

Atlantic Coast Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 5, 2026

Duluth, Georgia, USA

Gas South Arena

Virginia Tech Hokies
Coach Megan Duffy

Mackenzie Nelson

Carys Baker

Postgame Press Conference

Virginia Tech 62, Georgia Tech 54

MEGAN DUFFY: Just really thrilled about our response after a really difficult start. Give Georgia Tech credit. They came out punching. I thought we maybe were a little bit nervous trying to get our feet under us for the beginning of the tournament. But after that I thought we settled in, and defensively we were a lot better.

And then it was kind of a battle of will throughout the whole game. Some very strange statistics throughout the game, but at the end of the day, it's about winning the game and surviving so we can advance.

Q. Explain to me, you fall behind 17-3, you miss 15 of your first 16 shots and then you go on a 24-2 run to take the lead. What adjustments did you make? What did you start figuring out that enabled you to turn that game around?

MEGAN DUFFY: I mean, at some point in the first quarter and multiple, whether it was the media time-out or a time-out, we just almost had to reset ourselves. Everything we worked on didn't really go according to plan. We said let's start with following the game plan, let's start with turning up our defense. We were just a step slow on everything, very similar to when we played them at home not too long ago.

Again, I don't really know the answer to the why, and maybe these guys can answer it, but I think the way we responded to get back to ourselves was important.

Q. Mackie, what about your defense in that second



quarter did you feel like was so much different from the first quarter and kind of the way you forced turnovers and allowed you to get out in transition?

MACKENZIE NELSON: Yeah, I think we came out not really communicating with each other and I think that's a huge part of it. Coach Duffy and the coaching staff talks about it a lot in practice. It can't come from the people on the sideline or the baseline or whatever it is, it has to come from the five on the court. And simply saying it, we weren't doing that, and they were getting anything they wanted and that's why they want on that run in the beginning.

We came out of that time-out and we changed it, and that's why we went on a run and we got stops, and that's what allowed us to win this game today.

Q. For either of the players, missing all those shots in the beginning, was that getting used to the court or the background? What do you make of what finally got the offense going?

CARYS BAKER: Yeah, I mean, I feel like we did have a slow start and we knew that. It could have been a little bit of nerves. We're in March right now, we're in the tournament. So that is definitely something that we took into account. But I don't think we got too low on it. We didn't really think about it. Obviously I was missing shots in the beginning of the game, but I wasn't getting frustrated by it. We obviously had a whole 'nother three quarters to play so we couldn't have just threw the game in by then. It was first quarter and so we didn't think about that.

And then going to the second quarter, we just started on defense. Like Mac said, we had to focus on defense. And then our transition game started to get going and that's what builds our confidence a lot. And once we got our transition game going, then everything was falling for us.

Q. Coach, at the beginning of the fourth quarter, there were multiple possessions where your team was creating second-chance opportunities. Is that a personality trait for your team or is that coached?



MEGAN DUFFY: I think it's just emphasized. I think it's part of our standard and our culture of just trying to make as many positive winning plays as we can to be successful. Sometimes that's an offensive rebound put-back. I thought earlier in the game they were beating us to every 50/50 ball, and I thought we made the adjustment of just the effort and being a little bit more aware.

Mackie had a couple charges, Kilah chased down a loose ball. And that's what Georgia Tech lives on. They've done a great job this year in Karen's first year of making it a little bit ugly and gritty, and I say that in a respectful way. Because that's a little bit how we play sometimes, too. So a little bit of it was just two similar teams mucking it up at some points. And you want it be a little more fluid and a little more beautiful basketball. But matchups are sometimes everything.

We were concerned coming in because they had that grit and that toughness that we like to play with. It was just emphasizing it. I think we did enough at opportune times to get those hustle plays, and it allowed us to stretch a lead at certain points and get an extra basket.

Again, you get to this point in the season when both teams know each other so well, you have to find that different kind of advantage. I thought, while it wasn't the prettiest thing I think we did, obviously, enough.

Q. To the players, when the game got down 50-48, what did you feel like you guys hunkered down to finish the game strong?

MACKENZIE NELSON: Defense. That's what it came down to at the end of the day, getting stops. Whether it was taking a charge, getting a rebound. That was fueling us, and that's what it came down to at the end of the game. Getting stops, handling their physicality, helping each other, that was huge, too. Being able to slide over and double or just be able to be there to support somebody.

Q. Mackie, quite you were impactful today, 14 points, six assists. What was your mindset today in terms of how you were able to help the team so much?

MACKENZIE NELSON: I think I'm in this role that's do whatever is needed, whether that's come out and score or whether that's come out and throw a couple dimes, get some charges, play some defense. And like care Carys, Carleigh, our main scorers, maybe weren't hitting in the beginning of the game. But we saw Leila step up, we saw Samyha come in, you saw me hit a couple shots. And I think that's our team right there.

