

Atlantic Coast Conference Basketball Tipoff Media Day

Tuesday, October 24, 2023

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Virginia Tech Hokies

Coach Kenny Brooks

Georgia Amoore

Elizabeth Kitley

Press Conference

THE MODERATOR: Welcome to the 2023 ACC women's basketball tip-off where we are excited to get to know the coaches, the players, recap what they have done in the previous season but also get excited for what they are going to be prepared for and preparing for this season.

Of course we have to start off, they say save the best for last, but I feel like in this case we're just going to start right off the top because we know it's so hot as far as what you guys were able to do last season, going to the Final Four, winning the ACC title for the first time in Hokie history, and just understanding what it means for you.

I know we only have space for two players up here, but we also have Cayla King in the back, so we are excited to see her face, as well, excited to see her on the floor this season.

We talked about how you guys were able to have a monstrous season last year. A couple of the records, if we have time, highest seed earned in the NCAA Tournament, first ACC championship, longest ACC winning streak, the final eight of the season, and most student-athletes, the attendance at a game in Coach Brooks' era.

When you look at the beginning of where you started there, the story has always been if you build it they will come. Going back to last season, talk about how you guys were able to have such an incredible year, but also see the fans and the community come behind you. Just recap what that has meant to you.

KENNY BROOKS: The fans in the building, we've always said they can make a good team great, and the way the Hokie Nation came out and represented us.

We started slow when we were building it I think eight



years ago, and to the point where we got our watch party, we had more people at our watch party this year than we probably did my first game that we had in Cassell Coliseum.

You do have to build it, and you get tremendous players, tremendous people to represent your program, and then people will come out and they will support.

Hokie Nation has some of the best fans in the country. They're very loyal, and they come out and support it, and they even support it off the season has been over. I think it's really hard for those two to go to Kroger's and just have a peaceful afternoon or evening because everyone wants a part of them.

But that's a great thing. We're very proud of what we've built there. Cassell is a tremendous, tremendous home-court advantage, and we look to build on that.

Q. For Elizabeth, deciding to come back, I don't know how long it took for you to make that decision, but what went into coming back, being able to build on this historic season that you guys recently had?

ELIZABETH KITLEY: I think this time last year I was like 50/50 not knowing what I wanted to do, but the more time that passed in the season and the more I saw how lucky I was to be in the place that I am, it really became clear that another year here would benefit me and be the best for me.

And just the opportunity to play with Georgia and to be coached by Coach Brooks and play with Cayla and play in front of Hokie Nation every night, it's so fun and such a great opportunity that I think will benefit me in the long run, basketball and off the court.

Q. Going back to your season, you don't become the two-time ACC Player of the Year for no reason, becoming the program's all-time leading scorer, you have over 2,000 points and over 1,000 rebounds. What's the next step in your game?

ELIZABETH KITLEY: I think Coach Brooks and I have



... when all is said, we're done.®

taken on that challenge. Obviously I've been trying to be consistent over the last three years, but to further expand my game in ways in a might not be so obvious, so we talk about outsmarting defenders more, making minor adjustments that will help me be more efficient. Really just making things harder to guard at this level but also preparing me for the next.

I'm really grateful that I have a coach that looks into the future and is looking to help me, not just for the benefits of him but also what's best for me.

Q. What's best for you, I love that. You talk about what he's been able to do as far as helping your game. We'll go to Georgia Amoore because Coach Brooks has also coached some of the top three-point shooters in the country. You had Aisha Sheppard who was with your program; you just passed her record as far as most threes, and also Dawn Evans while you were at JMU. But when you look at Georgia, what she has been able to do and how she has been able to have these amazing moments within her career passing Aisha Sheppard last year for threes?

KENNY BROOKS: She's meant everything to us. Just her personality has transcended our program. She's a winner, she's a competitor, and she's one of the hardest working kids in our program. If everyone is looking up to her and they see what she does, only naturally they have to follow suit.

We follow her personality. We take on her personality. The way that she has gained confidence over the years, now she knows when she walks out on the floor, she's one of the best players on the floor, and she proved that that magnificent run she had last year toward the end and she took us all for a ride.

I love seeing her do that, watching her play down. The confidence is through the roof. She'll be very humble when you talk to her in a second, but we follow her lead. These two along with Cayla, we feel like when we step on the floor, if I have those three, then we can beat anyone if we play well.

Q. Georgia Amoore, when you stepped on the court, especially in the ACC Tournament, the MVP for the tournament, when you're seeing how people are praising you, I think I asked you can anybody guard you and you're like, I'm not sure. When you're going into this season, how do you build on that? A lot of people can see you have a gift of putting the ball in the hoop, but what goes into being such a prolific scorer?

GEORGIA AMOORE: Yeah, I think just consistency and

confidence. I think shooting is definitely more mental than anything. I say this all the time, but coming into college I was not a shooter. I was not preferred to shoot a three.

Seriously, I think one of my teammates from Australia brought that up a few months ago, and I was reminiscing on that because now I feel not normal when I don't attempt a three in a game.

But yeah, just consistent work over the off-season, and I think going into last year's season I was a bit complacent in trying to share the ball a bit more, which is still a huge part of my job, is to make everyone better, but I think going into this season, I know I have to be a threat, and I know I have to shoot.

Coach Brooks has placed stress on me that everything I'm able to do comes from me being a threat from three. I can't be a good pass without being a threat. I can't drive without being a threat from three.

So just remembering that that is my number one priority, and keeping up with that is going to help me on every other aspect.

