

Hype & Humility

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Introduction

Three-and-a-half months ago, Virginia Tech beat Providence 107-101 in an [overtime thriller](#). Aside from being a very entertaining game, it looked like the breakout game for Greek freshman Neoklis Avdalas. In a season that's been dominated by elite freshmen, it seemed like another one joined the conversation: 33 points, 6 assists, 5 threes, 66.3 TS%. The film was even better than the statline; he was drawing comparisons to Luka Dončić. He kept drilling off-the-dribble threes, stepback jumpshots, and Providence just couldn't speed him up. At 6'9", with that shooting touch, playmaking ability, and guard skills, he captured the nation's attention. He had drawn buzz from his work in Greece the year before, but he had just showcased his ability on an American stage.

That was game two of the 2025-26 season. Unfortunately, the season has not followed the same promise as that game; nowhere near it, in fact. A [mock draft from SB Nation](#) ranked Avdalas as a lottery pick a few days after his 33-point game. Entering conference play, *No Ceilings* had Avdalas going at pick 20 on [their mock draft](#). Now, he isn't even ranked on [Tankathon's 83-man big board](#). They must expect him to stay at Virginia Tech. If he were to declare, he would likely be a second-round pick. ESPN's most recent [big board](#) has him slotted at pick 43.

A Tale of Two Halves

The story of Avdalas's season can be summed up by his first two games.

	Opponent	PTS	FG	TS%	AST	Game Score
Game 1	Charleston So.	8	3-13	27.7%	9	6.5
Game 2	Providence	33	13-23	66.3%	6	25.9

Figure 1: Neoklis Avdalas's first two games of 2025-26

Game 1 was a struggle, and Game 2 was absolutely brilliant. Avdalas has had moments of excellence this season, but he hasn't sustained it. Every great game is followed by five bad-to-okay performances.

His next standout game came against Western Carolina. Avdalas scored 30 points on 10-for-17 shooting, made four threes, and went 6-8 from the free throw line. Those were his only scoring explosions. In twelve non-conference games, Avdalas scored 15+ points just three times. However, it was his playmaking that stood out as much as his scoring. Neoklis had eight games with five or more assists, and five games with 5+

assists and just 1 turnover. His playmaking ability both at 6'9" and as a freshman is extremely impressive.

While Avdalas didn't set the world on fire every time he took the court, he still posted some solid games in non-conference play:

Date	Opp	Res	MP	FG	FGA	3P	3PA	FT	FTA	eFG%	TS%	TRB	AST	STL	BLK	TOV	PF	PTS	GmSc
11/8/25	Providence	W	34	13	23	5	8	2	4	67.4%	66.3%	5	6	1	1	2	2	33	25.9
12/11/25	Western Carolina	W	33	10	17	4	8	6	8	70.6%	72.1%	3	2	1	2	3	1	30	22.6
12/14/25	Maryland Eastern Shore	W	29	4	9	2	5	6	8	55.6%	62.5%	2	7	3	0	3	2	16	15.2
11/12/25	Saint Joseph's	W	25	6	12	2	5	0	1	58.3%	56.1%	5	7	0	2	1	0	14	14.4
12/2/25	South Carolina	W	35	5	11	1	4	2	2	50.0%	54.4%	8	8	0	0	1	5	13	12.3

Figure 2: Avdalas's five best non-conference games

Conference play has been where the wheels fell off. In non-conference play, Avdalas's scoring was inconsistent, but his efficiency was decent. Unfortunately, it has taken a nosedive since the Hokies began conference play.

