

# Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Tuesday, March 12, 2024

Washington, D.C., USA

Capital One Arena

## Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets Coach Damon Stoudamire Naithan George Kyle Sturdivant

Postgame Press Conference



Notre Dame 84, Georgia Tech 80.

**DAMON STOUDAMIRE:** Proud of our guys for fighting back this evening. They did a really good job in the second half, and they gave us a chance to win the game.

Unfortunately somebody has to win and somebody has to lose. That last minute we had a couple turnovers.

But the biggest thing is in playing against Notre Dame, it's like Groundhog Day, because we lost the second game to them on offensive rebounding, as well. Again, they got that offensive rebound, and we just couldn't overcome.

But proud of the fellas for the way they played. They did a really good job and got back in the game. There was a lot of perseverance by them, showed a lot of character in not giving up. Proud of that.

**Q. Coach, it seemed like the team had to expend a lot of energy in that comeback. Do you feel like their legs got a little tired?**

**DAMON STOUDAMIRE:** I mean, we can make a lot of excuses, but there's no tomorrow. I think we got off to a slow start. I felt like we played -- I know we weren't intimidated by Notre Dame. I felt like we were intimidated by the moment at first.

Once the game settled in, second half I thought we did a tremendous job. We did everything we talked about in the second half that we should have done in the first. Again, that's the way the game goes.

But proud of the guys. You had to expend a lot of energy, but again, that's part of it.

**Q. Coach, you talked about the slow start. Was there something in particular on the floor that you were missing? It seemed like they had a lot of good looks, a lot of open looks. Was it that they're running something different, or did you just feel like your guys wasn't following the scout?**

**DAMON STOUDAMIRE:** No, I think that on the catch means on the catch. Sometimes you've got to -- sometimes you might have to send a message and foul a guy, too, to let him know this is what it's going to be.

But I just think we were really too passive. Even a couple times on Burton, we were supposed to be trapping the ball, screening, our bigs are back. Shrewsbury, the same thing. You have to really get into a guy like him because he's a rhythm player, and he found his rhythm and got open.

A couple of the other guys hit threes, but we can live with that. I have a motto: Threes beat you, twos don't. I think those early threes, it wasn't so much that for me, it's that you give guys confidence and you give them a rhythm.

We broke it in the second half, but by then -- we had a couple plays, like I said, and we didn't make them.

The moment. I'm big on that. I've played a lot of basketball, and I've coached a lot of basketball. I've really been in high-level games. I just thought the moment when we started the game, we weren't locked in, and that hurt us on the initial.

**Q. When you look at the totality of this first season at Tech, how do you assess how the season went and where it can go going forward?**

**DAMON STOUDAMIRE:** I think that we have a really bright future. I learned a lot this year. As we move forward, being in this conference and being where I'm trying to go, where we're trying to go as a program, you learn how to recruit. You learn the different styles of play



within the conference.

There's a lot of intel taken. You know from being in the pros, you -- I study coaches a lot, so I was studying coaches, studying philosophies, looking at the way guys play, and now I can construct my roster accordingly.

But it was a really good year. I got a chance to get Nait and coach Kyle, but as we move forward, there's a lot of work to do. But I think there's a lot of positive signs.

I look forward to moving forward. For me, it really starts now. It's time to try to go reconstruct the team and look at players. That's part of it.

**Q. Nait, can you speak to that, as well, the future of this program and how bright it is?**

NAITHAN GEORGE: I think the future is really bright just because we showed glimpses of what we could actually do. I didn't feel like we were able to do it this, but we fell short. But I feel like the young guys and everyone that's stepped up like Tafara, Baye and just seeing everyone come today, even Kowacie as well. Just seeing us build, I feel like the future is really bright.

**Q. Naithan, the last couple possessions there when you had the ball in your hands and a couple unfortunate turnovers, did Davis do something on defending the ball screen differently that gave you problems on that situation?**

NAITHAN GEORGE: A little bit. He weaked the ball screen, which pushed me back towards where all the traffic was. So I felt if I just took my time, pulled it back up, I could have found something better. But on the last possession he did, but the one before where I got the turnover, no.

**Q. Kyle, can you talk a little bit about playing your last game at Tech. I know it had to be an emotional night for you, and seeing your team rally in the second half to make it a game?**

KYLE STURDIVANT: Yeah, I think you hit it right on the head. This group never gave up on each other no matter how high or how low the season may have went. I'm super proud to be a part of this program and be on this team.

**Q. With Shrewsbury, what were your instructions about staying with him when he was out on the perimeter?**

DAMON STOU DAMIRE: I've been with a lot of good shooters. He can really shoot the ball. I thought a couple

times we were there. A couple times we weren't. But that's been his calling for them.

We needed to do a better job, obviously, but again, for me, it was the early threes. It wasn't so much as the game went on. You just can't give guys confidence. I've been fortunate, I've played with three of the top 10 percentage shooters in NBA history. There's a routine and a rhythm that goes, and if you're not there and you're not contesting shots, really getting off the ground, they don't see you, because that's what they practice each and every day.

**Q. I'm curious, it's been a -- roller coaster isn't the right word, but you've had some dramatic wins, great upsets, and then you've had some lulls. And then you've had a second half like today where all of a sudden it was going. I'm curious as you look forward to next year, what sort of ideas do you have in terms of building your team the way you want it?**

DAMON STOU DAMIRE: It's not really the ideas. For me it's the consistency. I'm trying to create young men that become creatures of habit. So attention to detail is something that I feel like we lacked when I got here, and I think that you've got to have attention to detail.

It's crazy because they'll tell you if you ask them how much we practiced on the floor the last month, we probably didn't even practice that much, but we watched a lot of film.

You have to critique yourself and you have to really pay attention to what you're doing mentally, because this time of the year, it's more mental than physical.

I'm not going to beat guys down. I understand. I coach from a player's perspective. I played the game. I'm not trying to win practice, I'm trying to win games.

But we have to be more consistent. Like when I tell you something, it's because I studied it. I'm not telling you because I'm guessing. I studied it.

The plan and the emphasis will be to get people to think like Coach Stoudamire moving forward. That to me has to be the emphasis.

These guys will tell you there's a lot of things that I talk to them about that they've probably never even heard of. Quit looking at the score, look at the possessions. How many possessions are left in the game, things of that nature. Picking on matchups. Forget what we're doing, picking on matchups. Most college guys just run 1-5 ball screens. Burton got four fouls. Everybody stay flat, whoever you're guarding, come set a screen, set a real screen, come off, let's see what we got.

I just think that once the mindset and the terminology and the fluidity of what we're doing, we won't have the inconsistent play. I think we have inconsistent play, again, because I relied on a couple younger guys, as well.

But it's a part of it. It's a growing process. I look forward to helping everyone grow. I look forward to the guys that will come in and helping them grow as players.

We've done enough in this first year to where I feel good about where we're going moving forward in the future.

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