Baseball

[Jose Alvarado: The straw that stirs Georgia Tech’s drink (ajc.com)](https://www.ajc.com/sports/mark-bradley-blog/jose-alvarado-the-straw-that-stirs-georgia-techs-drink/SR3F7H2VUNFG7AP4EI7UHPYB6Y/)

Jose Alvarado: Active Hustle on Defense (Steals and Blocks).

* https://georgiadogs.com/news/2018/12/14/mens-basketball-deflections-key-part-of-havoc.aspx

**Goal**: Analyze Jose’s impact on defense.

[2020-21 Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets Roster and Stats | College Basketball at Sports-Reference.com (sports-reference.com)](https://www.sports-reference.com/cbb/schools/georgia-tech/2021.html)

[Jose Alvarado Game by Game Stats and Performance | ESPN](https://www.espn.com/mens-college-basketball/player/gamelog/_/id/4277869/jose-alvarado)

The value of a steal – compare to the rest of the ACC from previous years (defensive performance)

Deflections – vital part of disrupting the opponents offensive flow, give more chances to get the ball back and score. (Tom Crean)

Talk about how hustle and steals

* Active on-ball defender who displays good technique and aggressiveness fighting through screens and moving laterally to stay in front of opposing lead guards. Despite being “undersized” for a guard

Aggression

The 2020 – 21 NCAA basketball season was a magical one for the Georgia Tech Yellow Jacket’s. They were predicted in the preseason rankings to finish 9th, yet they ended up on top, winning their first ACC Championship in 28 years, and earning an NCAA tournament appearance in since 2010. On the court, they played gritty and hard, and got hot at the right time of the year, ending the season on an eight-game winning streak as they entered the NCAA Tournament.

It was a total team effort with the likes of Moses Wright beasting and feasting in the paint, leading the team in points, rebounds, blocks, and earning the 2020-21 ACC Player of the Year; Michael Devoe slashed and dashed around opponents, showing star potential and earning himself the ACC Tournament MVP; Jordan Usher turned into a solid contributor with increased minutes, averaging career highs across most statistical categories. However, no one embodied the soul of the team more than one man – Jose Alvarado.

Despite being a quick but smaller guard, Alvarado has always been aggressive off the dribble and great at driving into the paint, which help set up plays and opportunities for others. This past year, he’s continued to improve on his game, and he’s reached career highs across almost all statistical categories. The most noticeable being his shooting percentages have all improved since arriving at Tech. He’s more patient when taking shots compared to previous seasons, and a lot more selective in the shots he wants to take. It shows in the stats as well; he took fewer shot attempts per game but converted shots at a higher rate. With this more efficient output, his offensive production and offensive rating jumped drastically to a team high 119.7 (out of all players playing more than 15 games).

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | FG% | 3P% | FT% | Pts/Game | Assists | Ortg |
| 2017-18 | 0.448 | 0.37 | 0.802 | 12.1 | 3.1 | 108.4 |
| 2018-19 | 0.392 | 0.286 | 0.743 | 12.5 | 3.4 | 100.0 |
| 2019-20 | 0.444 | 0.336 | 0.793 | 14.4 | 4 | 107.1 |
| 2020-21 | 0.504 | 0.39 | 0.838 | 15.2 | 4.1 | 119.7 |

However, there was perhaps no more valuable impact to the team last season than Alvarado’s defensive presence. When watching him during games, you’ll see an active on-ball defender who displayed aggressiveness and sound defensive principles. In fact, it’s this defensive hustle and attitude that resonated across the team and helped contribute to many wins during the season. He constantly fought through screens and moved quickly from side to side in order to contain the other guards. In particular, it was his intensity and scrappiness which resulted in a plethora of steals, that set the tone for many of the games throughout the season.

Typically, steals are an afterthought to other defensive stats such as rebounds allowed, block %, and opponent field goal %, yet through steals, Jose was able to enhance Tech’s defensive efforts and sputter opposing offensive efforts. In order to fully appreciate how the pickpockets of his game contribute to his defensive ability, we have to examine the development over his college career.