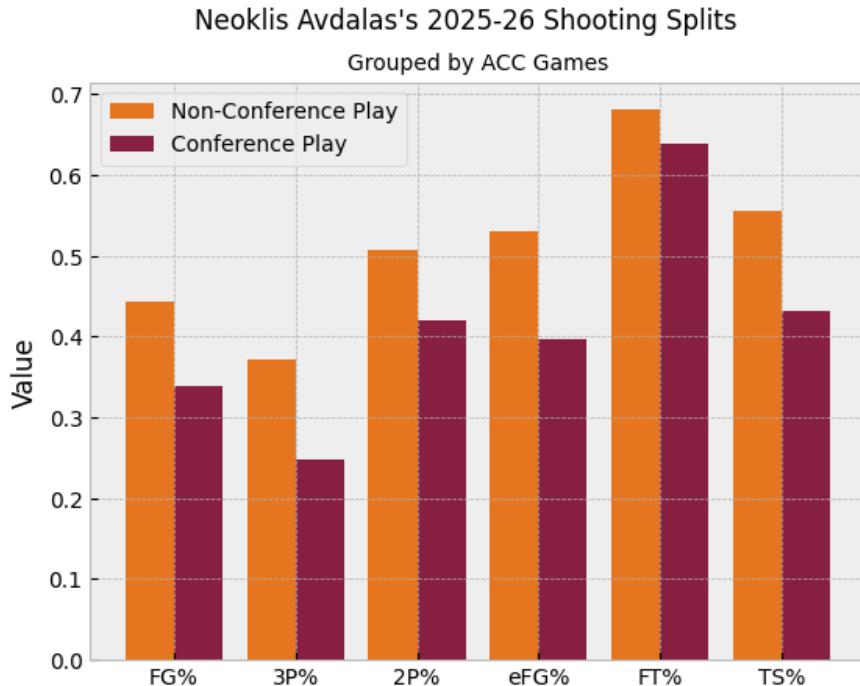


Figure 3

Avdalas was shooting the three fairly well before conference play; however, he's been a sub-70% free throw shooter all season. Free throw percentage is usually the better indicator of shooting ability for scouting purposes, so Avdalas rocking a 63.8 *FT%* and a 24.7 *3P%* in conference play casts further doubt on his shooting ability. He shot 35.7% from three and 70.3 *FT%* in his last season in Greece, so this is certainly an area of Avdalas's game that needs to grow.

Unfortunately for Avdalas, he has been arguably the least efficient volume shooter in ACC conference play. Here's how he compares to the rest of the ACC in terms of *eFG%*, *TS%*, and *3P%*:

