

## **Wrestling: Steve Garland & Football: Justin Anderson (No. 271)**

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**Jeff White:** Welcome to another edition of the wahoo central podcast. I'm your host Jeff White and this week Justin Anderson from the UVA football program takes us behind the scenes for a look at how head coach Bronco Mendenhall and his staff put together their highest ranked recruiting class and how they did so while dealing with the challenges of a pandemic. We'll also hear from the always enthusiastic Steve Garland. Steve is UVA is head wrestling coach and his team is preparing for his first home match of the year. All right, I'd like to welcome in Justin Anderson, the director of player personnel for the UVA football team, first of all, Happy New Year Justin.

**Justin Anderson:** Thank you. Happy New Year to you.

**Jeff White:** So, you've been on this podcast a couple times before but when we recorded those, we were sitting across from each other in the studio at John Paul Jones Arena. We're doing this one remotely, which ties into what I'd like to talk to you about today and that is recruiting during the pandemic. It's been a whole new world for you and your staff hadn't it?

**Justin Anderson:** Yeah, it has, the last year has brought a lot of changes. And it's opened a lot of, I think, maybe new ways to recruit, moving forward as well. So even though things may get to back to normal at some point in time, which I think we all hope and pray will happen, I do think there's been some really good things that have come to light in ways that we can use virtual recruiting more effectively.

**Jeff White:** Back in March, I think it was, maybe two weeks after basically all college sports were shut down, I talked to you for an article I wrote about the impact of the pandemic on recruiting. College coaches were no longer allowed to go on the road to meet with and evaluate players and colleges were no longer to host on-campus visits with prospects, that seems like a million years ago now, but when you look back on that what was the process like getting up to speed and kind of changing your operation so dramatically, because coaches were used to going out on the road and you were used to having kids come in for visits and having them at practice and showing them the facilities and all that.

**Justin Anderson:** Yeah, I think took a few weeks, I would say we really got into gear. In April-ish. And I think we put together a pretty good plan of what we wanted to do and really there was no football, there was no players on campus, so the primary goal was recruiting and we spent a lot of time with virtual visits and getting players on FaceTime calls and then eventually zoom calls. And I think that it took a few, I would say a month and a half of kind of figuring out, how long is this going to go and then okay, what are we allowed to do and what can we do to still give players some sense of a visit-like experience to help them make decisions and I thought our coaches did a really good job. I thought our staff recruiting staff did a really good job of putting together a plan and I think honestly moving forward I think we've even got a more clear vision of what we can do and what we can do more effectively so it's been a really positive experience in some regards.

**Jeff White:** Tell me, tell us, about the recruiting staff, who is on it right now in addition to yourself and where does everyone work from? I know some of you are back in the McCue center but others are working remotely aren't they?

**Justin Anderson:** Yeah, so there's myself, Bob Price who's been working remotely from home. Blair Hodges is our on campus recruiting coordinator she's been in. Blanda Wolfe is our high school relations guy he's been in some. Pat Hickman helps us some in recruiting and he's been in. He's also the director of player development so he has other roles as well but he's been in the office. JR Belton, who's a guy that we got out of Louisiana - he's been in the office. Zack Bradshaw has been in the office- Evan Butts. We lost Jordan Arcement to some things which is great. I'm excited for his new opportunities and chance for him to kind of grow and expand and then we have Ryan Weese is still with us and he actually has been working remotely but I think he's in the process of returning back to Charlottesville.

**Jeff White:** Bronco has talked on signing day last month he talked about the fact that he liked a lot of the new aspects of recruiting, how challenging is it to kind of build a relationship with a recruit virtually when you don't get that face to face? Is it tougher or is it easier in some ways, I mean you get more time with them when you're talking on zoom or talking remotely?

**Justin Anderson:** What's interesting is I think the eventually the NCAA kind of changed the rules a lot they had to because there was no visits taking place and so to give I think these guys that were making decisions on schools and specifically the seniors. There was a lot of ability to call these guys, or do zoom calls with these guys. And I think, while you do miss some of that in person, I do obviously I love the in person thing I think there's something special and unique that happens when that when you have that opportunity but I do think this ability to kind of almost not and they were unlimited but they were you had a lot of opportunities to be on zoom calls and the way we kind of established our, our visits allowed us to be on several calls and I think that I really think we dove deep into the relationships because we had to right so you didn't have this in person experience so there was a lot more like getting to know the person and asking deeper questions than maybe what you might have asked before over the phone and so I think our coaches did a really good job of kind of building relationships, and I think it showed with our recruiting class I mean this is one of the best recruiting classes Virginia's had since 2012. So, and we had some guys that for from a long way away that hadn't really been here and I think that kind of demonstrates the fact that our coaches have done a really good job of building strong relationships, because the number of times they spoke to the recruits. I think more so than if, if there were the in-person visits.

