

Atlantic Coast Conference Basketball Tipoff Media Day

Wednesday, October 25, 2023

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Virginia Tech Hokies

Coach Mike Young

Hunter Cattoor

Sean Pedulla

Men's Press Conference



additional day to the women's tournament. So that's a lot.

So those are conversations that we'll all have with the commissioner and others as we move along.

Q. My notes show me that you let Hunter install a play in an October practice.

MIKE YOUNG: He screwed it up, as I knew he would. (Laughter).

Q. What led to the suggestion? What led to the idea that he could do that?

MIKE YOUNG: He sometimes comes by the office -- I think he gets bored, so he comes to see me. He has his lunch, and we're thinking, we're thinking out loud, and he had an idea about a wrinkle to something that we already have, and I liked it.

I said, all right, you've got it, you're putting it in. He wants to coach when his playing days are over, when his professional career is over. He'll be really a good one. He's a very sharp -- has a very sharp basketball mind.

I've got no problem with who installs things, just get it right, and he got it exactly right.

Q. Does it have a creative name to it?

MIKE YOUNG: No, it's probably in the Lubbock family.

Q. Mike, MJ had to play more last year than you probably wanted him to play. How did that experience shape him, and how is he better this year because of it?

MIKE YOUNG: Well, I think there were some anxious moments for me -- I thought he handled himself very well, but the thought of going into league play and the understanding out of necessity you're going to have to play a freshman really and truly as much as he wants to play, 28, 32, 36 minutes a game, and I always knew in my private moments, every rep this kid gets is going to aid him greatly as we continue to move along throughout his

Q. You have one less guard than you did when preseason practice started. Given the guards and wings you still have, how do you feel you'll be able to withstand the loss --

MIKE YOUNG: Fine. Fine. I went into it -- I talked to you about the quality of depth that we have up and down the roster, and nothing has changed.

We can play as many as six potentially in the backcourt. Five is probably more realistic. I think we've got -- behind Hunter and Sean, MJ Collins, two kids that can, again, help us win games. That's all that matters.

Q. As we look at this conference grow from the 15 already to 18 next season, what are your thoughts on the world of realignment, expansion, and that there could be an ACC Tournament that doesn't have every school?

MIKE YOUNG: Well, you're the first to ask me my opinion. I'm all for it. Obviously it's a football decision. I understand that.

I've said it a couple of times now, and I mean this: I have incredible confidence and respect for Jim Phillips and for the leadership on our campus in Tim Sands and Whit Babcock. They deemed that necessary to move our league forward, and I'm all for that.

I do not -- I shudder at the thought of not taking every team to the ACC Tournament. I think that's of critical importance. I'll talk to commissioner Phillips about that as we move along.

I certainly understand his heartburn with adding an additional day to the league tournament. That would be an



career.

I thought he handled himself quite, quite well. He is poised to have an even finer sophomore year. He's bigger and stronger. I've challenged him to be a go-to defender. Let me guard you on the other team's best player. We need to get him to that point. He's a capable defender. He understands it. He's got long arms. He can move his feet.

He's worked really hard on his perimeter shooting, and that is -- I think he was 35, 36 from three. We are a lot more comfortable with those guys in the 40s, and that's saying something. Shooting 40 percent from three is challenging for anyone. He could very well be in that category this year. He's come a long way.

Q. Hunter, from your perspective, having seen all the wings and the guards, how are you feeling about being able to withstand the fact that you have one less now?

HUNTER CATTOOR: Yeah. I'm excited about the group we have in our locker room. We've got fighters. We've got hardworking dudes. We're going to figure it out. We'll be fine. We've been going through kind of the off-season summer working out, and we've got a good group of guys that I'm confident in, and we'll be excited to start off on November 6.

Q. You get to go home for Thanksgiving, play in a tournament. What's that going to be like for you?

HUNTER CATTOOR: I'm excited. It'll be my first time back home obviously playing in Tallahassee and Miami, but being able to go to Orlando for Thanksgiving, it'll be a lot of fun.

I'll probably have 30 friends and family there, maybe more or less, but it will be a surreal moment. I grew up playing at Wide World of Sports as a kid in AAU tournaments, so it'll be cool, kind of a full-circle moment to go back there my final year of college and be playing there.

Q. The notes say that you are shy by about 16 three-pointers to be the all-time career leader in that category at Virginia Tech. Do you think about such things?

HUNTER CATTOOR: Not much since I see it on social media. This last year it was really brought to light. I asked Coach if I could break it the first game, and he didn't like that idea, so we'll see how that goes.

But blessed to be in that conversation and have that feature. Just excited for this year, and just go out there and try to win games, whatever comes along.

Q. The play you designed is not a three-point basket play?

HUNTER CATTOOR: It is. Yeah, it is.

Q. Sean, what has impressed you the most about Brandon and how he has taken to kind of the similar role you had as a freshman to kind of backing up Storm? What has impressed you the most?

SEAN PEDULLA: Yeah, I think you guys will figure out how good of a shooter he is, and that obviously impressed me, but it was something I kind of already knew about him.

But what impressed me the most that I didn't already know was his competitive nature that I kind of resemble to a lot, and it kind of gave me flashbacks to my freshman year when I was backing Storm. We kind of went back and forth in practices a lot, and it's been more of the same with him. It's great to have him next to me.

Q. Going off of that, when you look at that first season for you, 36 games, didn't start a game. Last season started all 34. Just what you can say about having to wait your turn, go through that process, and then how you feel you performed last season when you had to be the guy.

SEAN PEDULLA: Yeah, I think that's just part of sports in general, is just waiting for your turn and earning everything that's given to you.

That was something that I learned a lot my freshman year is that you're not going to just be given anything, and that's in life, too.

But then once you do have that opportunity you've got to make the most of it, and last year I felt like I did a decent job for the most part.

Obviously things happen, but you just want to continue to improve upon things you can.

Q. You play with a different fire, a bit of a swagger. There's a different personality about the way you play. Where does that come from?

SEAN PEDULLA: Probably getting beaten up by my brothers in the driveway, if I'm being completely honest. Growing up with a lot of siblings and a lot of older brothers, that's where you kind of find that fiery competitive nature that I have.

It's something that I take pride in, playing every game with



a competitive nature, and also watching Russell Westbrook, who was my favorite player when I grew up, so he is kind of a similar way. That's someone who I kind of want to role model myself after.

Q. Cassell Coliseum is a special place to play, an elite place to play. What's your responsibility in trying to make that arena as heightened as it can be?

SEAN PEDULLA: Yeah, it's obviously one of the best places to play in the ACC, and it never ceases to amaze me every time I step foot on that floor. I never want to take it for granted. It's definitely something that gives myself and my teammates energy, and it's definitely something that you can have an edge over other teams with.

As far as my job and my role in creating that energy, just doing my job on the court, what I'm supposed to do, and the fans usually do a pretty good job taking care of the rest.

Q. The team went to Switzerland and Italy back in August. What were your favorite foods?

SEAN PEDULLA: The pizza, by far. Probably the best pizza of my life in Milan, Italy. We went to a little hole in the wall restaurant. It was like simple pizza, just cheese pizza, but it was so good. Oh, my gosh, so good.

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