

Atlantic Coast Conference Basketball Tipoff Media Day

Wednesday, October 7, 2026

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Virginia Tech Hokies
Coach Mike Young

Ben Hammond

Amani Hansberry

Men's Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Virginia Tech has joined us. Head Coach Mike Young will give us some opening comments. Coach.

MIKE YOUNG: It's a treat to be back in Charlotte in the early going with the season less than a month away. It is not lost on me the opportunity to coach in this great league. This will be my eighth season in Blacksburg. I've cherished every moment of it. Thrilled for what lies ahead for the Atlantic Coast Conference.

And our basketball, I thought we took a quantum leap forward after a bad year in '24/'25 with 8 teams in the NCAA the tournament. I think that should be the expectation year in and year out, if not nine or ten from our league.

We look forward to getting into it. Again, pleasure to be here. You guys go ahead.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Coach.

Q. Mike, just wanted to ask you, the people of Spartanburg are excited to see you coming back for an exhibition game against the Wofford Terriers. Can you talk about getting to go back home and about how this came about to play?

MIKE YOUNG: Kevin called in May or June, as did their athletic director. They wanted us to do it. And I had some hesitations, but it was going on help Kevin, and I think the world of Coach Giltner.

Of course, he was a heck of a player for me, and I guess we worked together for 17 years I think I heard him say. So the opportunity to help him, one. But, two, yeah, Dick, I spent 30 years in that community. I met my wife at



Wofford; my children were born in Spartanburg.

To have the opportunity to go back and see friends -- but the number one goal is to prepare these guys and our team, and I look forward to that opportunity. But it will be awesome to be back in the upstate of South Carolina, somewhere other than Clemson. Look forward to being down there next week. It's hard to believe.

Q. You're entering your eighth season here at Virginia Tech. What do you feel is different about this Virginia Tech team than previous Hokie teams you've coached in the past?

MIKE YOUNG: Well, the same character makeup of other teams that we've had. Let's hope we have some good fortune and we can keep them healthy. That was as frustrating and as debilitating as anything I've experienced in 25 years as a head coach, what we went through last year. We're in good health now.

It's a long year, but thrilled that we're able to retain Ben Hammond and Amani Hansberry and Tyler Johnson, who is not on stage. And a couple of young people that we wanted to bring back. We had high hopes for them as players, Sin Jones and Solomon Davis.

You know, a lot of the same characteristics, but some different attributes as well as I think more closely about it. I'm excited about it. I'll tell you that.

Q. What you were speaking about, retention, having starters return. That is something that is a little bit rare in today's college basketball. What does it mean to have Tyler as well as Ben and Amani on this team and how that elevates the Hokies immediately?

MIKE YOUNG: It's a big, big deal to retain your core and guys that have done it and good players, and there are no guarantees. We know it. We all know it. They are free agents at the end of every year.

No matter how I feel about that part of it, that's the way it reads, and they have the opportunity to explore and do what they think is in their best interest as players. I respect

ASAP . . . when all is said, we're done.®
sports

that.

But to bring them back and, you know, to have enter the leadership, to have that voice in the locker room, they know what we expect. They've been in the program. Ben and Tyler have been with us for two years, going into the third. Amani obviously last year was his first; his second at Virginia Tech.

At Virginia Tech this is how we do it. This is how we play. This is how we comport ourselves in the community when we're on the road representing the Hokies.

Above all that, as good of players as they are, they're great people and the kind of young people we all want to coach. They all affect winning, and we were more than happy to welcome them back.

Q. The rest of October and the exhibition game, what are you hoping to learn?

MIKE YOUNG: Oh, gosh, Mark. That part of it is not any different. It's not any different. That's a great question. There's still a lot to learn.

Now we practiced I think 35 times this summer. When I say practiced 35 times, we weren't going two, two and a half, three hours. We were going an hour and hour and 15. You got a pretty good feel for it.

I don't think it's any different than any other year, Mark. We've still got great strides to make on both sides of the ball. We scrimmaged last night. We scrimmaged very early by historical, you know, match-ups. We're usually a week later, but I wanted to see somebody different. We scrimmaged Liberty. Rick McKay is a great friend of mine. Great admiration for them.

There were some things I thought we were in good shape with; we're not as in good of shape as I thought we were. There are some areas that I had some concerns about that took a step forward last night. I think all in all -- now, next week we'll have the opportunity to go to Wofford and we'll learn more about ourselves and it will be a great experience.

The place will be full. Great facility. It's a true road game against a good opponent.

Then we've got the Terrapins at home in a closed scrimmage before we head into league play.

We've got a lot to get better with, Mark, but I love their willingness to learn. I love the camaraderie within the group, and I can't wait to get back to campus and get to

practice tomorrow.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you. Questions for Ben Hammond.

MIKE YOUNG: I did not approve of these shoes before he came in this morning. Rainbow Warriors.

THE MODERATOR: Ben, do you want to step out and show your shoes? That's actually pretty fun.