**Jeff White:** What's the what's the downside of the current model. I mean, there are definite advantages to it Broncos talked about that other coaches have what do you miss most about the old model?

**Justin Anderson:** Yeah, I mean, I'm a people person in a lot of ways, I miss interacting with recruits and their families when they come on campus. I think it's a really good way to for them to see and for us to see if they're the right fit. I think really the model is affected probably the recruits more than it has the universities. Recruits don't get that opportunity to really be around players as much so I think that is something that really is impacted the players maybe or the recruits more than it has recruiting -the schools. But yeah, I would say the in-person visits. I miss, I missed that interaction and a chance to really get to meet the parents or grandparents or siblings, that's a unique opportunity and you don't get that right now. No unofficial visits and no official visits and so game day experience was different. So, I think there's a lot of things that you just kind of, you missed that part I think the recruits probably do too.

**Jeff White:** I know, having been to a number of practices Bronco Mendenhall practice is different than a lot of teams practices, how do you convey that to a prospect and give them a good idea of what they're in for because I think Bronco would be the first one to say his system is not necessarily for everybody

and you probably want the kids to come in with their eyes wide open so they don't get there and say, "Oh, I didn't- this isn't what I bargained for. I didn't know it was going to be this hard I didn't know it was going to be."

**Justin Anderson:** Yeah, I think we do miss that because you're right in spring practices we had a lot of kids that would stop by and watch practice and then during the fall maybe on a bye week or whatever kids would have a chance to see us practice we tried to do some zoom calls with kids maybe why we were at practice. The hard part is we practiced in the morning and so sometimes kids were in school but when there was an opportunity to kind of maybe show them what a practice looked like via zoom or FaceTime we tried to do that but it's really not the same, it's not the same as being there and experiencing kind of what that's like. And I think there was a challenge all around with COVID and practice I think our practices probably looked a little bit different than what they had in the past, too. So yeah, I think there was that that missing piece, it's hard to replicate that live experience, but we tried to use technology the best we could to kind of maybe give someone, something to see or feel.

**Jeff White:** The early signing period was last month and as you mentioned this is the highest rated class Broncos has had in his six years- one of the highest rated classes Virginia has had in some time. Is this just coincidence obviously the program was coming off a banner 2019 season and there was a comfort level with the coaches that maybe wasn't there year one because they were more familiar with the state or does this reflect the fact that the staff really used this new model and adapted to recruiting virtually well.

**Justin Anderson:** I think it's both. I think we did a great job of adapting. I think that comes with we've been around each other a long time now I think there's strength in that I think we know that areas better, we've got better relationships. Now that we've been here going to the Orange Bowl doesn't hurt. And so, I think there's a lot that kind of played into that. I do think on a more national level we're getting more respect because we've played in some big games, we've won some big games, which I think helps right so beating North Carolina this year we beat Miami and we've had some top 25 wins. I think all those things kind of kind of start are starting to kind of add on each other. And I do think recruits, specifically in-state recruits, are hopefully seeing that this is a program that is on the rise and is here to stay. It's not just kind of like a fluke that we're winning that we're going to be winning for a while.

**Jeff White:** Do you think the NCAA and college football will look to incorporate some of these changes and make them permanent once we can pass the pandemic because I think one of the benefits? You know, of this whole thing is it's allowed schools to save money on recruiting. You're not spending as much sending coaches out on the road and I think that's probably a big consideration for a lot of schools. You know you can spend their time more efficiently and less expensively.

**Justin Anderson:** Yeah, I mean I would hope so. I think they're going to have to I think there are some of these changes that are going to have to be implemented. You know, long term for the benefit of of recruits there are some kids who live long ways away and financially for them to get to another school, other than an official visit is going to be difficult so my hope is that some of this is here to stay. It does save money in recruiting. But you do miss out on that in person, seeing them practice that once again there's that that live kind of. There is something different about watching someone practice or play as to just watching them on video so I do think there'll be some things that will change. I think for the better.

But hopefully we can get back to some of the old stuff as well because I think putting it together you have a pretty strong model when you kind of add what we've learned from this pandemic and then some of the old stuff I think he can have a pretty strong recruiting model.

**Jeff White:** Because of the pandemic, the NCAA gave every college player an extra year of eligibility and you guys have, I think, close to a dozen fourth- and fifth-year guys coming back for another season. How has that complicated your job? I know it's a good thing for the program on one hand because you've got talented experienced players coming back but is it difficult for you to know right now, how big a class, you'll want to sign in December?

