

# Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 12, 2025

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Spectrum Center

## Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets Damon Stoudamire Naithan George Duncan Powell

Postgame Press Conference

Georgia Tech 66, Virginia 60

**DAMON STOUDAMIRE:** You know, great second half by our guys. I thought we did a really good job in the first half defensively. But we didn't do a great job offensively. I thought in the second half, we spaced the floor, and we started to find some different things that we could get at on the offensive end, and I think that Nait started it. He was getting downhill, and then I think he helped everybody else.

Playing in space is just so different than what we did in the first half, and sometimes you have to open the floor up, and to be honest with you, we quit calling a lot of plays, and we just played in space, and guys were just making good decisions.

When we're on our game offensively, we're tough to guard because we've got guys that can play in pockets, two on the ball and things of that nature, and then when we do switch, we do a good job of attacking close-outs and finding buy on the inside, so just really proud of our guys and things that they did.

For us, I went into the game and I wanted to downsize, so that's why I took Square out of the lineup. I thought Duncan at the 4 was going to be really good for us because it matched up with us, and it allowed Jae Mustaf to guard a perimeter. The last time we played them, we had Duncan playing the perimeter, and that's tough to chase like that against guys that they have, and especially the way they play.

**Q. Naithan, you were about two assists away from a triple-double. Could have been the fifth Georgia Tech**



**player in history to get that. My question for you is out on the floor, the spacing and everything, what's the mentality to be able to lead like that and be an all-around guard and get guys like Duncan open in space?**

**NAITHAN GEORGE:** Having these guys around me, they make it easy, as well. Really just playing the right way is kind of what I emphasized in the playoff. But having Duncan the floor but also post up, Lance who can shoot, attack close-outs, Baye who can conceal, rebound, dunk, shoot, to who else, Jaeden Mustaf, great cutter, Sutton, great cutter, finisher, and Square, as well, rebounder and lob threat. Just having those guys around me, they just make it a lot easier, but just playing the right way is the main thing.

**Q. Duncan, could you walk us through the last play of the half? It looked like they almost fouled you before you caught the ball, and how big was that play to get you guys going?**

**DUNCAN POWELL:** It was real big. It gave us the opportunity to go into the second half 0-0 pretty much. Me and Nait got a good chemistry. He's found me a couple times throughout the year on this, so I give him a look, he sees one of the guys behind me, he just puts it in the pocket. I felt him fouling me before I went up, so I just knew to throw it.

**Q. Duncan, just inside today, did you feel like you had a distinct advantage? The points in the paint favored you guys significantly today. Did you feel like that was an edge you had coming in?**

**DUNCAN POWELL:** Right. Great question. We got one of the best post guys in the country with Baye Ndongo, so that makes everybody's job way easier when we've got a threat like that inside. You know, shooters are all around.

But yeah, that was a big thing going into the game. We told the guys before as players, get in the paint. We struggled with that against Wake Forest, and today we did it, and we came out victorious.



**Q. Duncan, can you put this in perspective personally? A few years ago you're at A&T, now you're back in Carolina leading your team to an ACC Tournament win.**

NAITHAN GEORGE: Yeah, all glory to God Jesus King with that one. I'm blessed to be here. I've got a great coach, great teammates. It's crazy how life works and how quick things turn around.

I say this all the time, a couple years ago I didn't think I'd play basketball anymore, even in summer, so to be able to play in Charlotte like an hour away from the school I started at in front of a lot of family is big-time. It means a lot.

**Q. Nait, you guys really got downhill on them, were attacking in the second half. Was that a point of emphasis that Coach made in the second half, to just be aggressive and play your game inside?**

NAITHAN GEORGE: Yeah, Coach emphasized that at half. We don't really need plays all the time, just getting downhill and setting hook screens in the backcourt, front court, wherever. They like to switch, so just attacking the big downhill is just a mismatch really.

And if they want to push us out, we have Baye Ndongo that can seal or Duncan Powell that can seal and get a finish. Yeah, Coach emphasized that at half.

**Q. McKneely with the seven three-pointers, No. 11 for them, but it seemed like defensively you were able to limit everyone else on the floor. What was the strategy in guarding him in concert with everyone else?**

NAITHAN GEORGE: Right, just being physical and off the other guys when you're guarding the ball, jump to the ball which will make it easier and cancel some of his shots that he'd usually get.

But yeah, physicality was our main thing going into the game and pressuring the ball, and that really helped us guarding 11.

