

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Sunday, March 14, 2021

Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets

Josh Pastner

Postgame Press Conference



Georgia Tech 80, Florida State 75

JOSH PASTNER: First off, just want to give an incredible shout-out to our young men. To get this from where we started -- not only how it started this year, how it started five years ago, holy Toledo. Goodness gracious. Thank the good Lord, God bless everybody for sticking with us. And these young men to be able to do what we've done, to do this is just darned special. To put Georgia Tech etched back in the forefront of the ACC.

You know, obviously we beat a great Florida State team. Man, Leonard Hamilton and his group, they are so good. I've said this multiple times. He should be in the Hall of Fame. Nominate him. Get him in the Hall of Fame. I love Coach Hamilton, love him.

It's the first time for Georgia Tech to win an ACC Tournament championship since 1993. This is our first fifth top 20 win this year because Florida State was 15th coming in. I don't think people understand how hard it is to beat Florida State twice in one year.

But you know, our guys have just scrapped, fought, kicked, clawed, whatever they had to do to find a way to get wins this year, and I'm just so darned proud of these young men.

Q. I imagine something that was very satisfactory about the way this game played out, you're on national television, huge audience, and everyone got to see why Jose Alvarado is the defensive of the player and even with the struggles shooting, you win the game. Can you talk about how big this moment is for Georgia Tech basketball?

JOSH PASTNER: It was humongous for Georgia Tech, the exposure, the publicity, the recognition. It was obviously the largest audience we've played in since

maybe Georgia Tech was last in the Final Four. Really, I mean, the amount of audience -- and you think obviously every hotel, restaurant or bar or whatever, all across the country, it's on ESPN, and so -- and we were the primetime game. To be able to do that was just incredible for Georgia Tech, incredible. There was a watch party with the students at McCamish.

You know, we didn't shoot the ball well, but we only had seven turnovers. How about our improvement from last year to this year in taking care of the ball, and we forced them into 25 turnovers. Our defense, our switching of defenses, our hand activity just made a world of difference.

Q. You've talked throughout the year about trying to get over the hump and over this stretch of eight or nine games. It seems like you've accomplished that. What have you seen the team do over that stretch and tonight the final four or five minutes that led you to believe that you're there now?

JOSH PASTNER: Yeah, you know, it's been a grind. I mean, and everybody here knows the document of the grind, from day one -- from the Saturday in Houston, Texas, in the hotel room with me, the search firm and the three people -- Mike Bobinski, Marvin Lewis, J.D. Wicker in the hotel room, to where we are now, it's been an unbelievable five years.

To get to this point is just -- you know, I can't express the words because of the energy that it's taken to get to this point. You know, and all credit and kudos and recognition should go to our young men, our players. These guys, these student-athletes -- and all five years. Today I got a call from Josh Okogie and he said, Coach, I am so excited for the game tonight. He was so mad they were playing at 7:00. He said I'm having my phone on in the locker room. When our game is over I'm coming right in and turning the game on.

Like I had guys texting me left and right from guys all -- who played for me in the first couple years saying, Coach, man, we've got to win this game, this is so important for Georgia Tech.



So it's just -- it matters so much for Georgia Tech. It was really, really important for Georgia Tech, and to get back into the forefront with the upper echelons of the ACC. It's been a long time for Georgia Tech to be there. Thank the good Lord.

Q. I thought that was kind of fitting that Jose led the way for you defensively, was very, very active. I'm curious can you describe what you saw out of him tonight as he played for you?

JOSH PASTNER: The guy is unbelievable. I don't think there's a better Georgia Tech guard in the history of Georgia Tech to win loose balls, 50/50 balls -- I mean, again, I said this the other day. I know there's been other guys who were more talented and played a long time in the NBA, I'm not saying that. I'm just saying what guard has come through Georgia Tech and done what he's done in terms of 50/50 balls and just winning loose balls and his toughness. His toughness.

Look, he was part of our first recruiting class, and he set the tone, and I knew what I was getting when I signed him. I knew what my vision was with him, and he's lived up and even more than I could even imagine. Think about this: After the Clemson game when he missed those two free throws and we lost off the backboard, he was in McCamish until 1:00, 2:00 in the morning, he was so upset.

