

# Atlantic Coast Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 7, 2024

Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

**Duke Blue Devils**

**Coach Kara Lawson**

**Kennedy Brown**

**Ashlon Jackson**

Postgame Press Conference

Duke 70, Georgia Tech 58

**KARA LAWSON:** Just proud of our group, being able to scratch out the win. Obviously in tournament play, it was the first postseason game for a lot of my players, and I thought the freshmen reacted well. I thought they came in and gave us a good lift.

I just thought our defense was pretty good for most of the evening, and then offensively we were able to get the ball inside, have some balance to our offense.

We didn't make a three in the second half, but we were getting the ball inside. And the 46 points in the paint was something we emphasized with our team against Georgia Tech. We wanted to touch the paint with the pass and with the dribble, and I thought they did a great job executing that.

**Q. It seemed like at halftime there was a conscious decision made to pound the ball inside. I don't think Duke scored in the second half outside the paint, but Kennedy and Camilla and Jayden all had successful passes and conversions inside. Can you talk about that a little bit more?**

**KARA LAWSON:** Yeah, we felt like we missed them a few times in the first half, so I think -- did we talk about it at halftime? I think we just talked about it before in the time-outs and stuff than we did in halftime. Just keep emphasizing that we felt like one-on-one in the paint that Kennedy and Camilla both would have some advantages, and just to keep looking to touch it.

It was definitely something we emphasized. I don't think I



told them at halftime to do it, but it was something we emphasized throughout the game.

**Q. Kennedy, just to follow up, give us the players' perspective on that interior dominance.**

**KENNEDY BROWN:** Yeah, I was able to get good early position and guards were finding me. When you're getting deep position like that, you've kind of got to score it at that point, two feet in the paint. Coach talks about that a lot when you have one-on-one, two feet in the paint to score.

And that's something we've talked about in the postseason and just towards the end of this regular season, as well. So it's something I've been trying to emphasize, just being aggressive when I get those one-on-ones.

**Q. Kennedy, I asked Georgia Tech about trying to stop the forwards tonight, and they said, well, they're really big. Did you feel big out there? Did you feel dominant? Is it that simple?**

**KENNEDY BROWN:** I mean, they're a really physical team, so they were definitely trying their best to keep me out of the paint. Again, I think I just was able to get good position, and that kind of set me up for success.

**Q. Ashlon, Kara touched on a little bit about how there was maybe a little bit of nerves with a lot of the freshmen, first postseason game, but then you stepped up big in that second quarter. Can you speak to that with shooting from the outside?**

**ASHLON JACKSON:** Yeah, I feel like to start the game, all of us was nervous, strictly being because it's March. We know that Georgia Tech, that's a really great team, and anything can happen in the postseason. Anybody can win at any given moment.

Second quarter just came out, tried to show a little experience, and yeah, that's pretty much it. I felt like we just had to calm down, get that first quarter over with so we could continue to play hard.

**Q. Can you talk a little bit about Jayden Donovan and**



**Oluchi Okananwa. They've played tremendously not just this game, but the whole season. How is it kind of watching them develop and watching them turn into these really kind of centerpieces of your team?**

KARA LAWSON: I mean, they've grown so much. Our team as a whole has grown so much. Start with Jayden. Jayden is just night and day what she is now when she first got here. She's such a wonderful player. When you look at what her abilities allow us to do defensively, like Jayden can guard multiple positions. We can switch with her. She can guard point guards. She can guard centers.

That ability is something we've come to rely on. In the beginning of the year, I wouldn't say we relied on it. Now we do because of how far she's grown. And offensively she's figuring out what spaces she can cut to to be effective.

She's electric in transition when she gets the rebounds. She electrifies our transition offense with her pace. You can see it when she gets the ball. She's at a different speed.

Oluchi, similarly. When she's playing out there, it feels like she's at a different speed. Also, both of their rebounding -- Oluchi has been doing it all year, but Jayden as of late, like the month of February, has been rebounding at a high clip, as well. And that's been huge for us to be able to get those high rebounding numbers from them.

Oluchi is a talented player, has been a consistent scorer for us, a consistent rebounder, and then at a point of attack, we usually put her on the other team's point guard because she can really disrupt and plays with such a high motor.

So we're fortunate to have those two on our team, and they continue to grow and continue to help us to win games.

**Q. Kara, you split with NC State during the season. You get them again tomorrow. What do you think the key is for round 3?**

KARA LAWSON: I was feeling pretty good until you asked me that question. Listen, they're one of the top teams in the country. One of the top teams in our league. It is a challenge to play them.

We went over there, and they kicked our butt. We weren't ready to play.

We have to be first and foremost ready to play tomorrow. We have to be ready to compete. They're as complete a team as we have in our league, when you look at the

balance they have of scoring, you look at the experience that they have. Any number of players can go off for 20 or 25 points on their team. You've seen it this year. They're as hard as it gets in this league.

Our job is to get ourselves ready to compete and put our best foot forward. This is what the tournament is about. In this league, you've got to beat good teams to win the tournament. You've got to beat the good teams to advance. I know they're focused on winning tomorrow, and we are, too, and I think it'll be a great matchup.

**Q. Quick question about Delaney. Do you expect her to be able to go tomorrow?**

KARA LAWSON: Yeah, I'm hopeful she'll be able to go tomorrow. That was just more me. Her and Kaobel, I just held them out a little bit more today. I'm hopeful they'll both be able to go tomorrow more.

**Q. For the players, one of the few debits on the stat sheet, something you'll need to clean up for tomorrow, Georgia Tech went to the foul line a lot. What was going on there, and how do you get that fixed so NC State is not shooting 25 free throws tomorrow?**

KARA LAWSON: Yeah, what was going on out there?

ASHLON JACKSON: Honestly, I feel like that's just us being disciplined. Well, it doesn't get more simple than that. It's just us being disciplined. We've got to be able to capitalize because we do play very aggressive defense.

Yeah, they're a great team, and I feel like we've just got to capitalize on that a lot.

KARA LAWSON: I'll say this. I thought we were really excited for the game and really hyped up. And when we got opportunities to challenge shots, we just were kind of over -- we're so excited and we're trying to really make a play, and we were too much.

I'm hopeful the second game we can kind of manage that a little bit more. That and the turnovers, when you look at the stat sheet, are the two that we've got to try to do a better job of tomorrow.

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