**Justin Anderson:** You know it's – we use a program it's called war room. I think it's one of the strengths of what we do but we're able to kind of forecast for seven years out, and so we're pretty clear on future recruiting classes and numbers and numbers at each position, and what depth looks like forecasting that out as well. So, I think we're in a really strong position I guess with some people it could be difficult but with, with the way we do it, I think it's, these guy's coming back is great and it really hasn't changed. What we know we need to do in the future because of the way we kind of count our numbers, so to speak.

**Jeff White:** I guess I just meant that you might have a guy now who's going to be a fourth-year next year and you thought that would be his last year and he could come back in 2022, if he's invited.

**Justin Anderson:** Oh, I see what you're saying. Yeah, we typically will forecast guys, I think we our coaches do a good job of having a feel for who wants to come back and who doesn't. And who's ready to move on or, you know whose draft potential is kind of there and so I think we do a good job of kind of trying to stay on top of that. I would say that something we do a really good job of we constantly kind of talk about, okay, who's coming back, who's going on. Pat Hickman in the recruiting department helps us because he's also our pro liaison so we have a good feel for maybe what you guys are kind of looking for the Avenue of the NFL.

**Jeff White:** The program added seven transfers last year I think, six were grad transfers and then Ronnie Walker came. There are so many players around the country in the transfer portal now. Does that make it more challenging because there's so many I mean what is the process like of figuring out guys A. would be good fits in Virginia and B. would be interested in Virginia, how do you narrow down that pool of hundreds of hundreds of players?

**Justin Anderson:** Yeah, this is uh, this is going to be something that's different moving forward.

**Jeff White:** There will be more of it now.

**Justin Anderson:** Yeah, I mean it's, this is something that we're going to have to adapt to, I think we've started. We kind of had a plan knowing this was kind of kind of coming down the pipes. But yeah, it's the number of kids in the portal on a daily basis, it's staggering. And you just have to know like the hard part is, I would say for probably most programs is what do you need versus what's out there right? So, you might get enamored by oh I'm just going to take this guy- there's some really good players in there so do you need that position, is he going to help you become better. And if not, you kind of have to kind of weigh those options so yeah, it's I would say it's a challenge and it is a lot of information and it is literally a daily. We're in that thing daily and gathering film daily and, when guys when the portal off its position to me, transcripts and those are all things we need at Virginia so yeah, it's uh it's only going to get

worse. No, I shouldn't say worse there's only going to be more in there, right, so we have to have a plan for that moving forward.

**Jeff White:** There was an announcement, I think it was yesterday, or Monday of this week that two grad transfers we're joining the program: Anthony Johnson, who's a defensive back from Louisville and Jelani Woods, if I'm pronouncing that correctly, a tight end from Oklahoma State. Anything you can share about their recruitments? Were there any connections with those guys on the staff or with other players on the team beforehand or did you just kind of start cold with them and recruit them?

**Justin Anderson:** Yeah, I think was just because you know positions that we wanted to look at. We felt like could help us. And then for us it's just gathering background from those coaching staffs if we knew someone on the staff. And then positions of need and then we really, we just recruited them and found the fit and for us once again academically, they have to be strong students, so both were great students and the right fits for what we're looking for to add to our program at this point. I don't think you'll see as many grad transfers this year as we had last year. I think that it's going to be moving forward it's kind of when someone's in there, you better do your research quick because these guys are jumping in and they're getting picked up like within a week or two, especially if they're good players.

**Jeff White:** I guess what we would call the late signing period is next month. It used to be the only signing period now there are two of them, are you expecting to add any more high school players, I think, I can't remember, I think 23 signed in December, any high school players? Still looking at other grad transfers or?

**Justin Anderson:** Yep. I think the only thing at this point is it would be either a grad transfer or undergrad, you know some of these guys going in the portal are also undergraduate transfers so if there was a really good undergraduate transfer as well, we would be looking at that and I, you wouldn't see more than just a couple. At this point, no more high school kids for us I think, unless it was a really good player that, you know, there are a couple really good ones out there if somehow we were to land them then that would kind of replace a grad transfer or undergraduate transfer for us.

**Jeff White:** I mean, ideally, you're looking with a transfer for a guy who has multiple years [of eligibility] left, right?

**Justin Anderson:** At this point and especially because of the COVID rules. A lot of these grad transfers are going to have multiple years. So yeah, you'd like to, you really don't want to have to take a one-year guy unless it's a really good player and there's a couple really good ones out there that if you were lucky enough to get in on them, you take them because they can make a difference in your program but you'd ultimately, you'd like to have a guy with two or three years.

