

Atlantic Coast Conference Basketball Tipoff Media Day

Wednesday, October 7, 2026

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Virginia Cavaliers

Coach Ryan Odom

Thijs De Ridder

Chance Mallory

Men's Press Conference



they had -- our guys had a tremendous amount of shared experience together, both good and bad.

Certainly the ending to the season wasn't what we all wanted. The conference championship, you know, wasn't what we wanted at the end. When you walk into those locker rooms at the end and the finality of it, that's really tough.

I think, you know, part of them, I'm sure -- I can't speak for them, but part of them I think they wanted to come back to give it another go together and didn't want to see it end. That's when you know you're having a good experience.

Q. Following up on the retention, did it allow you to kind of start further along the road starting this season compared to last year where you were bringing in all new players and trying to get everybody to get your lingo and your scheme down?

RYAN ODOM: Yeah, there's no question about it. There's a benefit to having retention from a practice perspective, just an overall standards perspective. These guys understand, you know, what it means to be a Virginia basketball player, what it means to put that jersey on, the history of the program.

There's a lot of stuff that we did a year ago, you know, in terms of putting it together. An entirely new collection of players that had never played together, and now we have guys that are back that have been through some pressure situations. They've been through some tough games, some disappointing endings. So they have a working knowledge and can help the new guys.

Then it allowed us to be able to go out and find guys that fit, you know, with the returning players. One other thing that I would add to that is not only did the four guys that played a lot of the minutes come back, several other guys that were developing in their games and didn't get as much action on the court came back as well.

We're really proud of that as a staff and excited for those young men.

THE MODERATOR: Virginia has joined us. Coach Odom will offer a few opening comments.

RYAN ODOM: Thank you. Appreciate everybody being here. Excited to have four guys -- obviously two will be in here with you in Chance and Thijs. But we're excited about the season. We were able to retain some key guys and guys that played under the lights this past season and had success.

We're excited about the new guys coming in, and the guys have been working hard to get prepared for this season, which we know is going to be a great ACC Conference season.

Then, also, our nonconference is going to be extremely challenging this year, but happy to answer any questions that you might have.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach.

Q. Basically almost 100% retention for your roster, which is almost unheard of in 2026. Just what led to you being able to bring the locker room back like that?

RYAN ODOM: Yeah, I think it speaks to the guys. It speaks to Virginia. I think ultimately when you really dive deep into it, the individuals have to feel like they can accomplish their individual goals.

All these guys want to play at the highest level and play in the NBA, so it starts there when you are making individual decisions about what's best for your future.

Ultimately, I believe in my heart these guys felt like they could do that here or else they wouldn't have stayed. Then when you combine that with the team aspect of it, last year



Q. Ryan, you mentioned the nonconference schedule. It immediately picks up with an NCAA Tournament-like cadence game, day off, game, day off. Was that intentional or just how you were able to put it together with the opponents?

RYAN ODOM: Yeah, I don't think it necessarily was intentional. I mean, I think when you have to make the decision to do it, absolutely, that's a factor, and that goes into your mind. There's no question about it.

There could be some benefits to it. That's why a lot of us want to play in these MTs and things of that nature where you do have that day in between to be able to prep for that next opponent.

To your point, it could benefit us long-term, but I think the biggest thing was we wanted to challenge ourselves in the nonconference to get us ready for what we know is going to be a really tough ACC this year.

I think all players want to play in big games, and all coaches want to coach in big games, and we've certainly provided these guys with that opportunity this year.

Q. Hiring Adrian Autry, what does that hire mean to you? I know you have crossed paths before and what does he bring to this team?

RYAN ODOM: Yeah, it's huge. Adrian and I have been friends for a long time. I've been in battles with him together on the same team, working at Virginia Tech for Coach Greenberg, and I know the character that he has. I know the expertise that he has.

He played the game at the highest level, both collegiately and professionally, and has so much to give these guys. His wealth of experience as a head coach and a high-level assistant coach is going to be really beneficial for Virginia. There's no doubt about it.

