the pitch, they thought they'd won it, they thought it was out. But it clearly crossed the line and hit the back of the net. So this penalty shoot at this game, this tournament run had everything. But you're right, for Anthony Sinclair, the heartbeat of our program, the emotional leader to step up and score that winning goal. When it hit the back of the net, you saw the guys running on the field. Our fans behind us would share video with our coaching staff and you saw our staff coach Masalin and Lolla embrace each other like they were six-year-old kids. It was just pure emotion, pure joy when that ball hit the back of the net.

John Boccacino: It was such a cool Monday night to get that feeling to watch our team bring home this national championship.

Ian McIntyre: Yeah, Monday night football. Right? It's with a little bit of a twist on it.

John Boccacino: And now we can say Ian, we're a football school. A football school.

Ian McIntyre: That's right. That's right.

John Boccacino: With the drama though of the game too, you're taking on a really good Indiana squad that found a way to come up with the equalizer with 10 minutes to go in

regulation. And when Indiana did come up with that goal to tie it, did you have any message for your team about that resiliency, about what it would take to get over the hurdle?

Ian McIntyre:

Well, we'd shown it a number of times. Even in the game when Indiana tied it up, we went straight back down the end and went to one up with [inaudible 00:11:00]. The semi-final game on Friday was a real slug fest against Creighton and it took a lot out of us. Creighton were terrific. That was two teams that left everything out on the soccer field and you could see that our legs were getting a little bit tired in that second half. We were trying to make a little bit of a change and a tactical tweak and we just couldn't get Jackson Glenn on the field quick enough.

The ball didn't go out and then they score. But I'm very proud of a lesser team. We were given every opportunity at that moment to go the other way, to fold, to not respond. And I felt that guys really dug deep and the remainder of the game and then I actually thought we got a second wind in overtime and apart from there, the chance right at the end to snatch it. I was very pleased we rode the guys physically, John, we really pushed the guys to their limit and with two games back to back with such limited rest in between, our guys were physically, emotionally, completely drained by the time we got to the penalty shootout. But found once again just that some more reserved to just something a little bit more so that we could certainly have the biggest night in the history of our program.

John Boccacino:

I know it's easy to fall into this trope, but you compare last year's team going eight, eight and two, you win 11 more matches this year than last year. That's a monumental increase in victories. When did you start to think that this team had the capability and had the talent to go on a deep run and possibly win it all?

Ian McIntyre:

And we had some good results last year. We felt that we had a good group, lost some, won nothing games, lost some games in overtime against big teams and big opponents. We started the year very well against... So to get to defeat Penn State, the reigning Big 10 champions was a big result early in the year. We started off our first two ACC games. We hosted Notre Dame who were the reigning ACC champions. Didn't just beat them but played very well in that game. I know on the scoreboard it just says won nothing. But we were very good. We then followed up by going down to play Clemson, the reigning national champions and to get a result to win at Clemson. But the fashion that we played some really good stuff showed that character and that toughness when we thought that we had a good group and would show in tough places to beat Wake Forest to go on the road to Louisville.

But we really started thinking about maybe doing something not just magical but legendary when we drove back from Clemson and as ACC champions to beat them the second time in the year. We thought that we had why not us at that stage. And so for the first time going into a national tournament when the

bracket came up, you see there's no more special college experience than being with your team. You see your name pop up in a national tournament bracket.

We then saw that we had a really tough draw to be playing against the Ivy League champions, Upenn, who came through. They ended up, they defeated the Big 10 champions in Ruckers. We knew on our side we'd have to go through a Cornell, Vermont, Clemson were on our side, Duke and then Creighton that went on a run. We knew it'd be tough, but going into that first week of practice, the national tournament, we talked about the group. You don't have to beat 47 other teams, you just have to beat the team in front of you. And that's what we were just focused on, was a good day of practice each day and then take each game as it came.

John Boccacino: It was also a nice little measure of revenge on the redemption tour to get past both Vermont and Cornell. I know you tied the cat amounts in the regular season and Cornell got us, they got the better hand of us and then in the tournament we knocked them off. Was that something that you'd noticed your players took a little satisfaction in getting to atone for a previous loss in the pro-season?

Ian McIntyre: No, look, I know sometimes, a lot of times we get caught up in revenge and taking, it's just a game and it's two teams trying to get past it. Look, Cornell were better than us during the regular season. When they played here, they got it right on the night, were terrific and they deserved to beat us. That was the last game that we would lose this season, as crazy as that sounds. But we responded from that. It was the first time that we'd lost a game against Virginia, but we were down a man for long stages and they were terrific this year. Virginia would score late in the game, but Cornell was the game where we played a little bit. We didn't play at our best, credit to them. We went behind and didn't respond. After that game, I thought we were terrific.