Jose has always been an above average in terms of steals per game. As a freshman, Jose was already ranked in the top 10 of ACC players who played more than 15 minutes a game; that year, he was ranked 6th out of 153 players (the steal leader that season was fellow teammate Josh Okogie). However, we can use standard deviations and averages to give us an even better picture of how adept Jose has been at picking up steals.

Standard deviations are often used in statistics and measure the spread of data compared to the mean of the dataset. Typically, if a dataset follows a normal distribution, which can be represented by a bell curve, 68% of data values will fall within the first standard deviation, and 95% will fall within that secondary standard deviation. For Jose’s freshman year, he fell a little higher than two standard deviations, which placed him in the 97% percentile: he was two standard deviations above the average number of steals per game.

This number continued to increase as he got more experience and reps. In his sophomore year, his number of steals ticked up to 1.8 steals per game, and increased to 2.2 in his junior year, enough to be tied for first. It was this past season that his steal rating made a massive jump and ran away from the competition. This past season, he averaged 2.85 steals per game, which resulted in a Z-score of 4.5: more than **four** standard deviations away from the mean. To put that into [perspective](https://www.sports-reference.com/cbb/conferences/acc/leaders/stl-per-g-player-yearly.html), the closest player in the ACC in the past few years to reach this number was Tim Pickett of Florida State during the 2002-03 season when he averaged 2.83 steals per game. In fact, Jose’s 2.85 steals a game is ranked 5th highest since 1985-86.

However, one can say that these are empty stats, yet they’re not. The impact of his steals shows up in the win/loss column as well. In wins, Jose typically averages nearly 1 more steal per a game compared to losses. As interesting as this relationship is, it should be wrong to conclude that more steals will translate to more wins. There might be something else that is at work, unofficial stats that contributes to the success: deflections and hustle.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Game Splits | | |
| Year | Steals/Win | Steals/Loss |
| 2017 - 18 | 1.73 | 1.71 |
| 2018 - 19 | 2.21 | 1.47 |
| 2019 - 20 | 2.79 | 1.40 |
| 2020 - 21 | 3.12 | 2.33 |

Unlike the NBA however, the NCAA unfortunately does not closely track these advanced stats such as deflections, loose balls recovered, and contested shots. These hustle stats don’t show up in the stat box, but the deflections that Jose produces are a vital part of what makes up his defensive identity. The proactiveness and level of effort Jose produces on defense is best summed up by Coach Tom Crean: “Deflections are a barometer of active defense.”

By playing active defense, he’s always looking for openings to poke away the ball and create offensive opportunities. This aggressive nature has been criticized by many suggesting that steal attempts may lead to moments where a player misses, compromising the team’s defense for the rest of the play. Despite this concern, this “gambling” on defense and commission playstyle is only one part of the larger story; the benefits of the aggressive nature are twofold. The rewards for this act are: 1) Denying the opposing team the scoring opportunity and 2) Creating an offensive opportunity and momentum for the team.

<https://streamable.com/hcnngo>

This possession against Duke is a great example of how Jose asserts influence on the defensive side. His active play forces the opposing offense to have to adjust to his presence, as Jose has shown to take advantage of an opponent’s sloppiness and carelessness when handling the ball. It’s this ability to use his quick hands and eagle-eyed vision in forcing turnovers that I believe greatly contributed to him winning the ACC Defensive Player of the Year award.

<https://streamable.com/8anisx>

Another great example is shown in the first few possessions against Miami. Despite the size difference against Miami’s Anthony Walker, he does a good job defensively by tracking the ball, which eventually leads to him forcing a turnover and an easy 2 points. In the very next play, Miami again is careless when Olaniyi throws a risky cross court pass. Jose instinctively jumps ahead of the pass and makes the easy layup.

Despite being an undersized guard, Jose has shown to be one of the best, if not the best, defensive player on the team and possibly in college basketball. He possesses extremely quick hands and knows just when to strike on defense for steal opportunities. Wherever he lands in the NBA draft, or if he decides to join a professional league overseas, I know that the GT Basketball team will surely miss his leadership and defensive presence in the upcoming seasons.