

# Atlantic Coast Conference Basketball Tipoff Media Day

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Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Virginia Tech Hokies

Coach Kenny Brooks

Georgia Amoore

Elizabeth Kitley

Press Conference



When you can have kids like that I think you're going to generate success, and that's what's happened to us. Fortunate for us, last year we had the best year in ACC history for Virginia Tech, and we're looking to build upon that. We have the experience. We have the depth. We have the talent, but more so we have the chemistry.

We brought in some amazing players with these young ladies, and all they want to do is blend in. No one's trying to do something out of their character. They all just want to blend in because they're all fighting for the same goal, and that's to become ACC champions.

THE MODERATOR: I wanted to go back to one thing that you said. You said representing our university well. I would be remiss not to say congratulations for Sheppard winning her title with the WNBA this past season with the Aces. They did mention how she came to campus, and I'm sure you guys were able to love on her a little bit, but that's a really amazing feather in the cap.

KENNY BROOKS: Yes, she is. She's a Hokey. She's a Hokey through and through and represents our program on the utmost stage.

For us, we were able to follow her. We had group chats going on following her success, and then when she was able to come back and she shared upon that success to the team with us, she and I, we shared a moment. We went out to eat when she came. She stayed at my house. We got to sit on the couch and watch the Cowboys win a football game.

It was a wonderful night for me, but she's represented us, and we credit her a lot for helping us change the culture. But very, very happy for her. She gained very valuable experience.

We all can live through her vicariously, but also she's paving the way for them so they can show her how it is to get to the next level.

THE MODERATOR: Big shoes to fill. She was the program's leading scorer and had so many accolades she

THE MODERATOR: I'll go ahead and get things started with the head coach of Virginia Tech, Kenny Brooks, joined by two of the most amazing players on his team, with Georgia Amoore, from Australia -- I told you I wasn't going to do an accent. Sorry about that. And you have Elizabeth Kitley, the defending Player of the Year.

Coach, we were looking at the roster, and I was talking about it with your girls just now, and I said, wow, depth. When you're looking at the seventh season for you, if you can just speak to what's gone into creating what you want for this roster, for this program, and this year where you guys can be.

KENNY BROOKS: It's been a work in progress. Obviously coming here seven years ago into the ACC I knew that, number one, you have to have really good players, and you have to have a lot of them. We were always battling and get to the point where we'd come up a little bit short just because of depth.

You see amazing teams in the ACC and amazing coaches who put together tremendous rosters. We figured out exactly what we wanted, the culture we wanted, the style, the kind of kid we wanted representing our university, and we went out.

It really kind of started with their class, Elizabeth's class, and we changed the culture. We brought in kids who really fit the scheme of what we wanted to do, not only on the court, but also off the court.

And these young ladies represent our program to the utmost in front of thousands of fans, but they represent our program behind the scenes, with the work that they do, not only in the community, their schoolwork, and they epitomize what it is to be a student-athlete.



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was able to accomplish within the ACC in her tenure as well.

You mentioned it already. You have a couple of players able to step in this season with the transfers. We'll talk about Ashley Owusu coming from Maryland. What can she provide to your roster right away?

KENNY BROOKS: Man, she's provided a lot of ooh moments in practice. People are like, oh, wow.

She had a moment the other day, and I think one of the things that's going to be undervalued about our team is we're really good defensively. We have Georgia, who's a tremendous on the ball defender. Kayana Traylor is a tremendous on the ball defender. Cayla King I think is one of the most underrated defenders in our league. Liz was an all-defensive performer. Taylor Soule was an all-defensive performer.

Ashley had a day where, no offense to all of them, they were coming to me and saying, well, how do I guard her when she does that? I was like, I don't know, when she gets it going like that.

She's going to be a tremendous addition to our program not only because she's so talented, but she just wants to fit in. She came here not because she wanted to be the mainstay in our offense. She came here to play with these young ladies. She knew how good they were and what she could add to our program to take us to another level.

THE MODERATOR: You did mention, too, Taylor Soule. That's another player she understands what it takes to win in the ACC, has been acknowledged for her attributes in that department as well. But how does she fit in to the roster?