Anytime we face adversity, be that against UVA in the tournament. You had when teams, UPenn in the national tournament going behind to have a poise and a confidence. We grew up a lot after that Cornell match. So when we got a chance to play them again in the tournament, we knew the challenge. When you play UPenn, Cornell, Vermont, we recognized how good those teams were. We realized in our region how difficult each three of those teams probably should have been a seated team. And we knew that we were, and fully appreciated that they didn't sneak up on us. We knew each one of those, I think Vermont finished maybe the fifth best ranked team in the country. Cornell would defeat Maryland the week before playing us. UPenn obviously beat Ruckers, the big 10 champions. We knew and Vermont as we were going into those, coming out of that game early in the year was our second weekend.

That weekend was also a big part of us growing up, getting a result at Vermont, then turning, going to Yukon and beating Yukon five, nothing. We knew that we were getting better, but we also later in the year realized that Vermont, they

handily took care of UCLA, went on the road and got big results in the national tournament. That, defeating them and moving on to the final four, the college cup, I don't know if it was redemption, but it was, you knew coming out of that, that you were a team that deserved, that was worthy of being in the college cup and certainly wasn't there by accident.

John Boccacino: I want to go back a little bit to last year too. We mentioned the 11 win improvement, but that is a little misleading because of your eight losses last year, six of them were in one goal games or overtime games. You lost a tough matchup in the first round of the ACC tournament. What lessons do you think the returners took from last year's close calls that really serve them well and help them fuel this run to the title this year?

Ian McIntyre: I'm very proud of our seniors and guys that have been with us for the duration, Julio Fulcar, this was his fifth year, Noah Singelmann, Anthony Sinclair. We've gone through some challenges on and off the field the last couple years. We were close last year, but I also think that through these challenges, our guys appreciate each moment and each game and each training session and each challenge. But you're right, look, we won 19 games this year. I was told yesterday that's more than what we won in the last three years. But I also liked our group two years ago when we won two games and the challenges of competing here during COVID in the fall in the spring. Very proud of that group. I think our coaching staff did some of our best ever coaching during the challenges of keeping our guys safe and in an environment where they knew that they were appreciated.

One of the strengths of our team is the strength of our locker room. During that year, we did everything to keep our guys apart out of a locker room. There was challenges, but I do think through those difficulties, your group becomes tighter and stronger. This journey started well before August and our pre-season camp. Three wonderful captains, a leadership group, started talking about how do we improve our environment and this was early in 2022 in January, February time. And how do we create an environment to be as supportive of our new guys as possible to set the standard for our demands on and off the field. But it started before that as well. It started, as you say, last year. And as devastating as it is to lose in overtime to teams of the caliber of Pitt and Louisville, to be close against Clemson, to have those, we play one of the toughest schedules in the country year in year out.

We're not looking to pad our wins and losses. We want to get a group that is ready for these moments so that we can say this moment is not too big for us. We've seen it all before. We've seen the challenges. That's not just this year, it's those guys embracing that over the previous years. But when you get to this situation, you want to ensure that you guys are battle tested. That's another cliché we throw out, but in order to be battle tested, you've got to go through battles and you don't get to win them all. But through those challenges, does it

prepare you for these big moments? And I think I could not be more proud of our group.

John Boccacino: I want to go back in the time machine a little bit to, you're hired here at Takeover Syracuse, starting with the 2010 season. Your first two years, the program goes five, 22 and six. What was the state of the men's soccer program that you took over, and how were you able to take this program and really elevate? I know it's a team effort and there's a lot of parts you can give credit to, but what would you credit the main reason for success for taking this program where it was to where we are now?

Ian McIntyre: Jukka Masalin came in same time. I was fortunate, he's been with me 15 years now. He's been a big part of our success on and off the field, out the support of our families. Look, you are interviewing me now, I had more hair back then, but this is the happy... That was tough. You win five games in two years. I've enjoyed celebrating this last week, this success of the season with those guys, with the guys that invested in us during that time. They're the guys that laid a foundation, but it's before that time too. I've enjoyed celebrating this with our alums, soccer alums that have gone through highs and lows. Our 82 team, many of that group flew down. That was a big east champion team that flew down to be with us this year. So yes, those first couple of years were tough.

I'm very thankful for guys like Alex Bono, Skylar Thomas, Jordan Morrell, that took a chance on us when we were talking about a vision and what we were trying to do and who we were and what kind of environment we were looking to create. So it has been a process, it's been a long journey. It's been a very rewarding journey, a devastating moment, the highs and lows. But through it all, just surrounding ourselves with very special young men and their families, our fans. It's been really awesome to enjoy this last week or so with everyone who has had a role to play in us becoming national champions.

John Boccacino: In the competitive world of recruiting for men's soccer, which has taken on such an international element. And our team is littered with amazing international talented student athletes that come to Central New York. What makes this a destination where student athletes should want to come and play soccer besides that lovely national championship trophy over your shoulder?

