

# Atlantic Coast Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 6, 2026

Duluth, Georgia, USA

Gas South Arena

## Duke Blue Devils

## Coach Kara Lawson

## Toby Fournier

### Postgame Press Conference



Duke 60, Clemson 46

**KARA LAWSON:** Happy to be advancing. That's the name of the game in the postseason. I thought we started the game with a great deal of energy, both ends. I thought defensively in that second quarter we were really disruptive and made it challenging for them to get quality looks at the basket.

Offensively we struggled a little bit there in the second half, but our defense held steady. So to hold them to 46 points is great.

Moving forward, and we're happy to be moving forward and get to play tomorrow.

**Q. Coach, in that first half you seemed to be offensively tight on your sets and getting good looks. What did you like about the offense there, especially in the first two quarters?**

**KARA LAWSON:** Just the pace. We talk about that a lot. I think that's true of any team. When you can get out in transition and you can make plays, even when you can flow into your stuff with a little bit of pace, the defense isn't set, and there's usually a little bit more room to work with.

I thought we did a good job of finding our forwards early. Toby had 17, Delaney had 14. They did a good job of finishing plays in there for the better part of the game.

Then I thought Mair started the game offensively in attack mode, and I think she had double digit scoring in that first half.

Anytime you have her as our point guard really being

aggressive, I think it changes our offense.

**Q. Toby, teams often reflect their coaches' personalities, intense, and that's your coach. Who on the players gets you all started and so strong when you start games?**

**TOBY FOURNIER:** I think that's kind of an obvious one. It has to be T. She brings all the energy. She just has a good vibe to her and she's one of my best friends off the court as well. The way she comes in and riles our team up and give our team the energy we need for the rest of the game, it's evident the type of person she is and type of player she is. And she does that consistently every game, and that's whether she's having a good game or not.

**Q. Coach, you held Clemson without a basket for five minutes in that second quarter. How impressed were you with your defense in today's game?**

**KARA LAWSON:** I was very impressed. I tried to tell them that. I think I was telling you that in the time-outs, how hard they were playing. I think it's important in time-outs you're not just being critical of what they're doing. That first half I just remember being super complimentary when they would come in of how hard they were competing, how tight our switches were defensively, they were where they were supposed to be, we were flying up behind in the zone up behind the actions. There were so many good things happening.

I encouraged them to keep it up as long as they could, but I thought it was a really high level defense for us, some of the highest we've had in the last few weeks, to be honest with you.

**Q. Toby, obviously you just played them 12 days ago and lost. You hinted at how they came out. Was there extra motivation coming into this one?**

**TOBY FOURNIER:** I think our motivation came from we know the type of team that we are. We know how connected we can be and the energy that we can bring to the game. I think in the last matchup against Clemson, we

**ASAP** sports . . . when all is said, we're done.®

didn't bring our full potential. And I think for this game, we just felt a lot more energy coming into the game and knowing what we needed to do to be better.

I think games like that really help you and help the team because it shows things that you need to work on. And I think we consistently worked on that through practice, and that showed in the game today.

**Q. Following up on the defensive front, I don't believe you gave up free throws in the first half. Can you talk to me a little bit, was that an area of focus, playing without fouling? What allowed you to be successful in that area today?**

KARA LAWSON: It's definitely something that I think as a coach you talk about in terms of trying to create a defense that can be disruptive but doesn't bail a team out by sending them to the free-throw line.

That wasn't specific to this game. I think that's something that we always talk about. We talk about defending without fouling. Sometimes you do that in some games, sometimes you don't. I don't really get too into the free throw attempts.

I thought it was really clean for us in the first half. We did a good job. Sometimes it goes your way that way, the way they're calling it, and sometimes it doesn't. But it's still our job to string good defensive possessions together.

**Q. Coach, I noticed that Ashlon was scoreless in the first half but opened up things in the second half. What was going well for her?**

KARA LAWSON: I didn't know she was scoreless. I never look at the boxes ever. I don't even know what's happening on here. I didn't know that.

But I think more than anything, we try to help our players understand and train them that, make the right plays and know that the game will bend in your favor if you're consistently giving great effort and you're making the right plays.

That's what we need. We have so many players -- for most of the ACC year, we had six players that averaged double figures in ACC play. So it can be anyone every night. So I didn't feel that from Ash at all at halftime. That's why I said I didn't know. Sometimes if a player maybe on a different team or teams that you've been on, they're scoreless, they're moping at halftime, they're frustrated because they haven't scored. We don't have that. It's more about how can we get it open.

It's only a matter of time for Ashlon. She's going to make plays and she's going to make big-time shots for us.

**Q. For both of you, I know I've asked you this before, but Taina was the leading rebounder for the first three quarters. Is it not fun to have a guard who can back Toby up? I know you say rebounding is a big deal for you every night, but having someone 5'9" be the leading rebounder on the floor for the first three quarters.**

KARA LAWSON: Yeah, she paid you to say that. She's not 5'9."

TOBY FOURNIER: She's definitely not 5'9". We're rounding up.

KARA LAWSON: I think more so than it feels good, I think it's necessary, and it's something we talk about with our guards especially. Our forwards have a responsibility to rebound. But for us to be a good team, our guards have to rebound as well. So we talk about that. There's a responsibility if you touch the court that you have to rebound.

T all season, she averaged over five boards a game, I think, all year. She's been one of our best rebounders all season, and we need them. In games like this, it is nice that she can help that way. We need more from Nelson on the boards, we need more from Wood on the boards, we need more from Ari on the boards. Everybody has a responsibility to get rebounds.

**Q. This is a pilot run for the ACC to come here to Duluth. Your thoughts on the experience and how you've adapted to Duluth, playing here?**

KARA LAWSON: It's been a great experience so far. Now, we're not even here 24 hours. We just got down here yesterday. But it's been a great experience. Everybody has been really welcoming. The arena is very nice.

That was the best state trooper we had, that dude in the -- he was driving like the Dukes of Hazzard -- you don't know what the Dukes of Hazzard is. The state troopers were awesome on the escort. They were flying. They were connected. There was great -- they were reading off one another in how they were stopping everybody. That was the best we've had. Shout-out Georgia State troopers.

TOBY FOURNIER: Oh, my God.

KARA LAWSON: They were good. I had a front row seat. That was impressive. The one, I was like, man, let me ride shotgun to the game tomorrow, hopefully. That would be

great.

**Q. Toby, this is for you. After coming here and winning the tournament last year, what did you learn about the keys to success in kind of a back-to-back-to-back format and the mindset you need to have to be successful in the ACC Tournament like this?**

TOBY FOURNIER: I think the key for us is just staying connected. I know I repeat this all the time, but working as a team, you can't do it by yourself. It's not one v. five. You can't just have one player scoring all the points or making all the defensive stops.

The way that we were super connected today, I think that helped the win last year and then also it carried on the connections that we had from last year into this year, as well.

I think connection and then also just confidence. We know how to play. We know who we are as players, and I think it's really important to just stay who you are no matter who you're facing and no matter what tournament you're in.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports.