Now here we are eight games later winning eight in a room. I grabbed him by the neck -- he was crying and I hugged him and I said, Jose, what a lesson in life. Man, it looked like everything was falling, and the adversity that we had, but the fight, the scrap, for you the character. And it just shows you that things are deeper than they look on the surface.

If there's ever a sign of that, this is the year to show that.

Q. After the game you said that to him, like on the court?

JOSH PASTNER: Yep, after the game, on the court.

Q. I noticed you've given your usual accolades to your support staff and of course your players and your opponents, but I just want to ask you sincerely, your defensive mindset and the various schemes that you run and the fact that your players not only create loose balls but 90 percent of the time they come up with those loose balls, I mean, that's got to be core of who you are, and I guess every recruit that comes to your program knows that's going to be who they are?

JOSH PASTNER: Yeah, look, first of all, with all -- I have such a great staff, and my assistants, my support staff, everything, none of this happens without them. I just try to oversee things, I'm kind of the CEO, so they deserve all the credit.

My personality is I believe in motor. I believe in energy. I believe in positive energy and just playing so hard and just leaving every ounce of energy -- you look at me when I go to shootaround, I've got old shoes, I wear mismatched socks. I'm not winning any -- I tell the guys, guys -- because a lot of times I think you're just going to reflect your coach. I said, I'm not really cool. Sometimes I'm so uncool it might be cool to be me because I'm so uncool.

But I just believe in playing so hard, and you're going to take the -- sometimes you're just going to take your personality of your coach, and I'm not into fanciness. I'm a low-maintenance guy, and I just want us to play darned hard and just play so hard every second.

They send me a lot of nice pairs of shoes, and they're like, Coach, you're wearing the shoes that you wore when you first got the job here. I said, I know. I've still got the same shoes. I've got the same shorts. It is what it is. But guys, that's why I don't want you to start playing cool, casual and cute. Man, we've got to fight, scrap, kick, claw. That's who we are and that's who we've got to be about, and I just believe in that.

Q. Jose said earlier that if you had told him after your 0-2 start that you would be ACC champions he would not have believed it. Would you have believed it?

JOSH PASTNER: No. I was just happy to beat Kentucky in the third game. I really thought we might not even beat -- I knew we were going to get better based on practice because we hadn't been practicing with contact. But I didn't know what -- we were so bad. I didn't know. I just said -- but if you told me back then to where we are now, it's just all about our guys' character and their toughness to be able to do what we did because that's not easy. That is not easy. You know, after those two games, we looked like we were out of it.

I think in my nine years as a head coach -- nine out of 12 years, which includes this year, nine out of 12 years, it might be 10, but I think there's nine out of 12 -- we haven't lost three games in a row. That's not me, that just shows the young men that I've had that I've coached. They've done a great job of being able to be resilient, to fight back, to when they're on the ropes, to kick and punch back, to not sit on the ropes, and our guys did that.

It's a great life lesson. There's so many lessons you can



take from this year and apply it to life with our team and just so darned proud of these guys. I'm just so happy for Georgia Tech and I'm so happy for our young men.

Q. Where do you think you ought to be seeded as the automatic qualifier from the ACC?

JOSH PASTNER: Well, I heard Lunardi is going to move us up to the 9, and everyone is like, you want to stay off that game. I'm like, no, if we're the 8 -- if we're the 9 we've got to go play someone. And of course if you win that game, you have to play the 1 seed. Great, let's go play them and beat them. Let the other opponents have to worry about us.

I like our chances -- whomever we play against, I love our team. Wherever they seed us, we'll be ready to play.

Q. Bobby Cremins said when he was watching the end of the game and saw you guys celebrate, he actually flashed back to his first ACC title that he won at Georgia Tech. I'm wondering what that means to you and how it feels to sort of be part of that old Georgia Tech history now.

JOSH PASTNER: Yeah, you know, look, obviously Coach Cremins built the program to where it is today in terms of his name is on the floor. Obviously Coach Hewitt and his success. And I've said this before, I give Coach Gregory -- I know he didn't win a tournament title or get to the tournament -- but he did a lot of good things, and when I took over the culture was great. So I give Coach Gregory a lot of credit as well, too. He did a great job, as well.

