

# Atlantic Coast Conference Women's Basketball Championship

Friday, March 3, 2023

Greensboro, North Carolina, USA

## Virginia Tech Hokies Coach Kenny Brooks Elizabeth Kitley Taylor Soule

Postgame Press Conference

Virginia Tech 68, Miami 42.

KENNY BROOKS: I'm not going to be long. We need to get home and get some rest. But phenomenal defensive effort from our group. They've been playing really, really good defense last month or two months of the season, and I thought they were really locked in, they were focused.

They're connected. They're very connected with each other and what's going on on both ends of the floor. Very, very pleased with what they're doing, and they looked good. I'm very, very proud of them.

To avenge a loss, Miami beat us in Miami, Miami is a very good basketball team who I think has possibilities to advance in the tournament. Katie does a tremendous job, and for us to come back out and play the way we did today, we knew that we were a better team than had faced them at the first of the year, and we wanted to be able to come out and show it. So very good start for us, and very proud of our kids.

**Q. The first meeting they put up 77 points on you and shot 54 percent from the field. What was different about how you defended them and handled them this time around?**

KENNY BROOKS: We were connected. Again, Katie does a tremendous job. That team is a really good basketball team, but when we watched that game, I don't think we had anyone who played well. We had some uncharacteristic mistakes. I think that's the infamous meeting that I had with Taylor Soule after that game, and the lightbulb has been on ever since. We knew, you can't go and play against a really good basketball team and



make uncharacteristic mistakes like that.

I just thought we were really connected like we've been pretty much the whole month.

**Q. For either of the players, this was nine wins in a row now. How have you guys just steadily improved over this time, and can you speak to just how the chemistry is right now?**

ELIZABETH KITLEY: I think we really found our defense again. I think in the middle of ACC play we kind of lost that a bit. Like you said, we weren't playing together or communicating very well, but once we made that a focus again, I think we've been playing a lot better and more together and just a lot more connected. And that gives us better offensive looks and energy on that end.

TAYLOR SOULE: I'll piggy-back on that. I definitely agree with our defense. And offensively with everything we do, whether it's practice, games, just having confidence in ourselves, also each other, I think that helps go a long way, especially when the shots aren't falling.

I think Coach a long time back talked about it's like 95 percent and 5 percent, and the 95 percent, are you boxing out, getting second-chance opportunities, things like that. So I think we've focused a lot more on that, so obviously it's paying off.

KENNY BROOKS: You were listening.

TAYLOR SOULE: I listen. Do I always execute?

**Q. For Taylor, I was hoping you could explain about that lightbulb went on and how you've been playing since. What's been the change?**

TAYLOR SOULE: I think after Coach and I had the talk, it was definitely really honest just about goals and where I want to be as an individual and where I want to help this team. So I think offensively just getting to my spots, being more confident, getting workouts in and film with him.

Just working smarter, not so hard. And my teammates



have a lot of confidence in allow me so I can knock down shots and get to the basket. It's working well, but definitely got to thank these two.

**Q. Kenny, a lot of teams that are as talented as you guys are offensively with different ways to beat teams maybe don't do the other things well. You're talking highly about the defense, also rebounding. I think it was the fifth time in the nine games you guys have out-rebounded somebody by 10 or more. What do you like about the way the team is attacking the glass and 25 second-chance points today?**

KENNY BROOKS: Yeah, you know, we kind of took on the mantra. A lot of people say they want to be physical, and they talk about just the defensive end. We talked about that right as we started the win streak. We want to be physical on both ends, not only the defensive end, but the offensive end, as well.

That means setting up your cuts, getting to your sports, not being pushed off the ball, starting your offense where you want to start the offense and not allowing the defense to control the narrative. Ever since we've been doing that, we've been more aggressive on both ends.

We're extremely talented on the offensive end. We've got a lot of different ways to beat you. Obviously Elizabeth, it starts with her, but Taylor Soule was the All Conference player. Georgia Amooore has been playing tremendous the last month. Kayana Traylor has played well for us lately. Cayla King can really step up and knock them down.