ACC Effective Field Goal Percentage vs. Field Goal Attempts

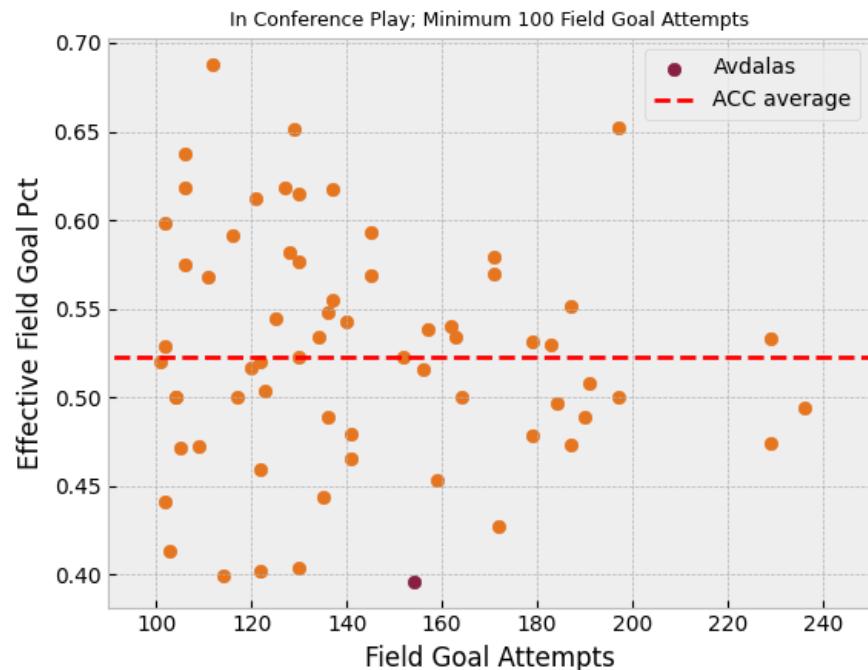


Figure 4

ACC True Shooting Percentage vs. Field Goal Attempts

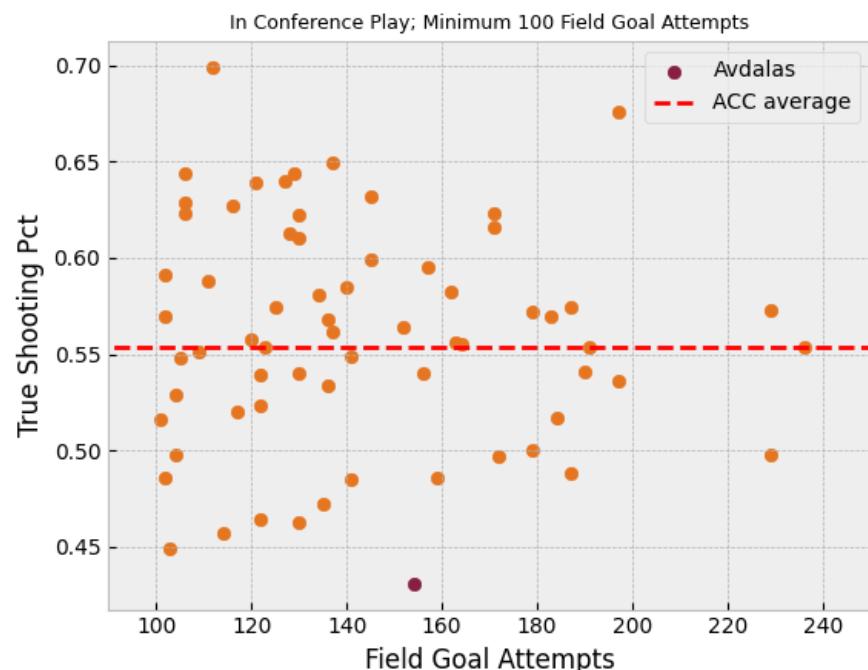


Figure 5

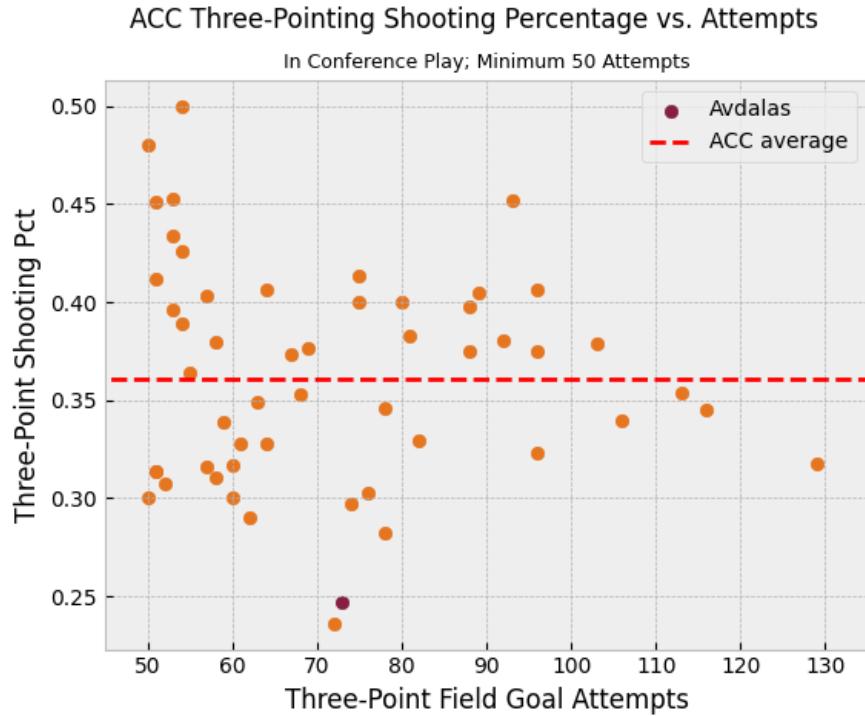


Figure 6

Along with Avdalas having a miserable time shooting the three, nearly half of his attempts have been threes (.474 3PAr in conference play). It is a lethal combination of volume and inaccuracy.

