

# Aflac Kickoff Game: Louisville vs. Georgia Tech

Saturday, September 2, 2023

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

## Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets

## Coach Brent Key

### Press Conference



Louisville - 39, Georgia Tech - 34

COACH KEY: Disappointing loss. Always disappointing when you don't come out on top, when you work to -- only get 12 chances a year to get these opportunities. So credit to Louisville and their staff. They did a good job of really making a couple of adjustments and sustaining us in that third quarter.

Did a good job with the field position in that quarter and we were really behind the 8-ball on the field position battle by the third. Ended up being a big factor in what we did.

A lot to build off of in the game and a lot to learn from. We will learn from it. And that's our job. Margin of error is small. It's very small and gotta be able to sustain for the entire game and get into the third quarter and be able to continue.

And, hey, look, you come out and they go down the field. We've got to be able to answer. We've got to be able to go three-and-out, come back the next drive and rebound from it.

I thought that's what happened in the second half. We got kind of spotty in some of the area of play -- all phases. It wasn't one phase. So it was all phases. We've got to continue to improve on.

Like I said, we'll learn from this. We had a lot of new guys out there. They played a lot of meaningful downs tonight, a lot of downs. A lot of them had some big plays made by some new guys out on the field.

It's encouraging when those guys can go out and do that. But at the same time we've got to be able to do it for the entirety of the football game.

Really those middle downs, you look at things and say, third quarter -- I'm sorry, the third downs or this or this, but

it's the first and second downs that you've got to be able to make the plays on.

They got ball on the perimeter some and broke us down. We'll improve on that. We'll work on that and be ready to come back the next week.

As I said, we'll learn from the things that we've got to learn from and build off of things we can build off of.

**Q. Offensively it seemed when Haynes had time back there, he threw the ball well. But the second half, their defensive line really put a lot of pressure on him and that really hurt the offense.**

COACH KEY: Yeah, it usually does. Early on, we had a couple of breakdowns in things. I thought Buster did a really good job of adapting with some of the play calls and what we were doing.

You get in some of those situations we're looking at dialing up some shots and get the ball pushed down field. And obviously those take longer.

Like I said, some young guys got out there and got some meaningful downs, and we'll learn a lot from it. That's my job is to make sure we make the biggest gains from that first game to the second game.

**Q. Secondary got banged up a little bit there in the second half. Any update on guys like LaMiles Brooks and those guys?**

COACH KEY: Not until tomorrow. Tomorrow we'll find out, get the injury report.

**Q. Take us through that fourth quarter with a little bit less than four, you went for it on fourth-and-6. What was the decision on going for it instead of letting the defense have a chance at it?**

COACH KEY: Just the flow of the game at that point. They had broken off some big plays. They were racking up explosives at that time. When you look at the momentum of the game, flow of the game, we had to be able to get



something done there.

The way the clock runs now it's 3 minutes, 46 seconds on the clock, when that time was, and that's not something that you decide at the spur of the moment. It's something you decide early on in the downs.

It's not a drop of the hat and say, let's go for it. That's something you decide early in the downs by the flow of the game. There's 3 minutes, 46 seconds on the clock. The way the clock runs, that 3:46 isn't like 3:46 used to be. It goes a lot faster.

We need to make our hay. We knew what type of coverage they'd be in. We had it called up, and unfortunately weren't able to execute on the play.

**Q. I was curious, missed tackles seemed to really to bite you guys at times especially in the hole on some of those big running plays and in space. They took advantage of opportunities. Was that something that you saw leading into the game, there was a concern or just jitters or anything in particular you can put your finger on with missed tackles?**

COACH KEY: No. Anytime you get guys in space, that's what college football is now. It's the battle of explosives. I think they won the first quarter. We won the second quarter. They won the third. That's how it went back and forth.

That's how explosives occur. Either somebody gets beat on one-on-one on a route, some sort of a route or somebody gets broken down one-on-one in a tackling situation. And they were able to execute in those situations.

It's one of these things that we'll learn from and we'll continue to address and work on and get better this week.

**Q. What stands out? Second quarter remarkable turnabout and the productivity was off the charts. Was that better execution? Was that adjustments? Was that a personnel change for Georgia Tech? 28 points in the quarter.**

COACH KEY: Yeah, no, it goes with the tempo of the game, the flow of the game. When you're playing with tempo and when you get those explosives and you're able to really kind of put your foot on them, momentum starts rolling.