Ian McIntyre: This one's the semi-final from 15. My [ones 00:24:36] disappeared. It's everyone wants a piece of the trophy. So it's flying around campus as we speak, but we gravitate towards young men who, obviously talented soccer players, but players similar to those early days when you're talking to Alex Bono and then eventually the Miles Robinsons, the Kamal Millers, the Tajon Buchanans. All have something to prove, that have an edge on their shoulder that take pride in representing Syracuse University. We may not be the sexiest, the shiniest college soccer program, but that's okay. We know who we are. We embrace that. And players that are looking to come to Syracuse because they believe in this environment, they believe that we can help them become better young

men on the field as well as off. They're selfless. They are individuals that put the team first.

These are guys that I gravitate towards and as I said, it may not be the Alex Bono, Miles Robinson, Tajon Buchanan were never part of a national program prior to coming here. We're not the reason why some of those guys played in the World Cup, but hopefully we can help them to continue to develop and we ask of our guys, and we demand of our guys the best from them. And then we are fully committed to supporting them. We then want what's best for them. And so one of the challenges is some of our talented young players have moved on after a couple of years. But that's awesome. And no doubt that will continue as we attract talented players. If we're getting the best from them, we're then looking for the best for them and we take tremendous pride as they go and enjoy success after Syracuse.

John Boccacino: And for someone like yourself who again was such a talented soccer student athlete yourself, you had great success at Hartwick, and you come to Syracuse here when the program again was having some tough times. Why is this the perfect place for you to coach?

Ian McIntyre: To leave your alma mater is a very difficult decision. And as my wife reminds me, it's difficult to leave [inaudible 00:27:08] to New York in central New York and go further north. Most guys go south, so we're almost in Canada, but we're edging closer. But all good players want an opportunity to play with and compete against the best players in the country. It's the same for cultures too. And when I was fortunate to be afforded the opportunity to come to Syracuse, it was the big East back then. It was difficult to upgrade from the Big East in soccer. And it's the ACC, it's the best of the best. And you want an opportunity to test yourself, to measure yourself against the best.

And that's players, that's coaching staffs. We take tremendous pride in week in, week out competing against the gauntlet, which is the ACC soccer. And then if you've got a group and a team that competes in the ACC, then you've got a chance to compete at the national level. And to be surrounded day in, day out with the caliber of people that we have here at Syracuse, that's in athletics, that's in academics. This is a very, very, I'll use the word again, but sorry, special place to come and work each and every day.

John Boccacino: The last question I've got for you, can you tell us a story since you won the championship? A crazy celebration story, something that's safe for a podcast of just how the boys, how the student athletes, how you and the coaches have celebrated to give our fans all insights into what it's like to be a national champion.

Ian McIntyre: Look I know and I hope that our young men and cultures have enjoyed this moment. It's surreal. Now the challenge, sometimes it's not quite as sexy as you think. Our guys landed 2:30 on a Tuesday morning during finals week. I'm sure



they've still had an opportunity to enjoy the moment. Look, when you're thinking that you're going to be just singing on top of your desk and things like this and running on, I've had a big smile on my face with my staff. You work harder this week than you ever worked beforehand. I'm all over the place talking and enjoying this. For me, and I apologize, this is not as sexy as you hope for. For me as the coach, I've just enjoyed spending time with the guys. If it's Russell Shealy and it's 7:30 at night in my office, sitting down just chatting with a national championship trophy between you.

If it's just a group of guys that want to be... Anytime you do something truly remarkable, truly special, you just want to spend time with each other. And this happens a couple of times in your life at different moments. If it's the birth of your child, sport has these moments, if it's getting married, these are times you just want to spend time with guys. So mine will be very PG rated, but I'll be honest with you, for me, it's enjoying my wife and daughter just being there on the pitch at the end of the game and giving my daughter that doesn't normally have too much time when it comes to soccer and dad and frigid nights, God bless her at the SU soccer stadium. But just to see her enjoying the moment with tears in her eyes and giving her dad a hug, that's special. And I'll remember that.

John Boccacino: Well, our whole campus community and the 250,000 alumni around the world will never forget where they were that magical night, Cary, North Carolina. It was a magical season. If you need us to put out an all points bulletin on the National Championship trophy with DPS, we can do that too.

Ian McIntyre: That's fine. I think there's got to be a tracker, right? Everything else now, we're going to put a tracker on this thing.

John Boccacino: If you've seen a beautiful looking NCAA championship trophy, please return it to Manley and the soccer offices. Again, he is Ian McIntyre. It's been a pleasure and a treat having you on the podcast. Thank you for what you've done to bring this program to the top of the mountain. I know you're not going to rest on your laurels and we look forward to seeing what you guys can do for an encore. The bar has been raised high, but enjoy the celebration and thank you so much for the time today, coach.

Ian McIntyre: Thank you very much. Happy holidays.

John Boccacino: Thanks for checking out the latest installment of the Cuse Conversations podcast. My name is John Boccacino, signing off for the Cuse Conversations podcast.