

# Atlantic Coast Conference Football Kickoff

Tuesday, July 22, 2025

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

**Virginia Cavaliers**

**Coach Tony Elliott**

**Chandler Morris**

**Noah Josey**

**Jahmeer Carter**

Press Conference

TONY ELLIOTT: Good afternoon. It's great to be here in Charlotte with each of you. I really appreciate your attendance today, especially sticking around for the last group. I know it's been a great day so far, but really appreciate you being here.

I also want to express how truly grateful I am to stand before you today representing the University of Virginia, the University of Virginia Athletic Department and the football program. There's nothing better than being a part of one of the most prestigious universities in the country that also is part of the best conference in the country. Accomplishing greatness is truly a way of life on the campuses of the schools that make up the ACC.

These very distinguished scholar athletes and myself would not be here today without the tremendous support and leadership that we receive from the university's Board of Visitors, our university administration, faculty and staff. I'm very blessed to work for a phenomenal athletic director in Dr. Carla Williams. Her vision, passion and leadership is inspiring and empowering.

There's a lot of excitement surrounding this year's team. I absolutely love being around our young men. Another huge thank you to our administration, Dr. Williams, our donor base and staff for contributing the resources, the time and the effort to assemble the deepest and most complete roster that we've had in four seasons.

Speaking of the staff, we're one of only six Power Four programs to return our entire staff. This off-season we added 54 new players. 32 of those through the transfer portal and 22 of those being high school signees. I'd also like to add that our staff has gone about building to this



point, and we've done it the right way. Three years ago on the front end we made a decision to honor the commitments of the young men that were committed to the previous staff. We also decided to honor the commitments of the young men that were currently on the roster, to embrace them and work alongside them until graduation.

Our current roster is very balanced. 46 percent of our players are upperclassmen and 54 percent are underclassmen. With the addition of the players that we added in the transfer portal, we added 850 games of college football experience.

We held a lead in nine of our 12 games last season, and we're hopeful that the added depth and experience will help us in working towards closing out games in which we have a lead.

As a staff and administration, we're hard at work building a competitive roster. The scholar athletes are hard at work on the grounds in the classroom. In the spring we set a football record with a 3.23 team GPA, and as a program we've been above a 3.0 GPA five of the seven semesters we've been on the grounds. In our seven semesters, we've averaged 77 members of our team accessing a 3.0 or Above Club each semester. This season we have seven home games, four of which are within the first five weeks, and our staff and players are excited to see our outstanding fan base pack Scott Stadium and create an environment that makes it the hardest for opposing teams to play in.

I'm joined by four, three of which are up here, Mitchell is on the side, but I'm joined by four outstanding young men of character, four highly gifted athletes and four phenomenal leaders, Noah Josey and Jahmeer Carter have been a part of the program the entire time our staff has been in Charlottesville. Both Noah and Jahmeer have been instrumental in changing the culture in our facility, in the classroom and on the field. Words cannot express how thankful I am for them and their commitment to UVA football.

I don't have to tell you, but they're also really good football players.



Chandler Morris and Mitchell Melton joined our program in the spring and have brought instant character, leadership and swagger to our program. Their football pedigrees speak for themselves, and I'm most excited about their championship experience that they will be bringing to our locker room.

You guys are all in for a treat as you get to talk to them over the next few minutes. As we get ready to transition to questions, I would like to close by acknowledging the Davis, Chandler and Perry families. You all are constantly in our thoughts and in our prayers. Lavel, Devin, D'Sean, we love you, we miss you, we know that you'll be smiling down upon us. We are UVA strong because of 1, 15 and 41. With that, I'll open it up to questions.

**Q. You talked a little bit about your staff continuity this season. Can you describe what value that brings to the team having the same voices in the room for these players?**

TONY ELLIOTT: Continuity is big for me, and I've been very intentional with creating an environment where I can earn the trust and loyalty of the staff by their belief in the vision that we have and then also the environment that creates a good space for work/life balance. But I think it's important for the student-athletes to hear a consistent voice. Changeover in this environment, with all the change around them, the last thing they need is a change in the meeting rooms.

Then also it brings stability, also it allows us to not have to start over every single year. So when we hit the practice field running, especially when we're bringing in 54 new guys, we know where we're going, we know what we're doing, and that also instills confidence in the guys because they can see the cohesion, the chemistry. In order for us to have a great team in the locker room, we first have to have a great team in the staff, and for us to have a great team, we've got to have time spent together so that there's trust, there's cohesion, there's chemistry. So it's critical and very important to me and I'm very intentional in making sure that we maintain continuity with our staff.