Personally, I'm excited that he's with us. He's a friend of mine. Our wives are friends. Our kids are friends. It was a no-brainer for me to bring him in. I'm excited for Griff and his family moving on to Pepperdine as well.

But Brad's hit the ground running. He's doing a great job. I'm looking forward to many years with him.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you. Questions for Thijs De Ridder.

Q. Obviously the ACC Championship didn't end the way you wanted last year. Is that kind of one of the main goals this year? What are some personal or team

goals that you are looking to achieve this year?

THIJS DE RIDDER: I mean, it was all team-related for me. I think, like, last year, we want to put ourselves in the same situations as last year, trying to fight for every title and just, like I said, we want to be in the same situation, yeah.

Q. What aspect of your game are you most looking forward to improve this season?

THIJS DE RIDDER: Just my handle and the control of the ball. I think I've been struggling a little bit that last year. Just head down, going through rim, losing balls, or whatever. I just worked really hard in summer to improve that. So, yeah.

Q. How would you describe the Virginia way? It seems like this is a program that develops, and we talked about retention, so just what is that Virginia way of building a program?

THIJS DE RIDDER: The Virginia way, we have these pillars that we have in the locker room, even before Coach was here, and we work on that really hard.

If you see, if we bring a player in, he will dive on the floor like Chance is really good in. We would run through walls for our coach. We would run through walls for our teammates. You see that everybody is such a nice person.

I think that's what Coach and Coach's staff is really good in, just bringing the right guys in for this program.

Q. Thijs, last season everything about ACC basketball was new to you. How different does your preparation look this time around now that you know the league?

THIJS DE RIDDER: It's not that different, to be honest. Last year I was in a complete area of knowing nothing about ACC basketball. Of course I watch it before, but not really playing it. But now I'm prepared. Now I know what team are going to face, what the environment is going to be like, what JPJ is going to be like in ACC play.

I'm just really excited to play in JPJ again with all the fans and students, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: Recently you played in Charleston in a tennis venue. You have tennis in your background because you like playing the sport. What was that experience like last week, two weeks ago?

THIJS DE RIDDER: It was really special. I never played tennis in an arena like that, but like, yeah, leave basketball

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

outside of that. No, it was special.

It brought me back to the old days, like when you are hooping with your brother or with your father outside somewhere when the sun is in your eyes, so that was pretty special.

Like, some of the guys the jersey was burned in their bodies, so that was pretty funny to see, but it was a unique experience. Yeah, it was cool.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you. Questions for Chance Mallory.

Q. You're a year in now. What does it mean to wear Virginia on your chest and growing up coming to the games and what have you learned and what does it mean to return?

CHANCE MALLORY: It means everything to me. My family, growing up in Charlottesville, going to all the games as a kid, so it means a little bit more to me, I think. But being a year in, I feel like my maturity has changed a little bit.

My offseason, I put a lot of work in this offseason just to better myself, better my body in order to help the team win.

Q. You just spoke about the offseason. How have you grown as a floor general? What are some of those pieces, those elements of your game that you feel like we're really going to see take a trend up this year?

CHANCE MALLORY: Just my pace. I feel like I've been working on my pace and my IQ a lot during this offseason. Just watching a lot of film, watching a lot of tape just to grow my game in total, working a lot on my shooting as well.

THE MODERATOR: Your sister Lexi played soccer and basketball at Randolph-Macon. Sister Josie played lacrosse at Howard. What was it like growing up in a house filled with so many athletic sisters?

CHANCE MALLORY: I mean, yeah, my two older sisters were great at their respective sports. Lexi won three state titles. Just looking up to them and everything that they did. They were like role models to me.

I mean, very competitive household. We just compete, and that's where I get my competitiveness is from them. Just taking what they've taught me and put it in my own game.

THE MODERATOR: How often were you on the winning end?

CHANCE MALLORY: All the time. All the time. No, I'm just kidding (laughing). It was a lot of fun. I would say I did win a lot, but that's because as I got older, they stopped playing. It was a lot of fun playing with them.

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