But regarding Coach Cremins, you look at what he's done -- if you listen to in the mornings on Packer and Durham or you listen to about everywhere I go, because there's such a big thing about ACC basketball and they always talk about Georgia Tech in the 90s. That's all people come and talk to me about, which is great. It's nice to say we've done something that they've done as well, too, which I'm happy about. And I hope we can have one-fourth the success that Coach Cremins had. If we can do that, then we've been pretty successful. It's a real honor to share the same thing that Coach Cremins had, first ACC Tournament championship for Georgia Tech since '93. That was the last one with Coach Cremins.

Q. I was just curious, how does the team get to celebrate tonight in a COVID pandemic?

JOSH PASTNER: Well, we've got to celebrate with ourselves. That's just kind of the world that we're in right now, and we'll continue to -- we'll celebrate, but it's got to be within COVID protocols. We will have an ice cream bar

when we get back, but when we get the ice cream everyone will have to wear gloves. You can't scoop it yourself. I'll be making sure of that when we get back.

Q. On the telecast tonight they played a recording of your voicemail greeting. Can you tell us what went into that, when you recorded that?

JOSH PASTNER: Oh, I just -- ever since I've had my cell phone, I try to leave positive messages on my cell phone. I change it every month, every six weeks. I've done it my whole life. I've had people call me and I answer -- they say, Coach, don't answer, I need a lift today. I need to listen to your voicemail. I've had more people around the country that actually just text me and say, Coach, or Josh, don't answer, I'm calling, I just need a lift. People want to hear my voicemail. I always try to have a positive message on my voicemail.

I think it's good for me, too, because it's easier to say those things, but it gives me a reminder that every day is a gift, every breath is a gift, don't take things for granted. So when I have those type of messages on my phone, it's a great reminder for myself.

Have you ever seen the commercial by the Tag Team, Whoop There It is and they have the ice cream scooper? We will have sprinkles tonight, as well, with the ice cream bar. We might even do a little dancing, as well, with the ice cream thing where they're doing this and this, and they're doing the dancing. So we will be throwing sprinkles in the air. That will be part of our celebration.

Q. You mentioned that faith and what God means to you is one of the first things you said. Just what you can say about the importance of God in your life, and at the same time what these gentlemen have meant to you all the way through your five years and how sweet this moment is knowing what they've meant to you in those moments early in the morning like you were with Jose, like he had spoken about, and to just be there for them?

JOSH PASTNER: No, look, everything is a gift. It's a blessing. I recognize that. Again, look, I don't believe God is rooting for winning or losing. Sometimes you have opportunities in life, but you've got to give the good Lord the credit.

I'm a man of faith. I'm a man of spirit and faith, and plenty of times my faith has been tested on and off the floor, but I've always gone back to -- that's why when I leave those voice messages to myself or whatever it may be, I'm a big believer that every day is a gift. I don't take that for granted.



That's why when people get on me -- I've had coaches say you act so elated after every win and you're going -- I'm like, because you don't understand, you don't take those things for granted. I recognize the chair that I'm sitting in could be taken away any split-second. Anything could happen in life, so you just cherish every moment of it. You don't take it for granted. Our young men have meant everything to me. The coaches are never as good as people say they are and they're never as bad as they say they are. They're somewhere in between.

I probably wasn't as bad of a coach in the first two games, and I'm not as good of a coach as they say right now. It's somewhere in the middle. The players win the game, but these guys are just phenomenal young men. I'm so proud of them.

Q. Given that positivity you talked about there, how did you handle yesterday given the news with Georgia, and was there ever a point you felt doubt that this game would even happen tonight?

JOSH PASTNER: No, you know, look, obviously first and foremost, we wanted to make sure Virginia was safe and healthy. And hopefully whoever was positive on the COVID that they're asymptomatic or, God forbid, they have any symptoms or it's very mild. That's more important than any win or any game was the health and safety of everyone.

But once we understood that the person that was positive, there was nothing -- it was maybe an asymptomatic situation, we had to turn our attention and get ready to play the game. We were moving to the championship -- I know it wasn't the way we wanted to get there, but hey, in the end, you're playing in the championship. In five, ten years -- there's going to be -- the 2021 ACC Tournament champion is going to be Georgia Tech.

As I told our guys, I was on the team that won the National Championship with the University of Arizona in 1997. Do you know how many minutes I played in that game? Zero. But nobody asks me let me see the box score, did you get any three-point -- no. They just say let me see the ring, tell me what it was like to be a part of that team. That's all people are going to remember about us winning the 2021 ACC Tournament championship.