**Q. On the other side of that, you did talk about how there are 54 new players, probably 30 of them are in the secondary at this point. I know that was a big emphasis for you. What's the role of both the incoming guys and the guys that have been returning to make that cohesion on and off the field? And from an evaluation standpoint, how difficult is it when you're trying to basically evaluate an entirely new slate of guys across 11 different positions on two different sides of the ball?**

TONY ELLIOTT: Great question. I talked about Jahmeer. I talked about Noah. It's really, really important to have these guys' complete buy in so when we bring the new guys into the fold, they quickly can let them know these are the expectations, these are the ways that we do things.

They've done an exceptional job of welcoming the new guys in with open arms and embracing them. These guys, Jahmeer and Noah in particular, have endured a lot over the last three years. Speaking for them, I think I can say, they want to win. They want to win badly. They had opportunities to leave, but they believed that what we're building, we're on the verge of doing something special.

So it's critical for the guys that are in the program to let the guys know that when we go in the weight room, we tuck our shirts in, or these are the socks that we wear, this is how we finish through the line. Then for the new guys, their role is really to infuse talent, to infuse the culture from a winning standpoint that they're coming from because we were very intentional in evaluating guys that we felt like would fit the University of Virginia.

Now, evaluation, we were able to do some of that in the spring, but we also brought in 13 additional guys in the spring portal. So now we're going to have to go back to work, in particular on the back end and the secondary. That was the biggest area of need in the spring portal window, and that's what we'll do over the 25 practices. We were able to get a little bit of a head start with about six structured workouts, but we're not in pads so we can't see the actual true football aspect of it, but I've been very pleased with the upgrade in the length, the speed, the athleticism that we've been able to add to our roster.

**Q. You're an offensive player from your playing days. You've always had a big interest in obviously how offense functions in college football. Speak to your new offense this year with your new quarterback, three new offensive linemen. Way more depth now at wide receiver and so forth. Dakota Twitty at tight end. Can you help us get a view of your new offense?**

TONY ELLIOTT: Yes, I am an offensive guy. What I do know is, the most important thing with offensive football is chemistry. So with all of those guys that you highlighted, the biggest thing is creating chemistry, because you can be very talented, but if they're not a cohesive unit then you're not going to be efficient, and ultimately you're not going to be productive. But I'm excited about where we are.

What I do know, offensive football is won in the trenches. Even though I'm a receiver at heart and coached skill guys my whole life, you win up front. And that's why the biggest



area that we addressed was the offensive line and adding depth to the offensive line.

Probably the one position that we've been playing catch up the most over the last three years, but with the addition of the seven guys that we brought in this off-season, I think we're in a space now where we can have competitive depth, which creates for competitive practice, which allows us to create that chemistry. I think as we figure out kind of the strengths, the weaknesses and get the guys in the right seats, then we can start to build towards Chandler's strengths as a quarterback. He knows a ton of football, and the beautiful thing about offensive football is we like to say we're geniuses and gurus, but we're not reinventing anything. We're just ripping off from each other and stealing stuff and changing the name.

So the biggest thing for him is to figure out how to get the terminology to where he's comfortable with it and then play to his strengths. That's what we'll do, and when we have a tight end that you mentioned, like Dakota Twitty and Sage Ennis and some of the younger guys that are developing, you have the glue that holds it together. So now we can play an 11 personnel, be an uptempo team when we need to, and then we can huddle. We can run the ball out of presentations where we're in 10 personnel and quickly get to 11 personnel, but then also in 3rd down, we don't have to change personnels and tip what we're getting ready to do and we have a passing threat.

So I'm excited about the addition of Jahmal Edrine to our room, JT Thomas, a couple guys coming in at receiver to kind of bolster the group that we already had in place to get Chandler some weapons.

So I'm excited about the potential. Now we have to bring it all together, and you'll be able to hear a little bit more from Chandler about how he feels about where we are, but it's not -- it may look a little bit different, but then there also may be some components that are the same, and it'll be dependent upon these 25 practices coming up in fall camp to determine exactly what the identity of this group of young men is. But I know we're better up front, and Josey and his boys are going to lead the way and we're going to kind of ride those guys as far as they'll take us.

**Q. Coach, talk a little bit about your off-season transition. You lose the game to Virginia Tech and you have a couple weeks, you get some NIL funds and a big, big transfer portal quarterback change. Talk about the transition, how that's been, and what you're excited for.**

TONY ELLIOTT: Appreciate that question there. Truly grateful to the individuals that decided to support the efforts

this off-season and provide the resources for us to be able to go be aggressive and productive in the transfer portal.

We knew that we were coming off a year where we would have a very, very large senior class, and I referenced that in my opening statement about the decisions that we made three years ago that we were building to this point to where we were going to have a chance to really transition the roster.

So there's really no downtime, and you go right to work trying to figure out how you're going to position yourself before the dead period hits. You've got to get the high school guys signed that first week in December, and then you've got about a two-week window of craziness where you're just trying to get guys to come see you, and every team in the country has the same problem.

