

# Atlantic Coast Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 5, 2026

Duluth, Georgia, USA

Gas South Arena

## Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets

## Karen Blair

## Talayah Walker

### Postgame Press Conference



Virginia Tech 62, Georgia Tech 54.

KAREN BLAIR: First of all, I just want to say congratulations to Virginia Tech. You just talk about what a gritty, hardworking team they are. Today was a really physical game that demanded a lot, I think, out of both sides. So congrats to them.

As far as our team and our fans, this was really special, you guys, to be here in Georgia, to have so many of our fans turn out, our band, our cheer. It was excellent. If there's one thing you've known about this group is they have been phenomenal at home, and this felt like a home away from home.

What a great experience. This tournament has been run wonderfully, the facility is great. But I think it came down to it, we all know this was -- every quarter it just kind of switched, the momentum. We started the first, they were good in the second, and then we came out with unbelievable fight and resolve in that third. And then that fourth quarter, I think, playing back-to-back games with seven players, we just couldn't get those rebounds when we really needed it.

When you give a team a chance to shoot three times. And what can I say about Mackenzie Nelson, almost had a freaking double-double tonight, but that's what happens in March. You've got to have -- players have got to step up for your team, and I thought she did that for them.

But I'm proud of our group. I'm proud of the fight. They have established this culture as a hardworking, gritty, resilient team, and for them and for that, I am always eternally grateful.

**Q. Take me through that fourth quarter when it got down 50-48. What do you think was the difference at that point?**

KAREN BLAIR: Yeah, I think that came down to the rebounds. We were giving up like three offensive rebounds on every possession, and some of those were the long rebounds. So I think that ended up being the part of the game, and then I think Wenzel ended up hitting a really big three, and it was just a dagger at that point.

Basketball is a game of momentum. That's what you're always trying to do. I thought we just used a lot of energy to get it that close, and then she hits that three and it kind of takes the wind out of your sails a little bit. But yeah, it came down to rebounding.

**Q. What was going on in the first quarter that let you get the big lead off the bat?**

KAREN BLAIR: I think part of it is Erica Moon just came out and was super aggressive. I think she set the tone on the first play. It was a play that we had a couple different options, and Erica just took that sucker to the hoop, and I was like, great, all right, Erica came to play again today.

So I think that was it. When we hit buckets early, this is kind of how this group has been. Their confidence starts to flow on the offensive end, and I think you kind of see that trickle-down effect. We got a lot of shots in that second quarter, and I'm not mad at the shots that we had. We just weren't able to finish them to a high clip.

**Q. Coach, Coach Duffy described your program as gritty, the way you play. How much is that a trademark of what you want this program to be?**

KAREN BLAIR: It's everything. The first thing I want for these women is it starts with I want them to have self-belief in themselves, and the second thing is my job is to give them confidence. I want them every single time they step on the court to believe in themselves and be confident.

It's like, even when we came out at halftime, I was like,



heads are held high, chest up. We've got to be proud of who we are and what we've done, and that's all this group has done.

That's what you want. That's what I say. We have been in almost every single game, and you guys look at our schedule. Our schedule was tough. Our non-conference schedule was tough, and there's a lot of teams that would quit, and we didn't. We trusted the process; they put their head down, and we went to work.

We figured out our roles and we got it all figured out. I was just telling Talayah on the way down here, I'm like, this is like 27 years I've been coaching. I don't know if I've ever seen a player that's transformed so much in one season. We had that Notre Dame game on January 1st, and she just looked at me and said, give me the ball, and I said, say less. You just saw her become the player, the go-to player. But you can't make that. She had to do that herself, and she did, and she carried us all the way through this ACC play.

**Q. Talayah, we saw the taking over the game toward the end of the game. What was your mindset to try to bring this team back? You took more shots towards the third and fourth quarter.**

TALAYAH WALKER: Yeah, in the beginning of the game I knew that I needed to be more aggressive. I wasn't getting enough touches, and I know as I go, my team goes. So I knew I had to get downhill and try to be more aggressive and hopefully everybody else would just come along and fill that space.

**Q. Talayah, Coach kind of mentioned how you've evolved over the season. How has she impacted your evolution, and what have you learned from her as you've grown?**

TALAYAH WALKER: She's impacted me a lot. Again, just giving me a lot of confidence. When I came in, I wasn't this confident, but under her wing I was able to be more confident, and just learning the game from her and our amazing coaching staff who has a lot of experience. So just able to absorb all their knowledge and apply it on the court has made me really successful, so I just am really appreciative of them and my teammates. They're very supportive, and they know what we have to do to win, whether it's getting me the ball or getting other people the ball or just attacking, like we said. So I think I just had a great group around me that made me very successful this season.

**Q. What are some positive things you'll take from your first season at Georgia Tech?**

KAREN BLAIR: I mean, there's a lot. The first thing is we've got a lot of underclassmen on this roster, so it's like, getting these experiences, getting through this postseason in March. And this is what we said; this is March basketball. March is different. The physicality gets ramped up to a different level. Every mistake usually somebody makes you pay. That's what I'm appreciative of.

Honestly, me as a first-time head coach, I'm getting through the league for the first time. So you're learning how to scout other teams, what are other coaches' tendencies, what are their systems. I was familiar with a few programs but not everybody in the ACC. I know in this off-season we'll be able to put a good team together, but I think that's just learning the league. It's been a fun experience for sure.

**Q. Talayah, first year at Georgia Tech, what's this been like being with Coach Blair the first year and how much confidence do you have about building this program the next few years and being a part of it?**

TALAYAH WALKER: Yeah. It's been a great experience. We've known each other for a while. She recruited me when I was in high school. So just getting to come and play with her meant a lot. And then I know how much belief she had in this group, so I'm really excited to see how we can keep evolving and being better.

And like she said, we have a lot of underclassmen. So the experience is there, so I think as we keep going in the years further, we'll be able to know mistakes early and know what to do in certain situations, so I'm very confident with this program.

**Q. Coach, I'm not sure if there will be a postseason opportunity for you guys. Would you be interested in that if that happens or with the seven players left, you feel like you're out of gas or do you want to play so many more?**

KAREN BLAIR: Listen, I would be with this group every single day. They probably don't want to practice that much, but we got in one of those time-outs, and I'm like, just their resolve and their fight, it was a war today. It was a battle. They just grind it out. So I hope so.

Like I said, you look at our non-conference schedule, but the amount of teams that we played that are going to end up in March Madness, there's a lot. This group has earned it. They've gotten better. We've gone through this ACC, which is a gauntlet every single night, and they deserve it. They deserve that opportunity to get a postseason experience.

I hope that we can.

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