

**Virginia Tech Women's Basketball
Head Coach Kenny Brooks Q&A Highlights
Purdue Game Press Conference
Dec. 5, 2019**

Opening statement:

"That's a good win for us. Obviously, Purdue is a very well-coached team, they are a very experienced team and we knew that we were going to have to play hard and try to disrupt them to get them out of what they wanted to do because they are a veteran group who have been playing well together. I think they were actually receiving votes [in the AP Poll], so for us to be able to come out here – we weren't always perfect, but I thought we had some stretches throughout the game that showed what we can be. Very proud of the kids, we challenged them during certain periods of the game and they all responded. This one will bode well for us in the future, learning and trying to form our identity. Any time you can win while you're doing that is always a good thing so we'll chalk this one up, it's a good win for us and we'll continue on."

On winning the program's fifth straight Big Ten/ACC Challenge game:

"I wish they were all of our conference games if that's the case. It is [a source of pride for the program]. I know yesterday the ACC didn't have good day and so that's another point of emphasis as you go out and you talk about it, yes you want to win the game, you want to win it for Virginia Tech and for Hokie Nation but also when you stack your program up against someone else's you want to do your part. We talked about it at stretches throughout our practice and they came out and they responded."

On handling Purdue's pressure and having less turnovers than in the Georgia game:

"That again was a point of emphasis because when we played Georgia, we had 10 3-pointers to their one, we outrebounded them by 18 and it was the lack of free throw shooting and turnovers that kind of doomed us in that game. We talked about it and we broke it down to them in simple terms. 'If you have eight less turnovers, and you get eight more shots, and you make four of those, two of them are probably going to be 3's, so those are points that you can use that will help you win.' They knew that, in the Georgia game we kind of lacked focus in certain stretches. Tonight, we were much better at it. We still had some unforced turnovers but the way we want to play, we're probably going to have some. I don't think you can eliminate the turnovers, just try to minimize them and that's what our thought process was."

On taking control of the game during the third quarter:

"Take nothing away from them and give them credit, we felt like they scored some of those baskets and had that run because we stopped paying attention to detail. I think they beat us down the court a couple times in transition. A lot of that has to do with our foul situation. Lydia [Rivers] was in foul trouble for most of the game so Trinity [Baptiste] and Liz [Kitley] had to play a few more minutes than they are accustomed to for stretches. I think it caught up to Liz a couple times, they got a couple easy baskets, then we just lost focus a couple times. We

regrouped, we talked about it to lock it. I thought Aisha Sheppard did a really good job and got going.

She's a work in progress in who she is and what she is going to be. She is so used to not being the focal point. She's so used to having Taylor Emery on the other side of the court where the focus is on Taylor. [There was a timeout] and I let my assistants talk to the team and I just had a one-on-one conversation with [Sheppard] because she thought she was open. I told her 'You're not open. You are the focal point, they are going to guard you as soon as you come across half court.' I pointed to a spot on the floor I said 'Taylor Emery is not over there anymore so you're the focal point. You're the person that they are going to guard, so now you have to run a little bit harder, you have to cut a little bit harder, you do those things, then you'll get open and get some of your shots.' Then she took off and got a couple good looks. I thought she was a little more aggressive, she was a little lethargic in the beginning of the game and she can't do that in order for us to be successful."

On Aisha Sheppard scoring seven points in a 10-2 run that opened up the game:

"That was the timeout speech, yeah. Sheppard and I we have a great relationship and I can kind of tell her some things and she can fully trust me. I think she took me at my word and as soon as the game was over with she said 'Can we watch film tomorrow?' because she's learning. She's learning how to be a focal point. That takes a little bit because when you have stars on one end like a Taylor Emery and people are double teaming her and watching her, you kind of run free. First few games of this year, no one really knew who Aisha Sheppard was, and then now they do. They're going to come out there and they're going to guard her differently. A lot of that happened vs. Belmont. She came up to me in Belmont and said 'Hey Coach, they're face guarding me'. I looked at her and said 'Congratulations, you've arrived, they know who you are so let's learn how to beat that because people are going to continue to do that.' I'm very proud of the way she responded in that second half."

On having freshman Taylor Geiman back on the floor after missing the first five games of the season:

"You know it's probably still a little bit frustrating for her and me as well because I saw what she was in the summertime and she's not going to be that right now. She needs a couple game underneath her belt. Some of the other freshmen, they're still trying to get their 'sea legs' so to speak and she's behind that. Right now, I'm using my honorary psychology degree to make sure she understands that she's not going to just walk out there and be what she was in high school. It's a process. She's behind in that process but she adds more depth to our guard position and she's going to get better and better. I think she had an assist tonight which was pretty good, but she's going to get better and better and offer something for us that's going to be pretty good."

On the lessons learned in the last three games:

"[I've learned] that we have potential. We've played really well in spurts. We looked really good in sports, almost in dominating fashion. But we've also had spurts where we just really lost focus. A lot of that has to do with everyone has to get used to their new roles. Aisha Sheppard and Dara Mabrey have been put in more prominent roles. They put in a lot of minutes, you can

throw Trinity Baptiste in there. Lydia Rivers and Taja Cole, I'm screaming at them to bring their leadership. It's kind of a tricky situation because they are almost looking at me and I can read their minds thinking 'We don't really know what it's like here yet, we're still figuring it out.' They are all going to have to figure it out quickly so that we can stay on pace. I think that we can compete and compete with a lot of teams. If we get going and understanding our roles and appreciating them and capitalizing off of them, I think we can be a team that can be in the mix."