I thought Tyler Jones and Justin Speros did a great job of identifying the guys that we felt like would fit the needs that we had open, and the staff just did a great job of working the phones, trying to build relationships as quick as possible. Then we got them in for spring practice and got the guys moving around, got them through about eight weeks of winter training and then hit the grass for 15 practices. Then we also were evaluating where additional needs were and that's what led to the direction we took in the spring portal window.

**Q. Chandler, you've had a journey. You've had a road of going to a lot of different places and trying to find that right fit. Why is Virginia the place for you to have this portion, this chapter of your career? What do you see in this program and moving it forward?**

CHANDLER MORRIS: Yeah, going back to my relationship with Coach Elliott, I've known him since I was about 11, 12 years old through my dad. I remember being out there at practices with my dad and just enjoying being around Coach Elliott and just the respect my family has for him and me, as well, for him, that was a big factor into it.

It's my last season. I've been through a roller coaster of a career. My main thing, I wrote down pros and cons and what do I truly want? At the end of the day, what does Chandler Morris want? And it was to be around good people. That was something very important to me. I know Coach Elliott is a great person. I knew he was going to have great people on his staff. I wasn't too familiar with many people on his staff. I got to come up on a visit, and it was phenomenal.

Then also, too, the community and kind of the fan base. The fan base of Virginia, they're hungry. I knew that the whole program has poured into this program and want to



get it right, and the coaches have done a great job going out and getting the pieces that we need, and at the end of the day it's going to come down to us, and go out and execute.

**Q. A great season at North Texas last season. You're now on to your fourth school in your career. What's been the key to adapting to so many different environments while also staying at the highest level that you are at?**

CHANDLER MORRIS: That's a good question. I think being at different stops and being around many different teammates has really helped me. And I think my experience, not just the success but also the adversity that I've faced, I've been able to really connect more with my teammates.

Football, it can be ugly at times. The game won't love you back at times. I've learned that the hard way. Just being able to connect with my teammates that way and really building relationships with everyone, but also, too -- and I give so much credit to my teammates, I came in -- I'm just a Texas boy. I've been around home for a while, come up to Virginia, I'm not sure if I've ever been in the state of Virginia before I'd gotten on a visit at UVA.

But teammates, I came in in January, and they welcomed me with open arms. That's Jah and Josey, just to name a few on our team that have been here for a while. That speaks volumes.

I'm very appreciative of them, and that's really helped with my transition and being able to kind of take that next step as a leader and fill that role and what the team needs.

**Q. You come into Virginia after being at North Texas but also Oklahoma and TCU. You're coming to a program that has struggled to find its footing over the last several years. What do you think you bring to the table that's going to allow Virginia to take that next step and have a winning season and to move forward?**

CHANDLER MORRIS: Yeah, I think it's my experience. I think I've played a lot of snaps in college. I've got a good grasp of it, and I've always said, you can't coach experience.

I really believe that, and as a young player, I actually got to sit behind Max Duggan for a little bit and kind of learning from him. He played a lot of snaps. I won the job. I get hurt first game, it wasn't meant to be, and then Max steps in and he goes and he finishes second in the Heisman. No one ever would have guessed that. We go to the National Championship.

It was something to be said about playing snaps, and I'd sit down with Max and he would just say, man, you can't -- it's all about the experience. You're going to get there at some point and have all these snaps under your belt.

Then at that point the game slows down for you.

I think that's where I'm going to be able to help us out, is coming in, and I think my game is exciting. I think I can take a bad play and turn it into positive yards. I think I can use my feet and escape pressure and everything like that, and I know I've got a great squad around me. I've got great pieces around me that the coaches have brought in and we're all meshing it together. And I just think it's going to be a lot of fun for us as a unit on the offense and then us as a team with all the pieces that we've brought in.

**Q. What type of leadership style do you think you command, both in the locker room and on the sideline and then the huddle?**

CHANDLER MORRIS: Yeah, I think I do a little bit of both. I think vocal and then also, too, leading by example.

I'm not the one who's always going to step up and say something. I think I'm going to get out there and sweat with my guys and show that I'm there by their side through it all.

But also, too, in the huddle, that's when I'm going to step up and I'm going to really say something and really break it down and command the best out of my guys around me. They do a great job of that to me, too, is we've got older guys that -- we don't just have one or four guys that are true leaders. We've got a bunch, we've got a group of 12 of us that really command everyone's best and show up every single day and do that.

I think it's a great balance. I think I've got a lot of help on this team leadership-wise, and I just came in and kind of felt it out, and I really learned that quickly, that we've got a lot of guys that are going to be able to help out with the leadership roles.

