

Atlantic Coast Conference Basketball Tipoff Media Day

Tuesday, October 7, 2025

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Virginia Tech Hokies

Coach Mike Young

Jailen Bedford

Amani Hansberry

Tobi Lawal

Men's Press Conference

MIKE YOUNG: It's a pleasure to be in Charlotte, and I am thankful for our league office and this event and for members of the media that are here to cover. It's good to see everyone. Hard to believe it's about that time of year again.

We're excited in Blacksburg. I've got a really good team. Those of you that have covered our team through 24 years as a head coach, I'm not much on bravado. I'm not much on -- I'm an undersell-overserve person, but my excitement is brimming with this team.

These three guys up here have a lot to do with that in Amani Hansberry, Jailen Bedford, Tobi Lawal and others back home. We have really good depth. We have good positional size. We've got good skill people.

Amani as an offensive connector at the five spot is quite interesting to me. Is as good as I've had at that spot since Keve Aluma, and you guys know what a great player he was in our league.

Aluma does some things better than Amani; Amani does some things better than Aluma; but take nothing away from either one of them. They're both really, really good players.

Neo Avdalas will be a good player for us. It was important for me to retain Ben Hammond, Tyler Johnson, Tobi Lawal, and Jaden Schutt. And through greater resources and, you know, some other things that went into we were able to do that, and I'm thankful.

All four of those men have come back bigger and stronger and more efficient and more comfortable within how we



want to play. I think a lot of each one of those men, and I'm glad they're in Hokie uniforms.

Izaiah Pasha is doing very well for us. I think we could possibly, quite possibly, play nine, maybe ten. I said to somebody earlier, we need to have a team that continues to improve as we go along. We need for the pieces to fit. We need a little luck. I think a little luck in any athletic endeavor is important.

So you guys go ahead.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach.

Q. You just mentioned Izaiah coming in from Delaware, the CAA Rookie of the Year. To go a little bit deeper into what you see in him and what he brings to this team and obviously his versatility.

MIKE YOUNG: Well, the obvious. He's got great size for a guard. I'm going to play him off the ball some. I think it's healthy. You better have two and a half point guards. I've got three with Avdalas, Pasha, and Ben Hammond.

Ben Hammond and Neo are going to play a lot together. Neo is going to play a lot with Bedford. Ben is going to play a lot with Bedford, Jaden Schutt, and others.

I'm looking forward to seeing how that evolves, but Izaiah Pasha, specific to your question, is a good basketball player. He was well-coached at Delaware. We were fortunate to get him out of the transfer portal.

You know, a work in progress, but a young man we think a lot of and have high hopes for.

Q. Mike, with Jailen Bedford, what stood out to you about his game so far?

MIKE YOUNG: Mark, you know what stands out to me? He's been around a long time. He was at junior college for two years I think, Oral Roberts, and then Vegas. Old guys want to win. I've been incredibly impressed and pleased with his willingness to be coached. He wants to help the team. He's a really good player, very dynamic with the



ball.

He's got a lot of attributes. Not the least of which he is our best on-ball defender, and that's going to keep him on the floor a lot. He really does a nice job on the ball, guarding the ball. He has to get a little bit better away from the ball, but that is making strides as we move along. Tomorrow will be practice number 12.

Jailen Bedford is a really good player, Mark, and happy he's in Blacksburg.

Q. You mentioned your 24 years of head coaching experience. Have you ever had a roster where not a single player is in his third or fourth year in the program?

MIKE YOUNG: No, no. David, I walked through these halls out here, and I see all these different schools and players representing these schools, and I don't know him, and I don't know him, and I don't know him. I will very, very soon, but indicative of the times that we're living through. Not that it's great, not that it's bad. It's just where we are.

I know those young people, as our guys are, are excited to represent their schools, and it's going to be a great league. I think the Atlantic Coast Conference -- I think all of us would agree, the Atlantic Coast Conference has to be better and is going to be. I am familiar with some of the rosters that are much improved from a year ago. I certainly think that we are in that group. We're excited about our chances.

Q. You mentioned a couple of weeks ago that Amani Hansberry is a connector. What allows him to help you guys play inside-out as a facilitator?

MIKE YOUNG: That's a great question. I need to be more thorough with my response. A connector, David, is when something flushes out, an action flushes out, and you can connect that possession. Whether that shot clock is at 18, 16, 14, wherever it may be. You can run a player, okay, preferably a post player, preferably Amani Hansberry-type player, to any point on the floor and get him the ball and you can connect it. There's a backup, there's a dribble handoff, there's a zoom action.

He is an exceptional communicator, and that's not always just on the defensive end of the floor. That's as important and as integral to your offensive success, the communication piece, on that end of the floor, and he does a great job of that and continues to get better.

That's what I mean when I say connected, and he does a really good job with that. Thanks, everybody.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you. Jailen will have the podium for the next few minutes.