Aside from shooting, Avdalas's stats have dipped across the board:

Stat	Non-Conference	Conference
PTS	14.6	10.1
REB	3.5	2.8
AST	5.0	4.7
TOV	1.9	2.5
STL + BLK	1.5	0.8
GmSc	11.6	5.8

Figure 7: Avdalas's averages grouped by scheduling

On some level, this was expected. The ACC is a very loaded conference; four ACC teams have been ranked for almost the entire season. Conference play is quite a gauntlet for any player. The games are more physical, it's chippy, and the opponents are familiar, which means there are more tailored gameplans for each match. It can be brutal for freshmen especially, an example being Egor Dëmin's drop off at BYU last year.

Avdalas's playmaking took a step back as well. We already saw that he's averaging less assists and more turnovers. He's not putting as much pressure on the defense as he did in non-conference play.

Stat	Non-Conference	Conference
Games Played	12	15
Games w/ 10+ PTS	9	8
Games w/ 10+ PTS, 5+ AST	5	3
TOV%	12.75%	17.73%
AST/TO Ratio	2.61	1.87
FTr	0.348	0.305

Figure 8: Neo's offensive struggles in conference play

These struggles have quelled the hype surrounding Avdalas. However, similar to Dëmin, there is still much to be intrigued about.

Winds of Change?

Surely, it's not all bad news for Neoklis, right? It's not! His turnover rate has increased, but Avdalas is not necessarily a high-turnover, especially relative to how offensively involved he is.

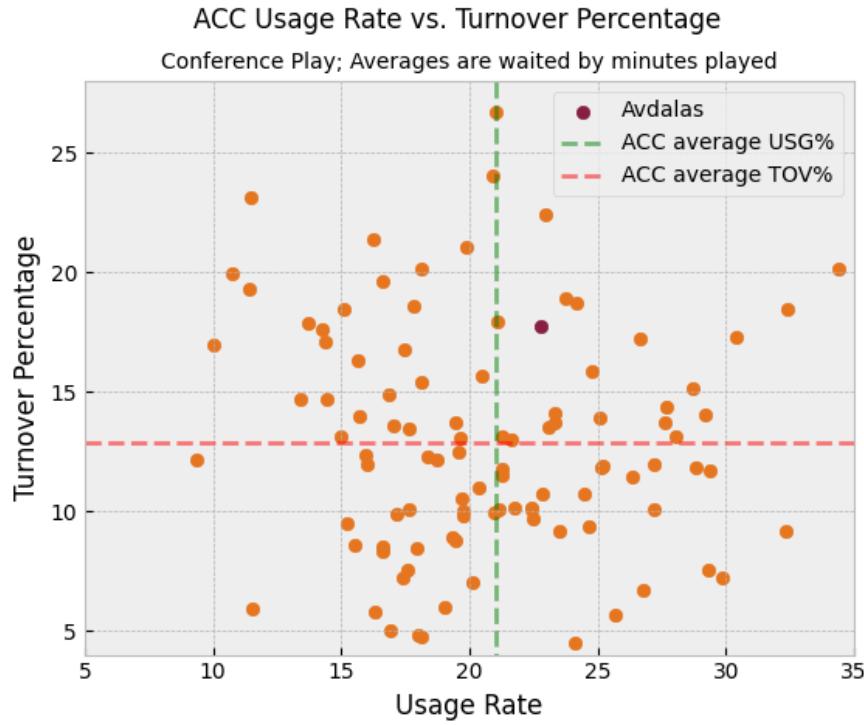


Figure 9

This is encouraging to see. Avdalas has been struggling with his shot, but despite having a large amount of responsibility on offense, he doesn't have a huge turnover percentage. That's a striking display of maturity from a 20-year-old freshman who's been toiling in ACC conference play.

At the time of writing this, Avdalas just had his cleanest three-game stretch in conference play. From Valentine's Day to February 21st, he posted a combined 17

assists to just a single turnover. On the 21st, he played arguably his best conference game in a blowout against Wake Forest. If it wasn't his best, then it was his finest effort since January 7th against Stanford.

Date	Points	FG	3PT	FT	Assists	Turnovers	Game Score
1-7-26	21	7-15	1-5	6-8	3	3	12.2
2-21-26	17	6-14	4-9	1-4	7	0	13.8

Table 1: Avdalas's best ACC games

The mistake-free playmaking is what led me to give his most recent game the edge, but regardless, it was a much better performance than what we have seen in about six weeks.