BEN HAMMOND: These are nice shoes. I don't know what he's talking about. Nice shoes.

Q. Ben, you're entering your third season here at Virginia Tech. How has your role and leadership within the team changed since you first arrived?

BEN HAMMOND: It's changed a lot. Freshman year coming in, not really expecting to play a lot. You know, probably think my freshman year is just going to be much of a learning year, but you know, freshman year turned out a little bit different.

I started playing starting midway through the season against big games. I was pretty much thrown into the fire, and you can learn that way as well. I feel like that helped a lot with coming in as a freshman and playing a lot and it helped my sophomore year as well to make that big jump.

I just feel I'm a big leader on the team now, so it's going to be great.

Q. Coach noted that, hey, we've got a lot to get better on, but I love their willingness to learn. You touched on that leadership aspect from you. What do you love about yourself?

BEN HAMMOND: What do I love about myself? I feel like I can talk to a lot of people. People can talk to me pretty well. I think it's pretty easy to talk to me. I listen pretty well.

Coach Young, he can say a lot to that. Like I listen pretty well to him. You know, just helping the team out. Helping the new guys. We have a lot of new guys coming in this year that need a lot of guidance, and they ask -- they come to me for help, if anything. They just look at me as a player they can go to. So, yeah.

Q. Ben, as you said, you took a big leap forward last season. What have you been working in on the offseason to kind of continue that growth this season?

BEN HAMMOND: Leadership as well. Communication. I



need to talk more as a point guard, leading those guys that we have coming in, and just scoring more off the bounce as well and getting more teammates involved. Amani Hansberry, you know, great shooters that we have coming in. Koul Atak, I have to get those guys the ball, shoot those shots. Amani Hansberry last season, last year, he's a great player. I think he needs to have the ball in his hands a lot of times.

So getting him the ball and finding all my other teammates is something I look forward to doing this year.

Q. You spoke about some of the new faces here with the Hokies. What can you say about the development that we're not seeing kind of away from the camera, some of these new faces that have come in and how the back court is going to excel this year.

BEN HAMMOND: I would say just all the smart guys that Coach Young has recruited to play with us. Instilling this offense that Mike Young runs could be difficult for a lot of players, but I feel like the guys that he recruited, they're pretty much doing pretty well with the offense that we got going on.

They listen pretty well, like I said. I feel like it's going pretty well.

Q. I'm going to ask my first non-sports question ever at any ACC event. Tell us about your shoes. Who are they repping?

BEN HAMMOND: These are Sabrinas. I don't know if you all know Sabrina, WNBA. I saw them on I think it was StockX or GOAT, and they're pretty nice. Pretty nice shoes. They got a whole bunch of colors. They stand out, so I feel like that helps. Yeah, it's pretty cool, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: You can take those shoes and sit right next to Coach.

BEN HAMMOND: He going to hold them right here.

THE MODERATOR: Questions for Amani Hansberry.

Q. Coach Young talked about everybody being a free agent. Just talk about why you came back to Virginia Tech and what you like about playing for Coach Young and what you like about playing at Virginia Tech.

AMANI HANSBERRY: Obviously you guys know the portal is crazy, but personally, I came back to -- I'm not one to enjoy yes men. Coach Young is definitely not a yes man. I just want to hear the truth. To go along with that Chester Frazier, David Moss JD Byers, all the way down to the GA

assistants, nobody is a yes man in our program.

I really want to do better myself, grow my game, get healthy, get stronger in the weight room. Overall I felt like I had a lot of strides to make, and I feel like Virginia Tech was the place to do it.

Q. You were ranked No. 40 among returning players in college basketball. Do ratings like that motivate you?

AMANI HANSBERRY: Yes, for sure. I feel as though I'm a great player. I don't really pay attention too much to rankings, but to know that 39 -- that the press think that 39 people are better than me. That's I guess good to know. It's definitely motivating.

Coming from high school, I wasn't really seen as a highly-touted guy, so just to see I've made it this far today is definitely a blessing.

Q. Amani, last year you came in as a transfer. How have expectations for you changed as you've become more of an established player within this locker room?

AMANI HANSBERRY: Things look a little different. I've become the guy my teammates depend on in times of struggle as well as, you know, just the guy they look for to build a culture, including Ben Hammond and Tyler Johnson. Those guys have been here a year longer than me as well, so they're also familiar.

But, you know, helping the new guys figure things out, find a role, find a place, ultimately find a hole and help us win.

Q. You mentioned growing your game. What have you been doing in the offseason? What do you feel like you still want to grow with your game?

AMANI HANSBERRY: Being able to abuse mismatches, understanding when to faceup, see the floor, knowing when the double team is coming from, knowing where it's coming from, knowing my outlets.

But overall definitely being able to hit the three more and abuse double teams.

THE MODERATOR: You've got a birthday next week, so happy early birthday. Is there anything that you've been asking for that you hope to get?

AMANI HANSBERRY: Honestly no, but I appreciate it (laughing).

FastScripts by ASAP Sports

