

Atlantic Coast Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Wednesday, March 6, 2024
Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

Pittsburgh Panthers Coach Tory Verdi Liatu King Aislin Malcolm

Postgame Press Conference

Georgia Tech 73, Pitt 60

TORY VERDI: Just came out of the locker room and told my team that I'm extremely proud of them and their effort here today. I thought that they fought for 40 minutes and did everything that I've always wanted to coach this year. I think throughout this journey, we learn what it takes to win, and we've showed it throughout the ACC conference. Didn't get the results, but I would say out of the 18 games of ACC play, we showed that we can play in 13 of them.

I thought today we showed that we're right there to win a basketball game because of how we played. We played together. I thought we did a great job of executing on both sides of the ball. Our will, our want-to was off the charts.

But what I'm really most proud of is how tough we were today. Very proud of them. Very proud of them here today.

Q. That third quarter everything seemed to go right for you guys and you were able to get a little lead, carry that into the fourth. What went well in that quarter?

TORY VERDI: Well, we were rebounding the basketball, so we were getting stops. And then we were executing. We did a great job. We did a great job of getting the ball where it needed to go and finding people.

It was fun to watch and be a part of. Whenever your team goes out there and they're competing every possession like it's the last possession of a championship game, it puts you in a position to win a basketball game, and I thought we did that here today.



Q. Liatu, you won ACC most improved player, a bunch of points again today, and I think you doubled your points per game average this season. I was wondering if you can speak to the growth that you've seen this season under Coach Verdi?

LIATU KING: Like I've been saying before and all season, he put his trust in me. We had a conversation when he first got here, and he asked me if I wanted to be that go-to player, if I was ready to take on that type of responsibility, and he told me what it would look like.

He never fell short of his word. He designed plays to put me in the position where he thought I would be successful, and I thought throughout the duration of our season, I was able to exploit other teams -- our opponents.

It just really goes into him trusting me and my teammates trusting me. It goes into me doing it in practice and me doing it when I'm working out in the gym by myself.

TORY VERDI: There's no question about it, early on when I first took this job -- firstly, coming into the job, I already did my evaluations and assessments of the players, and obviously a lot of them left, so I knew what we had. So when you look at that, I knew the talent that Liatu had.

In order for us to be successful, I knew that we had to run our offense through her and put her in a position to be successful. It's not easy. It's not easy when you look at what she has done this year. On any given night, there's four people draped around her, and she's still putting up double-doubles.

It was something that was unbelievable to watch, and I'm super proud of, but it goes to working hard each and every single day. But she's put in the work. I'm not surprised where she is right now, and I'm excited about her and her future.

Q. Aislin, you had some big opportunities today and made the most of them on a stage like this. What does this do for you going forward confidence-wise and moving on now?

AISLIN MALCOLM: I think going into this, I had a lot of confidence. I've been struggling from the three, so I think this game just got me going. I'll give all credit to my teammates. We put in plays to get me open. My teammates did the one more pass to get me open.

I think just our offense really helped me to get some open shots I needed and be confident.

Q. Liatu, for this game, all 15 of your points came in the second half. What adjustment would you say you made around halftime to be able to effectively help the team get back offensively in the second half?

LIATU KING: Not settle, rim run, finish around the basket. That's what I did. Like you said, I struggled in the first half. I think I was settling a lot. I was worried about not messing up.

I think in the second half I just let all that go. My coaches were talking to me. My teammates were talking to me. They knew what I was capable of, and that's how I got my 15 points. I was attacking. I was cutting hard. Like I said, I was running the floor when there was a change of possession.

That's what we needed throughout the duration of the game. But I'm happy that I was able to change it and turn it around in the second half at least.

TORY VERDI: The beauty of it was that her teammates had her back. You look at what they did; they poured in 32 points in the first half. That's what we needed. That's what we've needed all year long. We need to have a balanced scoring attack. We can't rely on one person.

I thought Aislin did a tremendous job. I thought she was aggressive right from the get-go, and that is what we need from her. She helps this program. She takes it to the next level doing those types of things. We're going to make sure that she doesn't forget this game. We'll keep some clips on file for her to see moving forward. But extremely proud of these two.

Q. First full off-season with this team coming up. What are some of the things you want to accomplish?

TORY VERDI: We've got to continue to develop our skill set and take advantage of our personnel that we have in the program and grow their games.

The first thing -- what we talked about in the locker room, it's really hard to win. Especially in this conference, it's so hard to win.

We need everyone's best each and every single day, and what we need to do as a team and as a program is we need to find that consistency. And we have to understand that it's supposed to be hard, because if winning was easy, everyone would be doing it, and they're not.

What we've got to do is we have to differentiate what we do on a daily basis, and we've got to be better. We've got to be better in all aspects, whether it's in the weight room or whether it's individuals. We have to be better.

This year has given me an opportunity to really assess where we are as a program, our players, our staff, like everything. And you can bet that moving forward, we're going to be able to take steps because we're going to be prepared for those next steps.

But again, as far as today goes, I thought our effort was outstanding here today. And obviously we didn't get the results and we're disappointed with the result, but I thought our fight and our want-to was off the charts.

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