

Virginia Tech Lacrosse  
Head Coach John Sung Q&A Highlights  
Nov. 7, 2019

**How would you assess the fall season?**

“I think that the fall was successful, we did a lot of growing. The biggest thing is trying to introduce another recruiting class. This is actually the first full recruiting class that we’ve had. we started recruiting them the minute we got to campus when I was hired our first summer [2016]. It was nice to get those kids and take them through the entire recruiting process, so we are excited to have that group here. We wanted to go slow and use what we’ve learned the last couple years to be a little bit more successful and go back to the basics. We spent a lot of time with the basic stuff and I think working on our skills of playing a lot more reactionary lacrosse versus a lot of the choreographed stuff that we have been doing in the past.

I think that we have also seen a lot of kids grow over the years and now we’re finally to a point where we have depth, which we haven’t had in the past so the ‘next man up’ mentality is definitely one that on certain sides of the ball we’re getting used to. I think we’re a little bit stronger on the defensive end now. We’ve gained depth on the defensive end and we’ve gained depth in the midfield. Those two areas were the things last year that we missed and now returning essentially everybody, is exciting because we were able to focus in on chemistry and that was really important.”

**Where have you seen the team grow the most?**

“I think the growth that we’ve seen is they have done a lot of internal searching and done a lot of internal assessment and they were really able to kind of know what allows them to perform at their best. That was something that we really focused in on. We spent a lot of time on the mental side, a lot of time on the cultural components of our program and really taking those things of what it’s going to take for us to be successful and get back to the NCAA tournament and going farther and trying to win an ACC Championship. I think for this group, they know we have the depth and the talent and I think one of the biggest things is being able to focus on ourselves and really focus on our culture pieces which has really helped us a ton. They know what it takes for them to be successful on a day-to-day basis and I think that’s kind of translating into when we compete. I think they have also realized what their preparation in going to compete needs to look like and that they need to do to bring it at that level every time.

For the fall we were tested, we got to play some really good teams. Getting to see another ACC team in UVA and seeing teams like James Madison, Penn and Penn State, seeing some big-name schools that have been historically been very good and for us to compete and have successful moments against them I think was really important for us. For them to also be challenged, if they decided not to show up or be really in it, I think they learned how to really compete and have to play their way through certain situations which I think is really more important.

I guess what's exciting about this group is they've come back to learning to love it again. I think last year was such a toll with so many close games and them just trying to find their identity. We lost so many people in the senior class the previous year which was kind of the personality and the heart and soul of the team. I think it just took us a while to find it and I think now that this group has gotten closer, figuring out our identity of this group has been really important. I think they are way further ahead on seeing those things so that really excites me about moving into the spring."

### **What excites you about this group moving into the spring?**

"The new faces that we have added to our program have been catalysts for us going forward and moving our program to that next level. Being able to bring in kids like Kayla Frank, Jacelyn Lazore, Mary Griffin, Sophia Holt, those kids have really pushed our returners. We've got some really talented freshmen who are really making an impact and will make an impact this upcoming spring and I'm excited to see them. Their growth this fall was pretty exponential.

Being able to take that next step, as crazy as it sounds – starts with bringing in my first complete recruiting class [with the freshmen this season]. Being able to see that these kids fit our system, they fit what we do, they fit what we're trying to do versus us having to maneuver the way we coach to the personnel that we have. Obviously, you always have to do that as a coach, but being able to do what we like as a coaching staff and being able to do what we typically haven't done yet, you're going to see some interesting things from us this spring. Our depth will allow us to do things that we haven't been able to do in the past and now having kids who have returned who have played significant minutes, I think we're in that really perfect place to take that next step of pushing the program to where we want to see it.

Being a top 25 team is not necessarily the goal any more. The goal is to be a perennial top 10 team, to be a team that goes to the NCAA tournament every single year, to be a team that historically is putting out All-Americans and putting out kids that are playing at the next level, kids who are competing for ACC and national championships that's what we want to do. That's what we want to build and I think that we're in that first phase of it still. That's probably the hardest part, is the recruiting takes so long for it to kick in but once it kicks in you can see the fruits of our labor and we are obviously really excited about that."

**Stay tuned in the coming weeks for the Hokies' 2020 schedule release and be sure to follow Virginia Tech lacrosse on Twitter and Instagram @HokiesLax.**