Q. Coach, noted earlier that he is brimming with excitement for this season as we are just less than a month away from tip. What are you most excited for?

JAILEN BEDFORD: I'm mostly excited to just play with these young group of guys, get out there and get some wins. I'm really excited about the depth and the versatility that we have. Honestly, just the pieces that he's brought in, that's what really intrigued me, and that's what made me want to come and play for him at this time, especially for my last year.

The pieces that he has, he's brought in, and how far we've come in such a little time to put those pieces together, it's going to be an amazing year, so yeah.

Q. Jailen, going the JUCO route originally and being at Trinidad State in Colorado, just what you can say you took away from junior college and the value that that brought to your entire career to get you to where you are today?

JAILEN BEDFORD: I honestly feel like it's made me such a gritty player. I've always had this chip on my shoulder coming out, and they've created some dogs. I'm going to always hold that and cherish that, and I'm going to take that on and off the court, wherever I am, who I'm playing with or who I'm playing for.

I'm always going to come in and compete and give you my all.

Q. Jailen, what do you feel are your strong suits that you bring to the table for Virginia Tech?

JAILEN BEDFORD: Defense. That's what Coach says. I take pride on that, and all the coaches that I played for, they take pride in that as well. I'm going to come in and give you my all as well as being versatile, three-level scorer, shooting the ball, play making. I'm getting better at that, and I want to improve as well as my IQ. I feel like playing for these type of coaches, they have a really good development plan, and this is all coming together.

THE MODERATOR: Jailen, thank you. A few moments with Mr. Hansberry.

Q. Amani, what do you feel are your strong suits that you are going to be able to help Virginia Tech with?

AMANI HANSBERRY: Just being a vocal leader, shooting



the ball, and, you know, just knowing what winning looks like. I won at my last two programs and I plan on winning here, and I feel like we got the pieces to do that.

Q. How does it feel to play for Coach Mike Young?

AMANI HANSBERRY: Indescribable. He puts not only me, but everybody on the team in winning positions when it comes to scheme and offensively. He holds everybody accountable. He hates turnovers. I'm just having a blast.

And I feel like his attention to detail, especially when it comes to our plays and little things just in transition, whether it's defense or offense, I feel like that only helps us get better and breeds us to become a winning team.

THE MODERATOR: Coach has six core pillars to the program: Smart, tough, obsessed, no excuses, every day, skill. Of those six, which one applies to you best? Do you want them again?

AMANI HANSBERRY: Yeah, sure.

THE MODERATOR: Smart, tough, obsessed, no excuses, every day, and skilled.

AMANI HANSBERRY: I got to pick one?

THE MODERATOR: One.

AMANI HANSBERRY: Dang. No excuses probably. I try to hold myself accountable as well as my teammates. I feel as though you can't be a true leader if you're not doing the things that are asked of us on the court and off the court.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. But all six really do apply, right?

AMANI HANSBERRY: Yes, absolutely.

THE MODERATOR: You can switch spots with Tobi. We'll finish out with questions for Tobi.

Q. Just what can you say to what this team has really done here? There is no offseason, but before we get started for this 2025-26 season, what are those pillars for this Virginia program from your point of view? Then totally not connected to that question, who has the best chain game, because we see you guys all have them up here right now, so I have to ask.

TOBI LAWAL: I feel like we put in a lot of work just making sure we're just spending time with each other knowing we're a very versatile group and we're skilled. So just

being able to put those pieces together on and off the court just makes it easier for us to gel on the court.

To the second question, I'm not going to answer that (smiling).

Q. What have you kind of learned about Amani's game from playing alongside him in the front court in practice?

TOBI LAWAL: What do you mean? Like how he likes to play?

Q. What have you learned about Amani, what he brings to the table, what his game is all about from being with him in practice?

TOBI LAWAL: I mean, he's versatile. He's a Swiss Army knife. That's what I call him. There's nothing on the court that he can't do. Playing with someone like that makes it easy, especially when you understand that he can do everything. So he just takes the load off of everyone else. Like if you need him to get the rebound and push and initiate offense and connect, he can do that.

If you need him to pick and pop, he will light up a shot. He can do that. If you need him to make a pass, he can do that. You know what I'm saying?

So it just takes a load off everyone and makes it easier to play in the flow.

Q. Coach Young mentioned his enthusiasm and excitement about this season. Having been with him last year, do you notice a little extra bounce in his step this preseason?

TOBI LAWAL: I mean, not just him. Me and the other coaches too, because obviously in practice sometimes they get carried away watching us play for a while, because it's fun to watch, because everyone is playing well, you know, connected. The emotions get high. You know, the energy in the gym is high.

You can really get lost in like just watching us play and having fun, to be honest, because it's a battlefield out there and we're competing every day, going at each other. You know, iron sharpens iron, so we're just getting better every day.

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