

Atlantic Coast Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Thursday, March 6, 2025

Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets

Coach Nell Fortner

Dani Carnegie

Postgame Press Conference



Georgia Tech 72, Virginia Tech 57.

NELL FORTNER: Really, really proud of the defensive effort tonight by our players. I thought they were just -- boy, they just bore down really, really hard on the defensive end, and that was something that was just incredibly important for us to get this win, especially being four in the hole and on the losing side of the last four games.

Our defense was not up to par, but they have listened well. They've worked hard. We really got off to a good start with that.

Just winning that first quarter 14-13 was incredibly important for us because the last two quarters of the games that we -- the last two first quarters of the games we lost at Cal and at Stanford, we gave up 14 points a quarter, so that was a big hole to dig out of.

So super proud of the defensive effort tonight.

Q. Obviously you were only up two points with eight and a half minutes to go and you guys went on that 17-0 run. What were you seeing out there that allowed you to be so effective during that stretch?

DANI CARNEGIE: The 17-0 run, we just knew what we had and who we had on the court as a whole. We knew what type of players we are. We just competed. We knew we had to go to 0-0 at the end of the game and we just competed and tried everything to win because we knew where we want to be and where we want to go at, and we did everything to be there.

NELL FORTNER: Yeah, I thought, no question, the run was incredibly important, but it was all about the defense. I

thought our defense was, again, outstanding.

Virginia Tech runs their offense really, really well and you have to be disruptive against them because they run a lot of different actions, and if you don't know how you're guarding those actions, then you're going to be in trouble.

They got away with a few things that we didn't guard -- we weren't on top of. But as a whole, we just guarded them really, really well. There were really no easy shots on the floor for them except for Ekh in the first half when she shot the 4 for 4 from the three-point line. Cleaned that up a little bit, and I don't think she scored again in the second half until she hit that three at the end of the game.

Again, it was all about the defensive end.

Q. Nell, specifically with the defense, what did you feel like allowed you guys to be so effective? Was it just better focus, better discipline from your players? What do you attribute it to?

NELL FORTNER: I think those are two really important words with it, toughness, discipline. You have to be physical. You have to be willing to really be a physical defender and also be a smart defender. You have to know what the game plan was. You have to know the ways we were guarding their actions and execute it. We did that well today.

Q. After missing a game that obviously was a tough loss for your team, was it nice to get back on the court and in a role like this?

DANI CARNEGIE: Yes, it's always great to play with these type of players I have. Those are my sisters, so I love being around them and just being able to win with them is pure joy. I love it every second.

The fact that I sat out and we lost, I felt I needed to be out there with my teammates to help them do everything. But this win helped us a lot.

Q. Coach, it seems initially looking at this box score that Virginia Tech won a lot of the major stat



categories. How did your team stay even keeled and stay composed and not let those advantages for Virginia Tech get to your head?

NELL FORTNER: Okay, which stat category did they win because I want to know what you're talking about because we were great on the offensive boards. Which ones did they win?

Q. Mainly field goal percentage and three-point percentage in the first three quarters.

NELL FORTNER: Yeah. Now, the first half they were shooting threes. Yeah, they hit that. But outside of that, I thought our offensive rebounding was really good. It was on point. I thought we executed. We were executing what we were -- we were attacking what we wanted to attack offensively against their defense, and I thought we were successful in that.

But I feel good about holding them to 38 percent. That makes me a happy coach.

But yeah, we could do better at the three-point percentage. No, I was pleased. I was pleased.

Q. Nell, to follow up on the defense, what were you doing to limit Wenzel to just one basket tonight, and did you make any defensive adjustments on Ekh after her first half to the second half?

NELL FORTNER: Yeah, I can't tell you all my secrets now. But it really comes down to really wanting to defend one-on-one because when it comes -- you're playing kids that want to get downhill, and Wenzel has been really good getting downhill and getting to the rim.

You've got to really get locked in and defend that, and I thought we did a really good job of not letting her get to the rim when she wanted to because she can do that at will. But we didn't let her do that today. That was just a disciplined, a locked-in, focused defense right there.

But at the end of the day, defense comes from the heart. It just comes from your guts and your will to win, and that's what we showed today.

With Ekh, it was like looking Kara Dunn in the eye and saying, okay, come on, are you going to defend her or not. Boy, she looked at us and she goes, she's not scoring again. I love it when kids get like that, when they get locked in like that. She looked at us and she goes, she's not scoring again. And she didn't, until the end of the half.

Q. Y'all get another shot at NC State, a team that you

lost to at home earlier in the season. You guys came in on a down slope and they came in hotter than any team in the country arguably. What are you looking at to take them down, maybe go on another run?

NELL FORTNER: You've got to take away their three. Madison Hayes killed us the first time we played them. I think she was 4 for 4 from the three, and that was tough. That's tough to overcome. It was tough to overcome Ekh's when she was 4 for 4. We can't let that happen again. You've got to defend all those players, and NC State has some really good players. They get downhill on you. They're big. They're long. It was a good -- I thought it was a good ballgame against them. We just gave up four threes at the wrong time in that game we played them at home.

Q. Dani, Coach mentioned that defense comes from the heart. You have to want to play defense. What did you see with you guys' defensive effort, especially in that fourth quarter when you guys pulled away?

DANI CARNEGIE: I seen that we wanted it. We actually wanted it. We talked to each other through everything. We were on the court communicating loud through the loud which was very loud. We overheard each other because we wanted it so much. We wanted to go to the next step each time, every time.

We know what we had to do, so we dug our heels in and stepped up and played defense.

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