KENNY BROOKS: You can see their smiles.

THE MODERATOR: All smiles. I don't know if you want to answer. We'll go straight to you, Georgia.

KENNY BROOKS: She's awesome. She's awesome. I'll just say this and let them go with it. I think she's going to be the mayor of Blacksburg before she leaves. She's just that type of kid. She adds a dynamic to our team.

We have a group that is technically introverted, and she comes in and she's very extroverted. She really adds a balance to us and makes us great.

GEORGIA AMOORE: To me, I see two T. Soules. You have the one on the court who's absolutely relentless. She runs the floor incredibly. She's the fastest person I've ever

seen sprint the floor. But then you have her off the court, and she's a big softy.

You talk about leadership and chemistry, she's someone that everyone goes to honestly, and she's bridged that gap. She's just an incredible leader and just a great mentor really.

THE MODERATOR: And so are you. I mean, you're looking at what you were able to do last season. We were joking maybe we need to fly her parents out more often because you had doubled your performance in your points with them being here.

For you in this next season, what's the next step for you?

GEORGIA AMOORE: Just continue to grow and be a leader, step into that leadership role. Because you said it, we have depth. We exceed on the athletic side. We exceed on the skill side. Leadership is something that's going to take us over the edge.

So growing into that role, yeah.

THE MODERATOR: I would say even with the defending Player of the Year in the ACC, when you have someone that is just consistent, that's what I see from you.

What do you want your next season to look like knowing that everyone sees you as that target on your back?

ELIZABETH KITLEY: I mean, again, for me, like Georgia said, I think we're both working a lot on leadership. We have, like we've mentioned, these new pieces that's are coming in and they're excellent, but it's a different system here.

I think our role is really to help them get acclimated and teach them the new things. And having freshmen also, too. So just forming one cohesive unit, that was definitely my goal.

THE MODERATOR: What was your role in that leadership department? You said being a bit better, cohesive. But for you specifically, what does that look like?

ELIZABETH KITLEY: Definitely just being vocal, and my role when it's time to step in and maybe correct something or teach somebody how to do something because this is my fourth year and I've been here and I know what Coach Brooks wants.

So take a little pressure off of him and speak up sometimes.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, you just talked about the historic numbers you guys were able to put up last season and just really showing everyone what the Hokies were all about. You mentioned defense, and I thought it was very interesting on one of our calls. You said it was like Jurassic Park. Do you still take that approach? What does that look like?

KENNY BROOKS: We are. We hunt in packs. Again, recruiting to your system, to your philosophies, is something that's very, very important to our success.

We're not a team that's going to get out and try to press you for 40 minutes. We're not going to try to cause havoc. We are dead last in the ACC in steals, and we're proud of that because we don't gamble.

It's accountability. We want to protect the paint, and that puts us in position. We're always one of the top rebounding teams in the conference. That's what we thrive on. You can rebound the basketball, you can kick it out, you can go and start your fast breaks.

I'm very proud of this group, and we've been talking about it. As I mentioned, we're really good defensively. If you put them all on an island and made them play one-on-one defensively, I'm not sure of their success rate, but as a team, as a unit, when they know that, okay, if I funnel to this area there's going to be someone there to help me and we can just throw the other team out of rhythm, that's our purpose. It's to throw them out of rhythm and not to try to trap and steal.

We want to make the game clean, clean as it can be for us. We were really good last year defensively, and it's kind of under rated because obviously they're so talented offensively. But I think, if you take notice of our defense, we're going to be much better this year.

THE MODERATOR: Georgia, I want to go to you and how that looks like for you. I know that's something you take a great deal of pride in. As far as the group overall, what can we expect? As a person seeing the Virginia Tech team and take the floor, what can they expect?

GEORGIA AMOORE: Excitement. Pushing the tempo in transition. I think that's something that's really going to be a good feel for us. But going back to insider basketball, we still have the ACC Player of the Year coming back, and you've added the likes of Ashley Owusu and Taylor Soule, Cayla King, KT; I could go on.

Just really good offense, but like Coach said. A pack mentality defense.