Q. We have one of the top 5 scoring duos in the country sitting next to us right now. How you guys work off one another, what does that do for your game?

ELIZABETH KITLEY: Yeah, especially after the way she ended last season, people are going to be paying tons of attention to her. And when you pair that with shooters like Cayla King and our transfer from Michigan, Matilda Ekh, people are really going to have to press out, and that obviously just allows more room for me or our 4 to drive or whatever. We just have a lot more space on the inside, and that's definitely helpful.

But Georgia just proved herself last year and people are going to have to adjust to her even more.

Q. Georgia, what does it mean to you and what we can expect from this team this season?

GEORGIA AMOORE: Yeah, it's massive. We talk about it all the time. Obviously talk about the season, but obviously the standout there is Iowa here in Charlotte. I think it's huge for women's basketball, period. You have obviously big names playing. Caitlin Clark draws so much attention and should. She's absolutely phenomenal.

But to play against her, and Iowa has also just played that outdoor game and they're bringing so much attention. The ball is rolling right now. It's a great time to hop on women's

sports.

I think this year this team is going to put on a really good show. I think you're going to see a lot of offense, a lot of threes. I said this a couple of days ago. We were a three-point team last year; we've even stepped that up this year.

As Liz said, we have Matilda Ekh from Michigan State. She's is phenomenal, she's automatic. It's insane. We even have someone like Liv Summiel from Wake Forest who can pick and pop. We bring back Cayla who is just incredible as well, our safety blanket.

Yeah, very exciting. The team is very much looking forward to it, and it'll be a great game.

Q. Coach, I want to go back to you because we've mentioned the one game that you guys have, but this season is going to be incredible as far as your schedule. What went into planning your said schedule for non-conference?

KENNY BROOKS: Well, we wanted to challenge the group, and obviously understanding what it took last year to be a No. 1 seed, that was new territory for us.

For me, it was always just try to get in the tournament. I didn't care if we were a 19 seed. We just wanted to be in the tournament.

Last year the benefits of being a No. 1 seed and what came with it and the importance of it, so putting together a schedule that was going to prepare us, give us a chance to be able to be a No. 1 seed or get the highest seed possible was very, very important, and I don't really know if I wanted to play Iowa so early, but Danny Morris came to me and was talking about the game and I just felt like it was going to be a tremendous opportunity for not only our program but for women's basketball in general.

That came, too, and we didn't have any say-so with the LSU game, but we'll play it, and I think it will help us prepare for a very rigorous ACC schedule because we didn't really want to do too much outside of that because the ACC this year is just going to be ridiculous. So many great teams, so many veteran basketball teams all chasing the same goal.

We felt like our schedule, our non-conference schedule was perfect for us. We only have three players coming back. Albeit they're great players, but the other nine have not played one game for me, I haven't called one time-out while they've been in a Hokie uniform.

It's going to be a challenge for us to put together a run. We can't look at what we did last year and say, hey, let's just do it again. I think that's a discredit to what we did last year and how hard it was. This is a new team, but we have tremendous possibilities, and we're looking to build on that, but it's going to take a little bit of time.

Q. Going back to what you were saying, last year's season, winning seven straight games against ranked opponents, you're making a name for yourself. Now it's keeping that name and understanding how to build on. Lost two to the WNBA, which we're very excited about in the ACC, but big shoes to fill. If you can explain a little more about what this roster looks like and I'm sure defense is on there somewhere.

KENNY BROOKS: Yeah, defense is still a work in progress right now. We're trying to learn each other. But when you have the staple of these three, they're like little assistant coaches for me, and the way they can go and pull some of the younger players, some of the more inexperienced players really helps me out a lot because I don't always have to do it, the assistant coaches don't always have to do it.

These three are probably the three smartest players I've ever coached, and they understand me. They've been with me for four, four and a half years. They understand our whole system.

We are new. One through five, I don't know if you can compare our team last year because we were such a veteran group. They are very motivated. They started playing extremely well together. It was a magical run.

This year I think we will be deeper. I think we'll be deeper. I think we'll have capabilities of more people being able to shoot the three as Georgia has alluded to with Cayla King in the back which is shooting lights out right now, and Matilda Ekh if she does miss a shot I'm wondering what is wrong with her, is she sick or something.

But then we have young players, freshmen, who are really stepping up, who are probably more ready than any freshman group that I've ever had. They just have the luxury to play behind such great players and learn.

It's going to be a really good team. We just have to try to put it together as quickly as we can with the chemistry. The only way you can get chemistry is you have to have experience with each other. The Greece trip we had this summer was phenomenal. It really helped us push this forward a little bit, but we do have a tough schedule, but we really like who we are and what we can be, and we're excited for the year.

Q. You talked before preseason practice started about you only trusted at that point three players on the team and you needed to build trust during the preseason. Who have you figured out that you can trust?

KENNY BROOKS: Well, I think we mentioned Matilda Ekh a few times. She really fits who we are and what we do. Very, very smart player, understands the system, and is getting in shape for us. Early on she wasn't in shape. She didn't have much of a postseason. But she's a very smart kid, passes the ball well, shoots the ball well, learning how to defend in our system.

Rose Micheaux is the missing piece that we needed when we lost Taylor Soule, strong, athletic, understanding our system now, getting better and better. Then we have quite a few freshmen that are doing a wonderful job of just trying to find their place. Carys Baker is a tremendous shooter. Clara Strack, she's the baby of our group, but she's playing exceptionally well right now and just really adding some depth in the backcourt for us, front court for us. So I'm excited about what their possibilities can be, but it's a really good group.

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