So we're extremely talented down on the offensive end, but I'm really proud because the defense is what allows us to really become a great basketball team. The first thing Katie said to me after the game was it was a great defensive effort, and we've had a few of those in a row, so we're starting to click.

We actually simplified our defensive schemes. This group is the smartest group I've ever been around. They will come to me and they will talk about different ways, and I'm listening to them because they're on the floor. They're talking about different ways to cover, different ways to do certain things. And we simplified our scouts because they're so smart, they were trying to take away everything. We get to a point where we're going to take away some stuff, but then we're going to guard, and they've been guarding the last month, and that's what's made us really good.

**Q. Kenny, what about the three big men look did you like? You played Liz and D Mo and Taylor all together. You guys out-rebound them by 23?**

KENNY BROOKS: We've actually gone to it out of necessity. One of the smaller guards gets into foul trouble. But we like that lineup. It allows us to do a lot of different things. D Mo's versatility. D'asia Gregg, her versatility allows us to play big and she the can step out on the perimeter. She knocked down a couple threes tonight, which really extends the defense. She's a really good passer from that area.

And then they have to pick their poison which smaller guard is going to guard Taylor Soule. It allows us to have some mismatches, but our offense still flows extremely smooth regardless of whether we have a smaller lineup, a traditional lineup or even a bigger lineup.

**Q. You have a bunch of players on your roster that have a bunch of postseason experience. How much of a luxury is it to have that at this time in the postseason?**

KENNY BROOKS: For them? For me? It is. We're extremely mature. After the North Carolina game, I commended them because I told them that they were more mature than their head coach during that game. I was losing my mind and they were just calm as all get-out. It's because they play so many minutes that they've seen every different scenario, so they don't panic and they just understand, hey, let's get it done.

Elizabeth and Georgia, they're like silent leaders introverts a little bit except for on their podcasts. Then you add Taylor Soule to the mix, an extreme extrovert, would you say, Liz?

ELIZABETH KITLEY: Yes.

KENNY BROOKS: And that right there just is a great balance. They do a tremendous job of policing themselves, talking about it, communicating what they need to be, and they're as connected as any group that I've ever had on both ends of the floor.

**Q. I believe after the first meeting you said you guys didn't handle their physicality too well. Do you feel like you guys were a tougher bunch today than the last time?**

KENNY BROOKS: Yeah, we have. We controlled the narrative. They did a really job with speeding us up the first game. We were putting the onus on Georgia too much to break the pressure and do so many other different things. Since that time a few other teams tried it, and we've implemented Taylor Soule as a secondary ball handler, and she's done a really good job of just really

bringing the ball up the floor, easing some of the pressure off of Georgia.

I've given her a couple packages to call. It's kind of like the wildcat in football or something. She's had a couple packages when she breaks the press, she can call a certain play, and it keeps us in a flow, and I really like that.

That allows us to keep Georgia fresher and to be able to -- we're a finesse team, we really are. We can run some pretty offense, but we can get down and dirty, too, and rebound the basketball and go out there and defend. They're tough. They're tough.

**Q. Coach Brooks, third matchup against the Duke Blue Devils coming up tomorrow. How would you assess the first one that didn't go your way, the double-digit loss, the last one the double-digit win. Is this one going to shape up to be a tight back-and-forth battle?**

KENNY BROOKS: Well, I would assume so. Two teams that are familiar with each other. As a matter of fact, I think we played them a couple weeks ago. That's the only benefit that we have right now.

I mean, obviously it's extremely late. We've got to get back and rest. We're not going to have a whole lot of time to prep. It's one of my beefs with the -- it's almost better to get the fourth seed than it is the third seed. So we've got to play the late game and turn around and play a really quick game.

At this point of year there's no use in complaining. It's just all about hey, we could play in an hour and they still would be out there ready to play. But it's going to be a tough battle. We know they're going to try to be physical, and we know they're going to try to learn from the last game that we played them.

We kept everything vanilla today. No offense to anybody, but we didn't run a whole lot of the plays today that we're going to run tomorrow. We know they're scouting. We know they're watching. We'll have some wrinkles. I'm sure Kara will have some wrinkles for their group, and I think both teams will be ready. It's a lot at stake, so I think everybody will be ready to battle tomorrow.

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