

Atlantic Coast Conference Men's Basketball Championship

Tuesday, March 7, 2023

Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets

Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

Coach Josh Pastner

Kyle Sturdivant

Miles Kelly

Postgame Press Conference



Georgia Tech 61, Florida State 60

JOSH PASTNER: First off, I want to give a shout-out to Coach Hamilton from Florida State. I have said this many times: He deserves to be in the basketball Hall of Fame, and I hope he's nominated. Somebody hopefully nominates him for what he's done, and I just think he deserves to be there, and I'm hoping at some point he gets in. I just want to make that point on Coach Hamilton. He deserves to be in the basketball Hall of Fame, and I hope if he's nominated, or if he hasn't been nominated, somebody nominates him because he deserves to be there, what he's done in his career and the places that he's been.

Secondly, I want to give an incredible shout-out to our young men, our team. They had to fight, scrap, kick, claw their way to find to be able to win this game. I'm just so darned proud of these guys.

In Georgia Tech history, in the last 35 years when they started keeping the turnovers, so in 35 years prior to this year, Georgia Tech only had five or less turnovers in Georgia Tech history since they've kept the stat 35 years ago seven total times. David Teel back there, you probably remember that, you've been around. But David, you look like you're 35, so I say that with all due respect.

I actually nominated David Teel for the Hall of Fame in the media day last year, too.

But that being said, in 35 years, we had in 35 years, seven times in Georgia Tech history, five or less turnovers, this year we've done it six. This was our sixth time today. Just so darned proud of these guys.

Kyle Sturdivant, who's our team captain, play as well as any guard, not only in the ACC but in all of college basketball, and Miles Kelly, man, has that guy gotten so good. He is one of the best players in the ACC and in the country. I'm just so darned proud of these young men.

I thought a huge charge by Deebo late in the game, his toughness. That's what we're about, our defense and our toughness to be able to do that. And Lance Terry had some big plays defensively. Hit a big shot, as well, too.

Then Ja'von Franklin, I've been on him, man, you can get 20 rebounds, I promise you you can get 20, and he had 19 this afternoon. He had a triple-double last week, he had another double-double. We talked about signing the bubble, you sign the bubble if you get six defensive rebounds, four offensive or 10 total, and he's been a guy that's signed his name all over our bubble because of the amount of times he's earned the right to sign the bubble.

Just a great win. I'll turn it over to these guys, and a great shout-out to my three bosses back there, Mr. Batt, Mr. Palumbo and Mr. Stricklin for them being here, too, so I'm glad we got the win for those three, too. I'll turn it over to these two gentlemen.

Q. Josh, you guys didn't play well in the first half, played about as poorly as you could offensively, but were only down 10. What was the message in the locker room, and what got you guys going offensively in the second half?

JOSH PASTNER: Yeah, we talked to the guys. I thought, again, got to give a lot of credit to the assistant coaches who have done a great job with just the preparation, and want to give a great shout-out to the assistant coaches and to the game plan.

Then obviously we were actually okay defensively in some areas the first half because we held them to 40 percent from the field and 20 from three, but we just weren't scoring. We had four turnovers, and we just weren't -- our pace was slow, and it could have been just one of those things that you're in our conference tournament, and you're playing the first game and just trying to get your wind back,



and we're not playing a lot of guys. Jalon Moore played seven minutes and he did a great job when he was in there, but other than that, we really played five guys.

Guys just kind of had to get their wind underneath them, and just so proud of these guys.

When you're on the ropes, you have two options. And we were on the ropes, not only in this game at halftime but we were on the ropes in the end of January. And when you're on the ropes, you have two options. You either get in a fetal position and you lay down and just take it, or you're going to fight, kick, claw, eye gouge, scrap your way off of that rope and find a way to keep fighting and doing what you've got to do. That's a credit and that's a sign of these guys' character and their internal fortitude and their toughness and their resolve to be able to fight like they did off the ropes.

Just I can't say enough about these guys.

Q. Miles, you were really looking for the ball in the second half. What were you feeling? And Kyle, what did you see from Miles?

MILES KELLY: Yeah, I just knew we needed to get going. I know in the first half we couldn't really get going offensively, so I just knew we needed a little spark offensively in the second half.

KYLE STURDIVANT: Yeah, I thought we were just a little sluggish in the first half. Second half we picked up on energy, and I think shots just started to fall, and credit that to Miles, too, he got his energy up and he started to cook.

Q. Coach Pastner, at halftime you're down 10, incredible manpower disadvantage, numbers and height. You're down 10. Did you think about changing the approach? Obviously you didn't change it, I just wondered if you'd thought twice about it.

