

Atlantic Coast Conference Basketball Tipoff Media Day

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Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Virginia Tech Hokies

Coach Mike Young

Mylyjael Poteat

Ben Burnham

Men's Press Conference



college sports. It makes you a better teacher.

You've got guys coming from different programs. All good programs. Well-coached, but they do things differently. The terminology may be different, and you're trying to make that a cohesive unit. That's going to take a little time.

All of us in my conversations with other coaches across the country, you know, it's going to look differently in January and February than it does in November/December. I think this team, this current Virginia Tech team, is on a good course, but there's something every day that I'll communicate, and I can tell by that reaction he doesn't know what I'm talking about, compared to a three-year, four-year person that has heard it, has experienced it, has done it on the floor.

So that's some challenges to it, but last time I checked, they call it coaching for a reason. That is to be a better teacher and give that person a better understanding of what you are trying to accomplish.

THE MODERATOR: As a follow-up, how will you know when it clicks? Is there a moment?

MIKE YOUNG: I'll get back to you. I'm not sure how to respond. When you are playing good basketball and winning games, which is certainly a challenge in this league year in, year out. This year will be no different.

I think maybe an even better answer is when they're playing -- when they're thinking, their feet slow down. When they are free, the game is a cleaner game. The ball is handled more crisply. They are more in unison defensively.

That's when I'll know that we're onto something. We're a far cry away there that right now. Only 11 practices in. We did scrimmage last night, but this team will get there.

Q. Yesterday Jim spoke about scheduling and how to make the ACC seem more appetizing going into the NCAA Tournament. You guys have an interesting schedule. Would you like to dive into that and how you feel like that could get VT back into the promise

THE MODERATOR: We have the Virginia Tech Hokies in with us. Questions for Head Coach Mike Young, please.

Q. With the few transfers that you picked up, one of them was Jaden Schutt out of Duke, who was coming off a knee injury. How has his progress been?

MIKE YOUNG: Really, really good. He did not participate in the full-contact stuff this summer, and you can see him still rounding into shape, but he's completely healthy. He's practiced very, very well.

We scrimmaged yesterday. He had a good day. Jaden Schutt is a good basketball player. We're thrilled he's in Blacksburg. He's doing a nice job for the Hokies.

THE MODERATOR: Your 23rd year as a collegiate head coach. What has this sport taught you as a head coach over those 23 years?

MIKE YOUNG: You better roll with the punches. There's a lot of wonderful times that I reflect back on, but there's some peaks and valleys in any profession. Certainly in the coaching world, but a lot of great lessons that we take with us through our lives in the coaching world.

23 years, that's a long time. I have been blessed and happy to have had the opportunity to do it as long as I've done it.

Q. To bring a transfer with you as well as a returning player, just what can you say about meshing the transfer portal and the returnees together and just what that team looks like through the summer here?

MIKE YOUNG: I think we're all trying to get our arms around it. We're a couple of three years into this era of



land other than just winning conference games? And also talk about Jim Phillips' comments.

MIKE YOUNG: I agree with Jim. I never want to miss the NCAA Tournament because what is perceived as a non-league schedule is not strong enough, and I don't think anybody could say that our non-league schedule hasn't been strong enough in our six years at Virginia Tech.

This schedule in '24-'25 is no exception. Michigan in Fort Myers, or where we hope to be Fort Myers over the Thanksgiving holiday, along with South Carolina and Xavier. Penn State in Baltimore. We have Vanderbilt at home in the SEC-ACC Challenge.

Then you consider we have Clemson, Virginia, and Miami, home and away in our league, and seven on the road, seven at home. I think our strength of schedule will be plenty good enough when that time comes and hope that we are fortunate yet again to play, in your words, in the greatest tournament on earth, the promise land.

Q. You mentioned, when we spoke with you a couple of weeks ago, that you felt like your defense was going to be farther ahead right now than your offense. What has impressed you through practice and your scrimmage about the way you have changed on that end?

MIKE YOUNG: I had a complete reversal after last night's experience. We have a long way to go on both ends. We're going to get there.

Both ends are hard. When you incorporate a ball into the offensive end, that requires timing, that requires spacing, execution.

The same can be said without the ball on the defensive end. We have the makings of a very good defensive team. This is not a great defensive team yet, but we've got the right pieces. They're smart people. I'm thankful we have several more practices before we throw it in the air for real on November 4.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you. You can switch spots with Mylyjael. Questions for Mylyjael.