**Q. Noah, a couple returning offensive linemen from last year, but a lot of guys out of the portal coming to join you guys. How has the relationship been with that offensive line? It's the most set that's ever been there in your time at UVA. How have the relationships been and how have you been meshing together?**

NOAH JOSEY: Thanks for the question. A lot of praise to this staff this off-season for the types of guys they've brought in. Meeting with them in December, it was clear



that the key for guys coming in was for them to be good-character guys, guys who want to win games, and I feel like that's the guys we've brought in.

Coming together as a unit hasn't been hard. There's going to be a lot of competition at all five spots during fall camp, which is huge. Having that competitive depth that Coach E talks about is going to be big, and along with stability we've got a strong group that can play 12, 15, 17 games, whatever we need.

**Q. You're one of the last holdovers from the players who know what it's like at UVA to experience a bowl game at UVA. How do you lead the room and kind of galvanize them to, hey, that is a big-time goal or are there bigger aspirations and goals for this team, because Coach Elliott said this team will go as far as you lead them. Where is the offensive line looking to take this team, like this would be a great season for us?**

NOAH JOSEY: Yeah, I think the sky is the limit for this team. I think with the talent we have and the resources we have, we can do whatever we put our minds to, and I believe championships are not out of the question for us.

**Q. You've played multiple positions on the offensive line in your career. How do you approach playing those different positions from mentality-wise and scheme-wise and how do you feel that can help your team succeed this season?**

NOAH JOSEY: Yeah, I feel like every week you go in watching film and thinking about how would you approach a certain play a ton of different ways, and I think that helps going into different positions. I think the coaches do a good job, too, of moving guys around, whether it be during spring ball or during camp or even during the season, just getting you snaps at center, at guard, at tackle, wherever you may be. They do a good job preparing you so when you do need to change positions in that moment, you're ready.

**Q. Fans don't follow the offensive line like they follow other skilled positions. With all of the changes that you've had to go through, what would fans be surprised to learn about these transitions?**

NOAH JOSEY: Fans would be surprised to learn how hungry these guys are. There's a lot of guys in our room who are coming here because this is a great opportunity for them and they're hungry and they're willing to do whatever it takes to put their best product on the field.

**Q. Jahmeer, I have watched you very carefully for a**

**number of years now, and it seems to me, number one, you seem leaner right now. What did you do in the off-season getting ready for the new season? Number two, what are your personal goals in addition to leading the defense?**

JAHMEER CARTER: Yeah, so the first question, my playing weight right now is between 305 and 310. I've dropped my body composition a lot, so I believe I dropped four percent body fat since January. That was a big goal for me this off-season.

A big goal for me going into this season is just being as disruptive as possible, however that looks. I know stats are always a big indicator of that, but for me, I just want to see how disruptive I can be at the line, if I can shed blocks quicker or pressure the quarterback.

**Q. Jahmeer, you've been with this squad for so long now, really experienced. A lot of new guys coming into the room just like the offensive line, but also some returners, Jason Hammond, Anthony Britton, and guys like Hunter Osborne coming in, it seems like a loaded line. Talk about the position battles and how you're making each other better.**

JAHMEER CARTER: Yeah, this off-season has been awesome. We have so much talent from the guys that we're returning and the guys we have brought in. Every day we know it's a competition, so that's helping us get better.

There's never a day where there's always a starter or there's always one that knows they got a starting spot. Like I said, that drives our performance to achieve great things.

**Q. I spoke with Brennan Armstrong, former quarterback at Virginia, and he spoke with Tony Elliott being the right guy to be a leader of men. Why do you agree with that statement?**

JAHMEER CARTER: I think back to when Coach Elliott first got here. Like many of us, we had a decision to make if we wanted to stay or if we wanted to transfer elsewhere, but the thing about Coach Elliott is he cares about you outside of football. I think that's very important because, in this day and age, it's hard to find a coach that truly cares about their players like he does. For me it was a no-brainer that he's a leader of men and he cares about your development.

**Q. Jahmeer, in terms of your development, what is one big thing that you are looking to do better than last year?**

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JAHMEER CARTER: Yeah, I think for me, at this point in my life, it's really just expanding my pass rushing ability. I think I've demonstrated well that I can stop the run, but obviously the game is always changing, which means I have to change, and air raids and all the passing quarterbacks we play in this league, it's important to work on that. So that's something I'm striving for this off-season.

**Q. Are you a vocal leader or do you lead by example?**

JAHMEER CARTER: I think naturally I lead by example, but this off-season, my defensive tackles coach, Coach Downing, he really challenged me to be more vocal. That's something I took to heart. It's not necessarily in my comfort zone, but if it's going to get us to a National Championship and an ACC Championship, I'm going to do it.

**Q. How does one practice being a vocal leader? Is it repetitions in front of the mirror? What do you do?**

JAHMEER CARTER: I think really just -- there's a saying called seizing the moment, and what that means is let's say we're in practice and we're not starting off great. I address that, where I say something or I'm not afraid to say -- call someone out or tell them to pick it up a little bit.

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