

Atlantic Coast Conference Basketball Tipoff Media Day

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Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets

Coach Karen Blair

La'Nya Foster

Talayah Walker

Women's Press Conference



THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the 2026 ACC Tip Off Q&A. I am happy to welcome Georgia Tech to the stage. We have head Coach Karen Blair going into her second season, we have La'Nya Foster, and then Talayah Walker, the birth day girl herself.

Karen, you led the Yellow Jackets to the WBIT, becoming the first coach to lead Georgia Tech to the postseason in their first season.

Georgia Tech returns seven players, including four starters from a year ago, while adding six transfers and a freshman.

Obviously a number of new faces this season. Can you talk about your focus in recruiting this past offseason and what this class brings to Tech?

KAREN BLAIR: Yeah, I think going through the first year of the ACC you understand the guard depth that you need. I mean, there's elite-level guards throughout this league. You know, last year we only had one true point guard, so we were able to shore that up.

We brought Kyndal Walker in to complement Erica Moon. Then we need to do get better from three-point shooting. We brought Sofia Munoz in from UAB, double-digit scorer. Also had, like, 124 assists so she's capable of sharing the basketball.

What we want to do is be able to create easier shots for these two. These two were really consistent for us last year, and so, you know, bringing in additional scoring. Jordan Ode, she was a redshirt freshman last year but was a top-30 high school player; averaged over 20 points. We wanted more of a scoring mentality to complement everybody else that we were bringing back.

THE MODERATOR: So you said improved guard depth, but I always say that a team improves the most from game one to game two. I think, likewise, a head coach and her staff because of the knowledge base that you gain.

What were some of the biggest lessons you learned as a head coach going through the ACC for the first time a year ago and how do you apply that this season?

KAREN BLAIR: I think the first time you're trying to learn which programs are scout-specific and which ones are systems. So I think us learning how we were going to be defended game in and game out. You know, there's some programs that are very scout-specific that you have to prepare for, and then there's others that are, we run the system and this is what we're going to do.

I think that's what helps us going into year two, is now you have a better feel for the coach's strategy. It's challenging when you only play everybody one time, so you get a small sample size. You know, with the exception of us playing Clemson twice and then getting into the ACC Tournament. I think those are the biggest take-away.

THE MODERATOR: La'Nya, last year you had a career high in threes made and a three-point field goal percentage. So efficient and deadly. What was your focus this offseason, and what should we expect in terms of you continuing to elevate your game?

LA'NYA FOSTER: Just having an impact on the floor. I want to be able to help my team win in any way that I can, so if that's scoring on the defensive end, rebounding, you know, anything to help us win.

THE MODERATOR: Talayah, personally, happy birthday.

TALAYAH WALKER: Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: You started all 33 games a year ago. You were an offensive mainstay all season long, but specifically the last five games of the season you were on an offensive tear; you averaged 24 points a game. How do you feel the experience of last year can propel you for even



more and greater things this season?

TALAYAH WALKER: Yeah, I definitely think last year just kind of made me a little more comfortable to step into this year. I know where my shots are going to come, how some teams may guard me, and just watching a lot of film with my coaches, they've helped me learn what the right shots are to take or when to shoot the ball or what to do on offense in general, so I think it makes me more comfortable going into this season.

Q. What has your team worked on this offseason to prepare for this season?

KAREN BLAIR: Definitely shooting a lot more threes. Obviously that was an area that we didn't -- I think we might have made five threes a game. So we've been a lot more intentional within practice, and then knowing if they have a good look early in the possession that that's a good shot for us.

So that's what we're trying to do is instill that confidence from the 3-point line to really help us space out the floor.

Q. Coach, with the roster featuring several new players, how do you balance team chemistry and individual development in the offseason?

KAREN BLAIR: Yeah, I mean, having seven returners is huge. You know, we didn't talk about Inés earlier, but this is her fifth year at Georgia Tech. You know, we lost her four games into the season last year, but having those seven that have gone through the program, they understand. They've established the culture and the foundation.

The one thing these guys have done is they did a great job of the newcomers, they brought them in, were really intentional with activities during the summer, getting to know each other, and creating that connection.

You've got to have that chemistry off the court before you're going to get that chemistry on the court.

Q. How do you balance basketball with the academics of Georgia Tech, of course, and other responsibilities?

KAREN BLAIR: Yeah, you know, we find the right student-athletes. When you come to Georgia Tech, you know you're going to be challenged in the classroom, but the value of the degree also speaks for itself.

I think the one thing these guys are is they're masters at time management. I think as a coaching staff, the one thing we try to do is we try to be really efficient with their

time because they get challenged in so many different ways outside of basketball.

So I think that's one thing we do well as a staff is we try and be really get in and get out, whether it's lifting, practice, and then they know they have study halls.

They also do a good job of communicating. There may be things where they've got to do some professor hours, and they have to get out of practice early. It is a balance, but you know, we support that.

You come to Georgia Tech to get a degree that matters something outside of basketball, so we support that.

THE MODERATOR: From your perspective, ladies, how do you balance it all?

TALAYAH WALKER: I would say we have a great extended staff with our like study hall advisors, coaches. Everybody is very flexible and helpful. I think we know that playing is a privilege, so we have to get that school part and that school aspect in.

So just remembering that.

I think all the players, we love being challenged, and we know we have to work hard in order to be better on the court.

LA'NYA FOSTER: Yeah, just piggyback off what she said just using our resources. I feel like they provide us with a lot to work with, so just using our resources. Time management, like she said, yeah.

Q. Coach Blair, do you feel a responsibility to educate your players about things that are really, really important, like legislation Protect College Sports Act?

KAREN BLAIR: Those are things we're always going to talk about things going on. I think that changes daily, if not hourly. I know as our staff, it's one of those things that we're in constant communication with our compliance department of, you know, having those discussions.