Q. The first year you started coaching you talked about putting Georgia Tech on the map. You look at the city of Atlanta and, just to be frank, mostly they talk about Georgia football team, they don't give Georgia Tech enough credit and you always talked about putting us back on the map. Now you've played

in front of this big audience and won a championship, do you feel like now that legacy is starting back that was always Georgia Tech basketball and just the city of Atlanta?

JOSH PASTNER: Yeah, and to the point about Bobby Cremins, at the time Bobby Cremins was the coach, he was the hottest ticket in town. So we hope to get -- obviously there's a lot of things, you've got the Braves, the Falcons, you've got the Hawks, so there's a lot of things going on, but you want to start creating that interest.

Winning these type of games, winning championships, going back to the NCAA Tournament helps not only with the fan base, but how about recruiting? I don't think people understand the audience that was watching our -- do you realize for the last 24 hours all people were talking about was Georgia Tech playing Florida State? Moses Wright was on Game Day earlier today. Georgia Tech was all over the television. The exposure for that is so important.

In this league, where you're trying to get to and then sustain, it's not easy to do. Just so darned proud of our young men.

Q. You didn't have to add any more motivation to these guys, but you said they could do anything with the hair. What's the plan? Is that going to happen during the ice cream party afterwards, and will it happen before we talk to you again?

JOSH PASTNER: I told the guys -- this is a few weeks ago, if we won the ACC Tournament champion they could do it because all of our guys were braiding their hair and doing things with the hair. And they said, Coach, we need to braid your hair. I said, if we win the ACC championship, you can do what you want with my hair.

But I'm a man of my word, so I have to -- if that's what they want to -- I'm going to try to convince them and say, hey, guys, let's get through the tournament. I'd rather keep my hair as it is. Maybe I'll say it's been a good luck charm, we've won eight in a row, I haven't got a haircut. How can I bribe you another way? Because I'm going to get your rings for winning an ACC championship, can I get you an extra ice cream bar? Can I get you an extra Adidas Georgia Tech polo? What can I do in exchange for maybe waiting after the tournament?

But it's their call, it's their team. I'm just kind of overseeing it. It's their team, so whatever they want to do they can do.

Q. On the game, I thought Kyle Sturdivant was huge coming in the game off the bench for you guys. He had a huge impact in the game. It was really helpful



against the press where you had struggled in previous games. And then the other thing is I'm curious how relieved are you going to be when you get to Indianapolis and get into the hotel and you've talked about the pressure of just keeping your kids safe and eligible to play through the COVID stuff.

JOSH PASTNER: Yeah, well, first of all, Kyle Sturdivant was huge. We made some adjustments at shootaround with our press break stuff and Kyle Sturdivant was big for us today. How about Michael Devoe? How good was he today? MVP of the tournament, really proud of him. I thought Bubba Parham hit some big shots for us that first half, big three.

Khalid Moore hit a big three in the first half, had a big basket the second half. Moses Wright was -- I know they're big, but he hit some big shots for us. Jordan Usher was a stud, Rodney Howard gave us minutes, and we made free throws including Kyle down the stretch. We were 21 for 28 and we only had seven turnovers compared to their 25.

Do you know how small we are out there? Do you see Jose fronting and Balsa playing against Scottie Barnes? Goodness gracious, it just shows about our team.

It's daylight savings time so I appreciate everyone staying on tonight. Thank you so much. But we actually leave tomorrow morning at 11:00 a.m. We're flying to Indianapolis, we get to the hotel, we're going to quarantine once we get there, take us 24 to 36 hours. We test, and then once you clear that, you can start practicing Monday or Tuesday. Obviously the First Four play Thursday, but our first games will be either Friday or Saturday which we'll find -- so we will watch the selection show in Indianapolis when we get there. Our plane leaves tomorrow morning right around the corner at 11:00 a.m.

Thank you for allowing me to get everyone's questions. Out of respect to everybody, I wanted to make sure I answered everybody because you never know when you get back to this. You don't know. Do you know how hard it is? We're in the ACC. This is the ACC. Do you know how many wins we've had in the last two years? It's incredible. It's been an incredible run. God bless the ACC. God bless Georgia Tech. God bless the United States of America. Go Jackets! And Whoop There It Is with the ice cream.

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