

Atlantic Coast Conference Football Kickoff

Monday, July 22, 2024

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets Coach Brent Key

Press Conference



BRENT KEY: Here we go, all right.

Can't tell you how awesome it is to come up here and be the first person up to kick off the 2024 season. Really signifies the media days the start of college football.

Thanks to Jim Phillips, the job he does for the ACC, working to make football a priority in the league, the tireless days and days he puts on it.

Thanks to president Angel Cabrera and athletic director Jay Batt for working every day to put Georgia Tech in a position to be competitive and giving us the resources needed to be competitive, to go on our quest to be a championship football team, competing at the highest level in all of college football.

Goes without saying the amount of work that they've put in, especially here in the last six months. It's about so many people other than just the ones standing up here today.

The new ACC, we'd like to welcome three new teams. When you have Stanford, Cal, SMU, teams that really expand the geographic footprint of the ACC, make it an even more dynamic league when you look at the landscape, the cities we play, that we're able to travel to.

When they made the expansion, when they were going through to select teams that didn't jeopardize or didn't conflict the integrity that this league has not just on the field of play but also in the classroom, an academic standpoint.

The staff we have at Georgia Tech, the men that we've been able to put together on our staff, they're great teachers, recruiters, a strong footprint in this league and this region of the country from a recruiting standpoint.

More than anything, they're good men. They're good mentors. They're good leaders. They're good teachers and role models for these young men that we have with us.

With that being said, the three guys we have today really encourage you guys to get to know their story and to know those guys. Those three guys, they're outstanding.

They're a sign of what is great in college football. I'm sure so many other schools, the young men they bring with them, are the same thing, the stories they have to tell and share. That's what's great about college football and that's why we love college football.

The final thing I want to say is I'd be remiss if I didn't mention Dr. Homer Rice who passed away recently. Been athletic director at Georgia Tech for many years. Meant so much to so many people all across the board, from being a coach, administrator, 98 years of impact he's had on people, really the fabric of so many programs he's woven into. What we do with our fifth quarter program for life after football is really all part of something he started with the total person concept back many years ago.

To his wife, his family, Coach Rice, you'll be missed.

With those things being said, really like to open it up for questions.

THE MODERATOR: You've been involved with the ACC since enrolling at Georgia Tech back in 1996. 30 years of your lifespan you've been in touch with this league.

BRENT KEY: I'm not that old (smiling).

THE MODERATOR: What does the ACC mean to you?

BRENT KEY: Man... That's an easy one (smiling).

28 years now, 28 years ago. Look, I grew up in Birmingham, Alabama. Growing up, I never realized how much my life would change because of the opportunity to come to play at Georgia Tech, to play in this league.

When you grow up in Birmingham, you only know one thing, that's college football. There's no pro teams, no pro football. College football is the top of the top. That's where my passion for this game really was born, was there.

Being involved in it... What I didn't realize was just how much making that decision to come to Georgia Tech could change my life. It gave me the opportunity to be challenged not only on the football field but challenged academically.

It allowed me to grow as a young person. I came in at 17, leaving home. By the time I left Georgia Tech, the things I'd learned...

You don't really realize those things as much when you're in school or when you just graduate. The lessons I learned, the lessons about discipline. How did I learn about discipline? Because I messed up. I made mistakes. I screwed up. Whether it be making a mistake in my personal life or socially or making a mistake on a converted first down against North Carolina on a Thursday night in 1997 and getting a 15-yard penalty.

Probably kicked us out of field goal range and cost us the game. You learn those lessons. You learn those about toughness, how to become tough, mentally tough. You learn lessons how to figure things out.

Taught me how to lead. Taught me what a leader is. Taught me how to lead this football team. Lot of the lessons I use today are lessons I learned in 25 years ago, 25, 30 years ago.

We all know what the ACC is. People talk about the ACC as an academic league, what it does from the academic standpoint. Georgia Tech, we don't let that be the only thing that defines us. We're not a group that wants to be defined by one thing alone.

At Georgia Tech, we want players that want to come in and have aspirations of being not great football players, but being great in their life after football as well. Being able to be, as we say, a first-round draft pick and a CEO. We want people to have those aspirations.

Georgia Tech, the teams in this league, they allow you to do that. Just look, if you look across the board, difficult this last night, I think it's seven coaches in this league actually graduated from ACC schools. Seven coaches. Seven head coaches graduated from ACC schools. That says a lot there. Being able to be, like we said, not just a first-rounder, but a CEO, a president, a head football coach, to learn the lessons to do those things.

We take pride in that. Those are all things that we've learned, that I've learned over the years, what is important, what makes it important.

Look, I've been through for all those years I've seen

everything there is to see about this league, what's great about it, from the transitions and rivalries and the coaches, the former players, what they've done in life.

Our kicker, David Frakes, when I was playing him, he invented the camera on the iPhone. Another friend of mine Robert Withers played at Boston College. He founded Wheels Up. You're talking major corporations that these people are running, companies they founded, as well as all the great football players.

You think back to the legends in coaching, 6just as a player, Coach Bowden. I mean, Coach Brown was a legend back then, and he's still coaching. Just the amount of history that goes along with it.

Look, there's a little bit of a narrative right now about this league. There is. That football is not the same in this league for whatever reason as others. That's up to us as coaches to continue to go out and how we put our football teams together, how we build our football teams, to go out and compete, how we compete each week, week in and week out, what's important to us.

That's my job, right? That's my job as the head coach at Georgia Tech. That's what I know about this league, that's what I know about Georgia Tech and this league, right? That's the priority, is to build this football team with these guys here, to build this team to be able to go out and compete week in, week out, be a championship football team. That's the end goal.

People talk about expectations. The expectation is to win every football game. There is no other thing, okay? That's all part of the history of this league that's gone for so many years. It's up to us to put our stamp on it as coaches and make this what it is.

THE MODERATOR: We'll take a question for coach.

Q. Last season you had an opportunity to open the year in Atlanta against Louisville. This year you've got the kickoff game in Dublin against Florida State. Talk about what those big stages have been like for the program, what that's added.

BRENT KEY: I think the exposure you get is great for these young men, great for these guys to be able to have exposure on the national level, for people to see them.

That's why they changed these rules several years ago in terms of NIL, name, image and likeness, is to create exposure for these students.

As far as one game being bigger than the other, there is no



game bigger than one. They're all the same. Every game is important. You only get so many times to play a year. Winning is a hard thing to do.

To look at one game bigger than another, it's not the way we go about things.

Q. Last year you stole the show at ACC media days, you talked about, Don't talk to me about the past, about the future. Are you guys on schedule to where you want to be here and now?

BRENT KEY: Yeah, I mean, you thought about that one for a year, hadn't you (laughter)?

We are. I think where we've improved as a football team throughout this year, you build the culture of your football team January through July. You build your football team in the four weeks in August. It remains to be seen what type of football team we're going to be. I know what type of locker room we have, what type of leaders we have. I'm excited to see where the team is going to be.

We're ready to get to work. The quicker we get down from here, get out and report and get on that field and practice on Wednesday.

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