

Atlantic Coast Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 7, 2024

Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets

Coach Nell Fortner

Tonie Morgan

Postgame Press Conference



Duke 70, Georgia Tech 58

NELL FORTNER: Every loss is disappointing. This was kind of a tough one to swallow just because it's the conference tournament and you want to go as far as you can.

But I thought the first quarter kind of -- it put us in a hole a little bit, so we were digging our way out of that. But then after that, we settled in and did some good things.

I thought there were some things that really hurt us. We couldn't keep them from scoring in the paint. That was kind of detriment at to us because those are easy, high-percentage baskets for them.

Then early in the game, transition defense wasn't -- we weren't on point with that, so we gave up some threes to Ashlon Jackson that were costly at the beginning of the game.

I think if we could have knocked down more consistently our free throws -- because we did get ourselves to the free-throw line, we've got some players that are pretty dynamic in there trying to get to the basket and creating some opportunities. But we've got to knock down those free throws when we're struggling to score on the perimeter.

I thought we settled in there and kind of did some things in the fourth quarter to get ourselves back in the game, but we just couldn't keep them from scoring in the paint.

Q. Coach, your season as a whole, you had a pretty young core with this team. Do you feel like you took some steps to build towards something better next year?

NELL FORTNER: Absolutely. I'm really proud of this bunch. I think they've grown up a lot. They've struggled through some tough times and got themselves out of it. It shows maturity, and it shows the direction we're headed as we continue to mature and grow and get better as a team.

I really like this core group of players. I think they've got a fantastic future.

Q. You talked about the points in the paint. What made their bigs so difficult to defend?

NELL FORTNER: Well, they're big. They're pretty big. We're not as big. We've got some size, but it's young right now, and anyway, that wasn't the direction we needed to go. I mean, they're big. They can shoot over us. They run some really good offense. They got inside of us and had some nice dump passes, things like that. Really did a good job of finding those bigs, and they went to work.

Q. Tonie, would you like to comment on that, as well?

TONIE MORGAN: Like she said, they're big.

NELL FORTNER: She didn't want to get down there and guard them.

Q. Coach talked last night about how you're a different team than when you saw Duke in January. January it was kind of even, then Duke started to pull away. Tonight they pulled away for a while. Second half was pretty even. Does that show the improvement that you've made?

NELL FORTNER: Absolutely. Yeah, absolutely. I'll let Tonie speak to it, too, because it was, it was real difficult at Duke. Duke is really good at home. They played really, really well, and the second half we just couldn't stop them.

But here you are in this environment. We've definitely improved from that time. I thought we fought hard tonight. I thought our will and our want and desire was all there.

But Duke is really good defensively. They're really good



with the offensive things that they run. They execute it well.

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But we still had opportunities to win the game. We still had opportunities. We fought our way back, but it fell short for us.

Q. Tonie, seems like your ability to get to the foul line was Georgia Tech's top offensive weapon today. Can you talk about your ability to turn your aggression into points?

TONIE MORGAN: Yeah, I was able to get downhill even though they have a lot of bigs in the paint. But like Coach said, I didn't convert well on free throws. But I got down there, found my teammates, got down there and then we just have to get better for next game.

NELL FORTNER: You did okay. You're all right. You missed a few.

Q. Coach, Oluchi Okananwa had some huge plays for Duke down the stretch. Talk about her contributions and how you weren't able to get her under control down the stretch?

NELL FORTNER: Yeah, man, she is one elite athlete. It's incredible. When you look at that kid, you think she should be on the track running the 100-meter dash. She just looks like a track athlete, but she is one heck of a basketball player. It's hard to get her under control. She's so fast. She changes the energy of that team when she comes on the floor. That's what it feels like from an opponent's point of view.

I think she's pretty special -- what did she end up with? She's a tough guard. She's got quickness. She's got great cuts to the basket. She can shoot, she can stretch the floor at times, and she's going to continue to be a really good player for Duke.

Q. You have a winning record this year. You have a young team. Do you think you could benefit from playing in a postseason tournament?

NELL FORTNER: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. That's our goal. We definitely want to play in postseason, and whatever that might be, we're up for it. We're definitely up for it. We're just going to -- we'll get some rest and we'll continue to work out and see where that ends up.

We are young, but it's an exciting future. And that's what's really encouraging about where we are right now because we know what we have coming in next year, and we know what we have going into next year, so that's good stuff.

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®