And when you're playing with tempo, it's a double-edged sword because it affects both sides of the football. And our whole thing with tempo is being able to play tempo that

complements the entire football team, not just one side of the ball.

We were able to get in the rhythm there. Come out in the second half, and unfortunately that first series we weren't able to get into the rhythm to get the tempo going. And later on we were able to get some tempo moving. It's all how it's set up. But the efficiency on first down really allows you to be able to get into that rhythm.

**Q. This week you were talking about you wanted your team to play with poise and be physical and situational football. There were some things in the fourth quarter, I'm sure you feel better about, but overall how did you feel just about the play of the team in that quarter?**

COACH KEY: It's hard to say you feel good about anything when you come off of a loss like that. It really is. That's our job is to find the things that we did well and continue to do them well, and find the things that we did not do as well and improve on those.

I don't have the sheet in front of me but I think it was one or two penalties. We challenged them constantly to play with discipline, continue to make improvements in that and situational things. Some were good and some weren't.

It's both sides of the football, all around. Toughness, I think to the last play, I think guys were playing hard. But there's no trophies for playing hard; it's just part of the equation of being a good football team.

**Q. You've spoken often about the process of establishing your identity. I know you were able to do that in the offseason and into camp. But after one game, what's the identity that you feel you guys showed tonight?**

COACH KEY: I mean, our identity was in spurts. We had flashes of an identity. We had flashes of the team we want to be.

And that is part of the process. When you put things on tape and you show who you can be, you need to be that. You can't part-time do it and that would be a big part of the lessons learned from the game.

For improvements, the biggest improvements, they're supposed to occur between the first and second games because now you have a good feel for how your team competes against another opponent, not just themselves. So we'll take those things and move forward with them and continue to improve into the next football game.

**Q. During the week you also said you wanted to see**

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

**how your team would respond in an adverse situation. When things seemed like things started getting out of control a bit in the second half, I was wondering from your viewpoint on the sideline what you saw?**

COACH KEY: It's something you watch closely. You watch the feel of your team, how your team's responding to things. Are they getting down? Are they moaning at each other?

And there was none of that. It was okay, hey, we've got to fix this, we gotta get out of the rut. How do you get out of the rut? We help them with some play calls and do some things. Which I thought we did.

Offensively after the first two drives in the second half, then we started to get back into the rhythm. You saw the ebbs and flows of the game. You saw the positives of what can be there with those guys.

It would be real easy when all of a sudden, when there's a quick run of points like that, just to give up and throw the towel in. But I didn't see that at all. That's an encouraging thing that we'll have to continue to build off of.

**Q. The running game seemed to find a little bit of a groove in the second quarter and then kind of tailed off in the second half. Was it something the defense was doing? Was it problems up front?**

COACH KEY: They did some good things, made some good adjustments on their side. Then we, in turn, made some adjustments back to it. It's part of the chess match of the game. They jumped into a bear front. So we ended up having to, once they did that, we went back and adjusted back the other way.

You've got to be able to execute when your number's called on it. Look, some of the middle-field coverages that they were playing and loading the box up early on, we were running some of the stretch-zone things and hitting some good creases.

As they jumped into the different fronts and you saw us, we started working to take some of the shots and get the ball out of their hands. And didn't execute on as many of them as we needed to. We'll continue to work on it, continue to get better.

**Q. What did you think of Haynes? We obviously saw the wheels a little bit of Haynes King. And do you think like he's the quarterback you saw that won this job in the fall? Did he show that today?**

COACH KEY: He did. He made some big-time throws.

He's sitting there at address several times. He made plays with his feet, got some yardage, got positive plays, holding the ball down screen, pulling it down on a play or a designed run.

That was encouraging. It was encouraging to see him sit there and deliver the football. And then we were a couple inches away from a couple other big ones. And we'll continue to close that gap and eliminate that margin.

**Q. I know you said it's disappointing on the loss, haven't watched tape. Do you feel like this one slipped away a little bit?**

COACH KEY: A loss is a loss. There's no asterisk next to one that was a close loss or slipped away or blowout. A loss is a loss. They all feel the same.

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