**Q. 11 offensive boards today, 40-plus rebounds in the game. Can you talk about how much of an opportunity those rebounds gave you guys to keep control of the lead throughout the game?**

DUNCAN POWELL: Yeah, my guy Nait right here had 10 of them, so Coach before the game was saying we've got to step up. The guards have to step up and get boards. That's what's really going to separate us. It speaks for itself. We won the rebounding battle, and throughout the

game it kind of wore them out and gave us a lot of second-chance opportunities. So that was good for us.

**Q. Damon, right after the game you had a longer-than-usual embrace with Coach Sanchez there at mid-court. What did you say to him?**

DAMON STOUDAMIRE: You know, just I hope everything works out. I've known Ron a long time, and I've said this before when we played them last time. I actually knew Tony and I knew Ritchie McKay, so many people that I knew from that staff. I met Ritchie McKay a long time ago when he got his first job at Portland State.

I've known Ron a long time and you're always pulling for people in the business. He's a good man. He's a good guy. Just kind of told him he did a great job, and he'll figure things out, and hopefully you're able to get the job.

**Q. You heard me ask about the defense on McKneely, 11, the seven three-pointers. What was the plan there? Were you happy with the way it shook out in terms of limiting other guys on the floor?**

DAMON STOUDAMIRE: Well, I said it briefly, but I think the biggest key to the game for me is when we played them the last time, I started Duncan at the 3 because I didn't have enough perimeter bodies. So I took Square out of the starting lineup and started Jaeden Mustaf, so it helped us stay connected, so I think that made a big difference.

The other thing is, I wanted to keep a lot of ball pressure on Rohde. He's really been playing well for Virginia, and you need ball pressure on him. He has great size, and you just can't let him play free like that. And Ames had been playing really well.

And you know, it's funny because I'm a left-handed guard, and I don't get out there like I used to, obviously, but I try to tell them things that lefties like to do, and they did a good job on him tonight. Even with McKneely, he hit really tough shots. It's hard. But I thought that was big.

Lastly, I'll say I thought Baye's presence and Duncan's presence at the 4 and the 5 helped us because they wore us out last game when we played them in Charlottesville.

I thought that that was really the difference when we lost to them there, and then you look at the stat sheet now, Duncan and Baye to me were the difference this afternoon.

**Q. Coach, you talked about having a relationship with Ritchie McKay who's currently at Liberty about playing in his tournament, as well. Have y'all talked recently?**

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DAMON STLOUDAMIRE: Yeah, Richie is like a guy that -- he's funny, man. To get to know Ritchie McKay, I'll give you a Ritchie McKay story. So Ritchie, when he got the job at Portland State they were coming off probation so my father is an alumnus for Portland State. He played basketball there.

So Ritchie just wanted traffic down at the gym. So Ritchie told me to bring guys down there, and so Richie, being the Christian man that he is, there was a lot of profanity in the gym, so he tried to tell dudes - I'm talking about NBA players - what to do.

So I pulled Ritchie to the side, I said, Ritchie, you wanted me to get the traffic in the gym. I'm doing what you told me to do. You can't tell them how to talk. These guys are making a million dollars. To know Ritchie McKay, you'd know exactly what I'm talking about.

Ritchie is a good man, and he's been really successful at Liberty. Happy for him and his family.

Like I said, I've known him, really it's 20 plus years now.

**Q. Damon, the first half pretty ugly offensively. How big was it to get that bucket from Duncan on the two free throws there, and the effort of your team to play all the way to the end of the buzzer there to tie the game?**

DAMON STLOUDAMIRE: It was big. It was really big. But to be honest with you, the offense I knew would pick up, but I was more concerned but happy all at the same time with the way we played defense because usually two months ago if shots wasn't going in, we wouldn't play D.

But two months later, we did a great job defensively to keep ourselves in the game. They shot 29 percent for the half, so that was the only reason we were in the game because it definitely wasn't our offense, and I knew that I could pick up -- Duncan getting those free throws, I think it ignited us, and the first four minutes for me was so important, and I thought we established the tone, physicality on both ends of the floor, putting the ball on the ground offensively, and then on the defensive end, letting them feel us.

When you're playing against teams that to me struggle to score, you've got to, I like to say, keep putting stress on the game, and I thought we did a great job of that.

**Q. Damon, when you turn around in 24 hours and play the No. 1 ranked team in the country, will you be able to be as loose and free offensively or do you have to be more structured?**

DAMON STLOUDAMIRE: Well, I think that Duke is a team that obviously they're different. They're long. They're athletic. I look forward to the game, though, to be honest with you.

At the end of the day, the one thing I do know going into this game is that we're playing our best basketball of the season. If we weren't, maybe I wouldn't feel the way I do, but I feel as confident as I've ever felt about this group of guys.

It's going to be a task, but we'll go in there, and we can't fear them. We've got to do the things that we need to do. It's a challenge, but I think that we're all looking forward to that.

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