But I know early on Talayah during the summer were talking about the five and five and what does that look like.

Yeah, absolutely, that is part of my responsibility to, you know, the things that are going on in the world, we have to be educated and be able to have open and clear communication.

THE MODERATOR: Talayah, tell me what you think the X factor will be for this team this season to take the next step.



TALAYAH WALKER: I think chemistry really. I think we have a bunch of great players who can make shots, play great defense, but I think as long as we're all on the same page together, we can do some pretty great things. And just supporting each other. Yeah, I think the chemistry is going to be a big thing for us.

THE MODERATOR: La'Nya, describe what it's like to play for Coach Blair.

LA'NYA FOSTER: I would just say free. I feel like she makes us very comfortable. We can come to her with anything. She believes in us, have a lot of confidence in us. She instills that confidence in us every day, so it's just free, comfortable. I'm very much grateful.

THE MODERATOR: Karen, the chemistry became a true home court advantage a year ago as you posted the highest single season attendance while also -- attendance average while generating a 10-6 record at home. How important is it to continue to grow the fan base in Atlanta?

KAREN BLAIR: Our fans were great last year. It became -- it was a really hard place to win, so we're really grateful for that. I think we've now -- going into year two we've also been able to spend more time in the community. I think that's part of our responsibility is getting out, creating that connection.

Our team getting to know -- you know, getting out, getting to know more people, and then in return, getting people back.

You know, it's everything. There's nothing like that energy that you get. I think our very first game we're starting with the education game. Nothing better than having thousands of screaming kids just -- you are already nervous in the first game, and then you add in all the screaming kids. But yeah, it's our goal.

We've been really intentional of trying to get more people at our games. Right now for us it's helpful. Atlanta Dream going to the semifinals, one game. We've enjoyed going to those games and supporting them and that organization. We want that fan base to also be supporting us at Georgia Tech.

THE MODERATOR: La'Nya, most coaches consistently preach or have a couple of constant sayings. What is Coach Blair's?

LA'NYA FOSTER: We can do hard things (laughing), every day.

THE MODERATOR: Talayah, anything else?

TALAYAH WALKER: No, we can do hard things, and we've done hard things, for sure.

KAREN BLAIR: Tech Tough, baby. Tech Tough.

THE MODERATOR: Talayah, who is that teammate that maybe no one knows about right now, but come ACC season, everybody is going to be talking about?

TALAYAH WALKER: I just think that's so hard because we all play very differently, yet, it complements each other so well. We have Ari; she's a 6'6" center who can shoot threes, and he she's a great playmaker, really good passer.

We have Inés who complements her game as well. Like that Euro kind of game going on. Also really good shooter and really smart.

And then with La'Nya and Erica, just their defense and their aggression going downhill is great. And then like she said, our newcomers with Kyndal and Jordan and Sofia, who can really shoot the ball. They're very offensive-minded and very high-spirited, energetic people. I think there's just so many people you can say for that.

THE MODERATOR: Who is the returner who has elevated their game the most this offseason?

LA'NYA FOSTER: Wow, that's a hard one as well.

THE MODERATOR: You guys are true teammates, by the way.

LA'NYA FOSTER: I just feel like this offseason we was very intentional. Everybody came in with the right mindset to get better, so I would just say be on the lookout for all.

THE MODERATOR: Karen, your nonconference is loaded this season, especially with NCAA Tournament teams from a year ago.

West Virginia, Princeton, TCU, Alabama, along with Georgia and Indiana. Can you talk about the genesis behind such a loaded schedule?

KAREN BLAIR: Yeah, I think part of this is when I got the job, we're returning some of those that are home and homes, but I think what we learned last year was it made us better. We play in a tough conference. The ACC, you've got to bring it every single night. So we did learn a lot about ourselves, and that's why where we were in November, you know, we were better come March.

Like to your point, I think that's why the fan base got behind us is we continued to improve, and they were just so gritty. They played so hard. It's going to challenge us. It's going to be the same thing. That's why they laugh and say we can do hard things.

But we're going to hit some adversity. We're going to learn about ourselves. But, you know, that's why you play a schedule like that because it's going to prepare us by the time we get to the ACC. You've seen different matchups. We also have to learn about ourselves being seven new. What are these lineups? What happens when we play big? What happens when we play small? When you get into those games -- and as a coach you love to see who is going to show up when the bright lights are on. We'll learn that early about ourselves.

THE MODERATOR: La'Nya, we talk about the ACC. You guys have lived it. You've done tough things in it. What makes this league so unique?

LA'NYA FOSTER: I would just say the talent. The talent is very unique. Obviously day in, day out, like she said, it's going to be a battle. Every conference game, we don't know what to expect. A lot of ups and downs.

I would say the talent makes it really unique and the pace. The pace.

TALAYAH WALKER: I would just say the versatility. We've played so many different types of players that like to do different things. We've played against bigs that like to shoot threes. We've played against guards that are just really great going downhill. I think just knowing how to guard different people and just honing in on those details is what makes the ACC so great.

THE MODERATOR: I'm going to ask each of you this question, and we'll start with you, Talayah. Give me one word to describe Georgia Tech women's basketball this season?

TALAYAH WALKER: Entertaining. I would say we're always going to put on a show. We're going to play the whole game. We're going to fight if we need to. We just always are going to put on a great show for our fans.

LA'NYA FOSTER: I would say determined. I feel like, like I said, we're very intentional. We've been very intentional, so just looking forward to instilling confidence in each other throughout the whole season and having a good one.

KAREN BLAIR: I'm going to go with passion. That's a big piece for us is kind of like they say, players make plays. Them having the freedom, but they also just play the game

with such passion and joy, and that's what's important to us.

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