Q. With the scrimmage last night that Coach was talking about, you being the big veteran on this team, what did you see that pleased you, and what did you see that made you go, Ah, we have to work on this some more, guys?

MYLYJAEEL POTEAT: Like Coach attested to, a lot of the timing stuff is off. A lot of new guys coming from different

spots trying to get that together. As he spoke to, I think you see the makings of what we could be potentially with. I think we rebounded the ball well. Good athleticism across the board. You see that we can be a good defensive team. I think we see what we can work towards.

Q. Mylyjael, what can you say about your evolution as a player, what you have seen in yourself in your time at Virginia Tech, and what's come through the summer that we can expect to see on the floor?

MYLYJAEEL POTEAT: I think a lot of the emphasis for me personally this summer was conditioning. You know, getting in shape to play more minutes, leaned out a little bit, got in better shape.

I think that, along with expansion game a little bit, try to score the ball in some different ways than I was able to last year or the year before that overall. I think all of that will come together to hopefully make me a little more effective on the court.

THE MODERATOR: A follow-up to that. You did lose between 20 and 25 pounds during the offseason. Was that hard to do?

MYLYJAEEL POTEAT: It really wasn't. Just eat a little better, work out a little more.

THE MODERATOR: Is it hard to keep it off?

MYLYJAEEL POTEAT: No, it hasn't been for me. It wasn't too tough of a process. I always go to David Jackson, our strength and conditioning guy. He is probably the best in the business. It's been an easy adjustment for me.

THE MODERATOR: The room would like for you to give some tips on that.

Q. What have you learned about this team that maybe you didn't know in August or in May?

MYLYJAEEL POTEAT: I'm definitely higher on the team now and our potential than I could have been earlier. Despite what I thought, I think we're a little further along than I thought we would be at this point.

We talked before, we have the makings of a good offense active and good defensive team. We've come a far way in the offseason, and everybody is gelling together with well.

Q. You said David Jackson is the best in the business in your mind. Why do you say that? What makes him so good as a strength and conditioning coach?

MYLYJAEEL POTEAT: Obviously he knows his stuff, but it's a good balance of obviously he's going to be hard on you, but he is never going to be overbearing or anything like that. If are you doing something well, he's going to let you know and praise you. If you're not doing something well, it's going to be the obvious. Never too high or low out of him. It's going to be steady makings.

THE MODERATOR: You can switch spots with Mr. Burnham. Questions for Ben, please.

Q. My question for you, sir, coming up on your final year, we know Mike Young has a great atmosphere and environment going at VT, so was that the reason why you chose VT for probably your final year of collegiate basketball, or was there something else to it?

BEN BURNHAM: I think, yeah, you nailed it. Coach Young, his personality. He's a real likable guy, despite what some people say. The assistants who recruited me just built a good relationship. The sports fans in Blacksburg are crazy, so that's eventually what led to me being here.

Q. Last season being with the college at Charleston and Pat Kelsey, what can you say about your experience with him and the uniqueness of the fact that he is now going to be a coach that you go up against?

BEN BURNHAM: Yeah, it is kind of strange because I have nothing but respect for him. He's a great coach. The amount of basketball stuff he taught me is crazy. I couldn't even explain what he's taught me. That's really what allowed me to be able to come to this level.

Respect to him. He's a great coach, and I'm looking forward to play against him.

THE MODERATOR: A follow-up to learning when your team clicks. You said on September 30th that the team plays with a chip on the shoulder. Well, if you haven't played yet, how do you know that?

BEN BURNHAM: Just how we get after it in practice. We're going at each other like you wouldn't believe. We're all playing as hard as we can, diving on loose balls, getting deflections in practice. We like to count the deflections. So we're all flying around on defense trying to get as many deflections as we can.

I think that's winning basketball, and that chip on our shoulder is what could win us some games.

THE MODERATOR: Curious to know, do you have to win

a championship to call the season successful?

BEN BURNHAM: I don't think you have to win a championship to call the season successful. I think that would be great, and that is obviously a goal, but I think if we just come together as a team and win as a team, I think we could have a real successful season.

THE MODERATOR: Virginia Tech, thank you. Good luck this season.

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