

NCAA Women's Basketball Championship: Regional Semifinal: Georgia Tech vs South Carolina

Sunday, March 28, 2021

San Antonio, Texas, USA

Alamodome - Hemisfair

Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets Nell Fortner

Sweet 16 Postgame Media Conference



extraordinary in that I think even though we're in the middle of a pandemic, we couldn't have as many fans in the stands, I think we garnered a lot of attention this year in the city of Atlanta, state of Georgia. Really excited for what the future holds with the excitement surrounding the program at this point. Hopefully we can build on that. Next year when fans can get back in the stand, that we continue to grow our fan base.

I'm just super proud of these kids. I think that they really just worked incredibly hard during the pandemic to stay safe and make sure that we had a season, that they had a season.

This is something, this is a springboard for us that we'll use to continue to build this program and play at a high level and get back to this tournament, see if we can go a little bit farther.

Q. Can you speak on how you guys kind of bounced back? In the third quarter when South Carolina started to separate, it seemed like you always had an answer. What does that say about the team and your players and the ability to keep bouncing back?

NELL FORTNER: Yeah, I think that speaks to directly how tough these kids are. They're incredibly tough. They have a will to win. They're competitive. It doesn't matter. We can be down. We've been down in several games this year, came back to win 'em because of their will to win. Really proud of that.

That goes back to the leadership of this team, with Kierra Fletcher, Lotta-Maj Lahtinen and Lorela Cubaj. They're extremely competitive. There's no question, in every game we've been in, whether we won or lost, I always knew we were always going to have a chance. Just like today, I felt like we had a chance. I felt like this was a matchup that we could do some things to exploit some things.

But today South Carolina just had a better day. But these kids are tough. Hopefully we're all back here next year trying to win a few more games.

Q. You were within six points I think in the fourth

South Carolina 76, Georgia Tech 65

THE MODERATOR: We are now joined by Georgia Tech head coach Nell Fortner. We'll take an opening statement from coach and then go to questions.

NELL FORTNER: Congratulations to South Carolina. I thought they played really, really well. They've got a lot of weapons.

I'm really proud of this Georgia Tech team. I think our will to win today was excellent, as it always is. We just didn't have enough weapons. Couldn't make enough stops at the end. I thought we were scoring pretty well. But we just couldn't make enough stops.

South Carolina shot the three ball a lot better than we thought they would today. That came as a bit of a surprise.

To hold them to seven offensive rebounds, to only let them get to the free throw line, six attempts, five of seven, what were they, six of six in the free-throw line. We did some things well, but we just didn't have quite enough to stop them from scoring in the paint. They killed us points in the paint.

They're an excellent team and I wish them well as they move forward. But super proud of Georgia Tech.

THE MODERATOR: Questions.

Q. What has this past year meant, not just Georgia Tech women's basketball, but to the university and the city of Atlanta? How much fuel does this give you to get back to this stage next season?

NELL FORTNER: I think that this season really was



... when all is said, we're done.®

quarter, you had a shot. Was it what you talked about at first that just couldn't get enough stops on South Carolina? What got away from you guys?

NELL FORTNER: At the end of the day we just couldn't get the stops. At the end of the day -- if you score 65 points, we're a team that can hold our opponents to around 55 points a game. We scored enough points to win. They just killed us in the paint today. Good gosh, they had like 44 points in the paint.

They're big, they're long, they're lengthy. I thought they had some players really stepped up, like Amihere. I don't know if I'm saying her name right. She was a handful for us. She ends up being 6-for-8. Then Saxton 6-for-8. They really had a day inside. We just didn't have much of an answer for them.

But maybe a few more stops, this thing would have come down and then a little closer in the end. Again, South Carolina did what they needed to do, they played how they're built. Just congratulations to them.

Q. I can only imagine how tough this loss is right now. What are your main takeaways from this year's tournament run?

NELL FORTNER: Every loss, any loss is hard. You're exactly right. But my main takeaways is that this team has a really incredibly bright future. We have to put some work in in the off-season and we've got to get better individually so we can get into this game next year and have a different outcome.

But I'm very proud of how we competed this year and how we got through this season with a pandemic, stayed safe and were able to complete it. So I love these kids. They're hard workers. I can't wait to start working with them again in the off-season and get going again.

Q. In terms of the postgame locker room, what was your message, especially to those seniors who might have played their last game? Also, as a coaching staff, do you start to lobby to talk to them, try to get them back for an extra year?

NELL FORTNER: Those conversations will take place here in the next few days. But the message in the locker room was don't hang your head. We were all super proud of their effort and their will to win. But we know that we've got to get better. Individually we've got to get better, as a team we've just got to get better all the way around. We've got to be able to score the ball in the paint a little bit better.

Those are things we'll work on in the off-season. But I

thought our fight during this tournament, coming back down 17 against Stephen F. Running away from Virginia, super proud. Getting to the Sweet 16, it was a really fun run. It just makes us all really hungry for the off-season. Can't wait. Everybody should be wanting to get better and get started again, let's get this thing rolling.

We won't hang our heads when we walk out the back door. This staff, very proud of the effort we showed today.

Q. You talk about how incredible this group of ladies is. Now that you've seen them in this tournament run, what separates them from some of the other ladies maybe that you've coached in the past?

NELL FORTNER: This group is incredibly tough. They're resilient. They're tough. Their will to win it extremely strong. You don't always get that with teams. You don't know if certain teams, certain chemistries are going to work that way. This team does.

Our three leaders, Fletcher, Lotta-Maj Lahtinen, Cubaj, just extremely strong leaders. They lead by example. When they speak, their voice is heard. They set the tone for us. Look, when they get going, they put their mind to it, they're pretty tough to stop.

We got to get a few more pieces on this team to really make a strong run. Those are pieces that we bring in, but they're also individuals working harder on their game to get it a little bit better.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you.

FastScripts by ASAP Sports