Anyone on this team can go out and score 10, 15 points.

Carleigh and Carys are just really good basketball players. But I think that it's a big moment. It's March. Time to step up. And whether it's tomorrow, Carleigh drops another 20, Carys drops, it's just our team right there. That's the culture we build every day.

Q. Mackenzie and Carys, this game as Coach mentioned was kind of gritty, rough and tough. Now you have to play again tomorrow against North Carolina. How do you settle your minds as players to go play another tough game?

CARYS BAKER: I think what is nice about being in a tournament like this is we've seen these teams before. We just played Georgia Tech seven days ago, a week ago, a couple weeks ago. We've seen them before, we've seen UNC. We have that going into the game tomorrow. Obviously we're going to get some sleep tonight which is going to help. But tomorrow we're going to have that little chip on our shoulder.

We've played UNC at home, and obviously it wasn't the outcome that we wanted, and so we get another opportunity, we get another shot. We talk about that in the season, like we might see them in the tournament. That's something we put in our minds. And so I think just having that. We're going to guest our rest, our recovery. That's huge. But having that extra motivation is going to help us, too.

Q. Megan, the overtime game against Carolina, what do you recall about that? Anything you want to do better or differently in the rematch to have a different outcome?

MEGAN DUFFY: I mean, we'll stay up tonight talking about game plan. I think it was an amazing game. The crowd at Cassell was totally into it. Played some really good basketball. Had a couple breakdowns on both sides of the ball.

I remember them vividly in my head. I don't need to probably explain all of them.

But it's different. You're going into a tournament, we've got a quick turnaround. And you kind of apply it to Georgia Tech. Georgia Tech didn't care if they played the day before. They came in with a mindset about themselves, and we're going to have to do the same tomorrow against UNC, a great team. They've been shooting the ball well, they've balanced, they're deep. There's a reason they're playing for a host opportunity.

For us, I think Mackie put it perfectly, a chip on our shoulder, we got nothing to lose. Excited for the rematch



and most importantly let's get some rest and be excited about another opportunity to play another day.

Q. Megan, Mackie had six assists, no turnovers today. I believe she led the league in assist-to-turnover ratio this year. What do you see from her to explain how she's so good in that area?

MEGAN DUFFY: First and foremost, Mackie was tremendous. We needed every ounce of what she gave to us. The charges, the assist-to-turnover ratio, they controlled our pace even when we were struggling to score. She made phenomenal decisions. She starts banging some jumpers and Carleigh is smiling at me, and I just thought the perfect balance of everything she has in her game.

Mackie is one of our most selfless leaders in this program, and she continues to rise when she sees fit. And I thought it was a perfect game tonight for her when a couple people struggled to score. Between her and Leila, stepping up in the moment, it's great.

Mackie, I always say this about her, her passing ability, she can do it in a lot of different ways. It's transition, it's knowing our sets, it's getting somebody with the hot hand. Her versatility to do it is really great, and it's incredibly valuable for our team.

Q. Coach just mentioned Leila. Carys, she plays 14 minutes and had a career high six rebounds and hit two threes. What kind of spark does she add when some of you guys maybe are not hitting your shots, she can come in and kind of lift you guys?

CARYS BAKER: Yeah, Leila has been that steady presence for us all season. She just does what she needs to do. She just comes into practice every day and just does everything we need her to do. Kind of like Mackie. They're both that steadiness that we need on the court. Leila's voice is huge for us. I think that's the biggest thing. She's had a voice all season. No matter what's going on in her head, she's always that one that's going to have that presence on defense for us.

And I think tonight was a huge night for her. It finally clicked. Obviously you can get frustrated with your shots, and I wasn't hitting, but Leila came in and just picked it up for us, and that was huge just to see her finally grow off of that. She's only a sophomore doing that. We forget about that. This is her second year playing. So just to see her have that steady presence as a sophomore is huge for us.

Q. Coach, I'm sure you saw the sea of maroon and orange behind you tonight. Could you speak to what

that means to have that kind of support on the road?

MEGAN DUFFY: Our Hokie fans are the best in the country. We're so grateful just the way they show up no matter what town or city it is. They're loud, and whether they're heckling or cheering for us, they've been great all year long, and we're continuing to even build it better. I think that's the biggest thing.

Those standards of people that keep coming, we know them all by name I feel like now. But just to see a nice little crowd for us here in Duluth was good. And especially when you play the hometown team, right, in Georgia Tech. To have your band, your cheerleaders, dance squad, and our fans behind us is important.

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