Defense? In This Economy?

Again, in addition to these positive signs, Avdalas is still only 20 years old. He is a freshman playing in a very strong ACC and his biggest issue is his shooting splits. There are no questions about IQ, shot creation, or his playmaking ability. He debuted in Europe at 15 years old, and that maturity is visible every time he plays. His passing ability shines even brighter during fastbreak opportunities, where Avdalas makes great reads and pinpoint passes to streaking teammates. In addition to ability, his 6'9" frame gives him an advantage when seeing the floor, and that physical profile adds to his intrigue as a prospect.

Similarly to Luka, another area in which Avdalas needs to grow is a mixture of defense and physicality. He is 6'9", but he's listed at 215 pounds and has a 6'8" wingspan, meaning he doesn't have a standout defensive physical profile. His length is still enough to get blocks and steals. He's also shown that he doesn't shy away from contact, often attacking the rim and taking the contact on layup attempts. Avdalas is also very athletic, so his physical gifts are not really an issue. I believe Avdalas could exert more energy on defense. Obviously, he shoulders a lot of responsibility on offense, but only a few select players are begrudgingly afforded the allowance to give less effort on defense due to their offensive impact. Given how poorly Avdalas has played on certain nights, he doesn't meet that criteria.

This hole in Avdalas's game really stood out in the Virginia-Virginia Tech Derby. He had a tough game: 17 points (5-21 FG), 3-11 3PT, 8 rebounds, 4 assists, 5 turnovers. He wasn't lighting it up by any stretch. He had several moments of critical defensive lapses.

- He gets **beat off the dribble** by the ball handler just running in a straight line.
- Two very **half-hearted box out attempts** that allow an offensive rebound and a bucket.
- Instead of stunting and recovering, he's just **floating defensively on the weak side and contests late** on a corner three attempt by a 40% shooter.
- He **gives up on a De Ridder layup attempt** with 20 seconds left in overtime.
- Gets **cooked off the dribble** by Dallin Hall, he doesn't get down in that defensive stance very often.

This was a triple-overtime game, but if he's going to shoot poorly, he needs to find other ways to contribute to the game. For contrast, Avdalas's teammate Jaden Schutt is smaller than him, but Schutt works much harder on defense, and it was showing in this game. Schutt was fighting through screens, putting a body on nearby Cavaliers to clear the glass. Just general effort things. This game highlights a motor issue, and the same habits emerged in the Hokies' [most recent game](#) against Wake Forest, despite his resurgent offensive performance.

Barring a late season surge, Avdalas would greatly benefit from staying at school for another season. It would afford him the opportunity to further improve his shooting touch, which would lead to a stronger and more complete season, and a higher draft position. He was previously in the draft process before committing to Virginia Tech, so he has shown that he is willing to wait that extra time. Virginia Tech does not have a very strong résumé this season, so a tournament appearance to boost his stock is likely out of the question. His shooting has gotten ghastly in conference play and it will cause his draft stock to slip into the second round. Virginia Tech has a strong offense and a cast of good three-point shooters, so spacing and complementary talent can't be blamed. As I discussed, his profile contains a lot to love, but his playmaking process will be capped if he can't consistently punish teams for allowing him to shoot. Many of his three-point attempts were high-difficulty attempts coming off the dribble or the pick and roll, but his 66 *FT%* on the season will certainly stick out to scouts. He has shown comfort hitting catch-and-shoot threes, so again, the difficulty of most of his attempts potentially causes his percentages to look worse than his true ability.

Of course, there is the argument that he should declare following the 2025-26 season. Even with the shooting struggles, it is still very likely he will be drafted. He could immediately adopt a pro-level development plan, get reps in the G-League, or NBA if it goes well. This approach is possible, but it's short on guarantees. Avdalas is not a project; he's shown enough already to surpass that distinction. He just needs to iron that jump shot.

Avdalas is a fascinating prospect who offers a very mature and diverse offensive skillset. He needs improvement in consistency, shooting touch, and defensive motor, as shown by a difficult stretch in ACC play. However, given the level of offensive command at such a young age, optimistic scouts and teams will likely be unable to resist drafting Avdalas if he falls to their selection.

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