JOSH PASTNER: Well, you're a Georgia Tech grad, right, so you understand when you're at Georgia Tech and to be able to graduate from Georgia Tech, you've got to have some toughness to be able to be at a school like Georgia Tech. It's one of the elite curriculums, the toughness to be at the school and to be a student-athlete. And I knew these guys had the toughness, and I thought it was a real Georgia Tech way that they just kicked, clawed their way back, and being able to take a lead on that.

I had no doubt that we were going to be able to scrap our way back because that's what we've done over this last month. We've won seven of nine, and we've just been at a really, really high level in the way we've played the right

way. Kyle Sturdivant had seven assists.

We won the second half. Yes, we gave up a big size advantage, but our toughness, our scrap, our 50/50 balls, our motor, that's the power of being at Georgia Tech. You develop that great toughness in there at an incredible school. I'm just really in awe and proud of where these guys -- I can't say enough about these gentlemen.

Q. Kyle, I want to go back to something a couple minutes ago to what your coach said about having two ways to go, you can give up or fight. What was the discussion among the players at that point in the season, and did you guys talk about that? How did you come to the conclusion that you were going to be able to finish the season the way you did or have?

KYLE STURDIVANT: Yeah, we talked about it. We talked about it one day before practice, just kind of hearing where everybody was coming from, and we knew we had the talent to do anything we wanted in the room. So we just had to depend on each other and really had to double down on what we could control, and the rest was going to take care of itself.

Q. Last time you played Pittsburgh, you played them relatively close in the first half before Pitt pulled away in the second half. What do you look forward to most about seeing Pitt a third time?

JOSH PASTNER: First of all, congratulations to Coach Capel on being ACC Coach of the Year. They they had an incredible year. I would tell you that I thought we played really well against Pitt the first time. Sometimes when you play a game and you think, man, we blew the game or we should have won the game, Pittsburgh earned that win when they beat us. They played at a high level. If we didn't -- I thought we played really well, and they just made big shots. They were really good. That's why they're a really good team. They earned that win. They made big plays.

If we're going to want to beat Pittsburgh, we're going to have to be really good again, and we're going to have to try to hopefully make them have to -- if they're going to beat us, they're going to have to earn it like they did last time. They're a good basketball club, and obviously Coach Capel has done an incredible job. Congratulations to him for Coach of the Year. He's done a heck of a job, and they've got a really good team.

Q. You decided to let them play at the end and not call a time-out. I know every coach has a different philosophy at the end. Can you talk about the decision to let them play?

JOSH PASTNER: Yeah, you know, look, in the Georgia State game and the Georgia game when we won at the end, we called time-out to set up a play, and in this game I had a feeling that let them play. I thought Kyle and Miles -- they had it. Lance, Ja'von, those guys had it. Kyle made an excellent read on a back door to Lance, and then Ja'von cleaned it up there with the offensive rebound.

Just great execution, and when you have good players, good players make coaches look good, and that was just strictly on the players, nothing with me. It's the players deserve the credit.

Q. If you could actually talk about that play, you spread the floor it looked like. How did you try to create there?

KYLE STURDIVANT: You know, that's our famous play. We've been very successful running that play. I kind of saw how they was helping off me pretty much the whole game, and I told my teammates, make sure we're cutting back door, so when I saw the guy was kind of lifted, I threw it to Lance and he attacked the rim violently. I thought it was a foul, but Ja'von, credit to him to go and get that put-back.

Q. Miles, you're one of the better guards in the league. You've faced Pitt now a few times and their backcourt. What are some things that you have to watch out for what their guards bring to the game?

MILES KELLY: Right, I think we've just got to play our game. Just play Georgia Tech basketball, and as long as we do that, I think we'll come out with the win. We've got to stay focused, keep the same mindset. This was a great game today but we've got a game tomorrow, and we've got to get ready for that so we can get the win.

Q. Kyle, I'm curious, the first half obviously you guys were not yourselves. In the second half at the start of it I think you were down by 11. What was the most discouraging thought you allowed yourself of man, this isn't going how we want or I don't want to lose or whatever maybe crossed your mind as that was happening?

KYLE STURDIVANT: It really wasn't no discouraging thought to be honest. This is a team inside of it. We saw "Creed" the other day, and this is what we watched the movie for. We knew we was going to be down, but it's never over until the game is over, and that's why we fought.

JOSH PASTNER: "Creed 3," we watched the movie, and I

was using that analogy to the guys, and we talked about it, and that is great movie. If you haven't seen the movie, unbelievable job. Michael -- did he direct it? What a great job by Michael B. Jordan, incredible actor, and that was an incredible movie. It was just awesome.

If you haven't seen "Creed 3," I would recommend it, and I'm not Michael B. Jordan's agent, even though I wish I was. But that was a heck of a movie. These guys performed like Adonis Creed with the toughness and we used the analogies out of the movie. It was pretty cool.

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