THE MODERATOR: Just going back to you, Elizabeth, obviously when you're looking at the entire scope of what you guys were able to do last year, obviously everyone wants to win, but when you're looking at what that looks like in the ACC and gaining that respect and earning that respect, what has gone into making sure that your name is known and no one can take a night off when they step on your court?

ELIZABETH KITLEY: I think it's just -- looking at the progression since I've been here, Coach Brooks has done a great job of elevating the program every year. I think that's just going to continue through this year.

I think, as we mature too, every player individually gets better, and that makes us better as a whole. I think we get more and more dangerous as time goes on.

THE MODERATOR: I wanted to look to the audience. Any questions?

Coach, I just know that for you, you mentioned just the ACC and how tough it is to win in the ACC. If we can look at the non-conference schedule as well, how you guys are challenging yourself for the play moving forward.

KENNY BROOKS: We wanted to strengthen our non-conference schedule. Obviously we felt like we came up a little bit short last year in being able to host. Obviously if you're able to host it gives you a better path to get to the Sweet 16. I think we came up a little bit short.

We wanted to strengthen our schedule not only for that purpose, but also to prepare us, prepare us for the ACC, the regimen of that schedule.

No question in my mind, ACC women's basketball is the best conference in the country. The parity in this league is tremendous, 1 through 15. If you do not come to play every night, anyone can beat anyone. There's no easy game on your schedule.

So I'm looking forward to these young ladies challenging themselves to be the best version of themselves every night, and that takes a lot of energy, effort, and it takes a tremendous attitude because, if you want to accomplish your goals -- I really think that the team who's going to become the ACC regular season champion this year, they may have four, maybe even five losses, just because there's so many teams.

You can talk about a lot of teams that returned their rosters from a Sweet 16 appearance, Jeff Walz from a Final Four appearance, but there are some teams that are up and coming. Miami showed; they got to The Finals last year.



There's a lot of good basketball teams in this league, and I think it's going to be fun for the fans. I think the first year I got into the league we were definitely number one in the country in our conference, and I think this year can be the same.

So I'm looking forward to it.

But the difference for us is that when I first got in the league and we were the number one conference in the team, we weren't ready to be one of those teams, and I think now we are. When you see Virginia Tech, you're going to have to come out and play because we're very, very talented.

THE MODERATOR: And a lot of experience.

KENNY BROOKS: A lot of experience, and it makes my job easier. They come to me a lot. These two right here, they know me as well as anyone, as well as anyone I've ever coached, just our relationships, the chemistry that we have.

Like my language I have with Georgia is just me and Georgia. Maybe you wouldn't understand it. Maybe Liz wouldn't understand it. But my language with Liz is what me and Liz understand with each other.

So in return, they're able to go out and they're able to help coach the team. They're able to go out and instruct.

I think they were asking for my permission early. They would come over to me, hey, last year we did it like this. Well, go tell them. It makes my job a lot easier. It's fun watching their maturation into a leadership role and what they become, and I think they're ready to take on that leadership role, as I mentioned before, and do that well.

THE MODERATOR: I have to bring up Cayla King one more time, as you mentioned, being under the radar and a senior, what she provides for you guys. Can you put a stamp on that one?

KENNY BROOKS: I think she's probably the most under rated player in the ACC. A lot of times people will just look at the final stat sheet of the person she guarded, but she's doing exactly what we ask them to do, and she's funneling people to the right spots.

You add Cayla King to this panel here, and it's probably three of the smartest kids I've ever coached in my life. They're so respectful because they're smarter than I am. I can call a play something this year, and I can rename it the next year, and they come over to me very respectfully, and

they'll say, coach, last year we called it five five double. I just understand it. You've got to know who you're working with. They're smart.

Cayla King is in that role also. She actually shoots the ball as well as anyone in the country. She knows her role and plays it well, and she's a very important piece to our success, any success we've had.

With this group right here, add Cayla King, and they're the foundation of our program. They've been with me for four years, and we've added some pieces to supplement it, but they're the foundation and very proud of their accomplishments.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you so much for your time, Coach, Georgia and Liz. I'll call you Liz too. That's really cute. Thank you so much for your time. Best of luck this season. We'll definitely be following you all along the way.

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