**Jeff White:** Well, great. Well thanks for, thanks for joining us today that was enlightening.

**Justin Anderson:** No problem.

**Jeff White:** It's a brave new world and hopefully we'll get back to some degree of normalcy sooner rather than later.

**Justin Anderson:** Absolutely, great seeing you via Zoom Jeff and I appreciate your time.

**Jeff White:** Alright, take care and see you Justin.

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**Jeff White:** Okay, now I have the privilege of welcoming one of our all-time favorite guests back to the podcast and I'm talking of course about my Crozet neighbor, Steve Garland. Coach, how are things in the world of UVA wrestling?

**Steve Garland:** Good man, good. We just finished our first competition of the year and it was our first competition since last March, so I don't know how many months that is but you can imagine how grateful we were, how excited we were, and also me as a worrier, as a coach as a guy that has to constantly think about what's going to go wrong or what's going to go right, I think it was also very nerve wracking and a little surreal. I mean, when the first whistle blew, you're like oh my goodness we made it actually happened no one's going to pull it from us where they can't call and say we're done. I think we're going. It was awesome, man. We're in good shape and we're right back at it and hoping God willing, we're going to compete again this Saturday. So, yeah.

**Jeff White:** Before I kind of talk about the competitive aspect of it let's go back to the fall and then into the holidays. Your team was one of the ones who stayed in Charlottesville throughout the holidays, didn't go home for Christmas because of the pandemic and protocols. What was that like for your guys and what was that like for you?

**Steve Garland:** Yeah, so the honest truth. Well first of all, I'm going to make sure that the viewers don't think we're trying to be some sort of tough guys, I had to explain this to my kids too. First of all, we gave them a couple weeks in November, so we gave them Thanksgiving, that was going to be their break and the reason why is twofold: number one. The only issues we've had is when guys have gone home more. In the bubble, we've been fine, it's every time we let guys leave somebody gets something, it seems like and so we were trying to not have that happen so we didn't get shut down. It is about limiting the spread of this virus and any means necessary. Okay. The second thing it was about training, because of the university COVID protocols. If you leave, you have to then quarantine for five days or seven days, whatever it is. So, think about it mathematically if we let him go home for Christmas Eve and Christmas day even and then had them right back, we still wouldn't have been able to go to our first competition with the Mac with a five-day quarantine. Or at least you wouldn't have been able to train which makes no sense, so we had to do it was both from a training perspective, and also the safety perspective so. But when, what was it like? Look, it was tough. You know I don't care, like, man, I think we'll probably get to this, but I moved into the dorms with the freshman I felt so bad for these kids, I felt so bad for them and they were struggling I'm like, you know what, I'm going to get the pit with you. I'm going to lead from the front, I'm going to struggle with you. I'm going to suffer with you, and I did, I'm not trying to martyr myself but on Christmas Eve my youngest daughter was bawling her eyes out Daddy, please don't leave, please don't go. I want you to be here tonight and i honey I told these guys I got to do this I got to be there I'm supervising the kids I got to be there. And, and then on Christmas day I woke up at four o'clock in the morning and went and got a bunch of food from the refrigerator in the mem gym office I went home I did Christmas morning with my kids and then I cooked for five hours. So, we had

Christmas Day meal I made homemade lasagna, and I was doing, you know turkeys and I mean I was it was all over the map and it was crazy. It was freaking crazy, and I got home on Christmas Day back to I had about a two-hour window before I had to go back to the dorms that night, and I just collapsed I was so exhausted. So, I'm not gonna lie It's really tough. It was really tough for me. I'm sure it was tough, even a lot tougher for the kids. But here's the good news. The guys made a decision after a meeting I had with them about halfway through it to replace complaining with commitment. Replace complaint with commitment, and our leaders lead, and dudes locked in and guys were training and it was an awesome minicamp and we were ready, when we got to that competition last weekend the reason why we had I think so many guys go undefeated is because we were ready guys were sharp and they were firing and they were crisp and then because the training was great. And that's the whole point. We were supposed to be getting better at wrestling, to put ourselves in the best position to perform and to compete in such a way so I think that was mission accomplished, even with all the hard stuff that came, you know.

**Jeff White:** So, I saw a great team picture that you posted on social media. Taken, it might have been Christmas Day in the indoor facility.

**Steve Garland:** Yup, that was that our socially distanced masked up lunch that we had in the football facility but that facility so beautiful. It was a perfect place to have it, the guys brought Spikeball and they brought up cornhole and they got to play games and they did a secret Santa so yeah man it was it was our trying to grab hold of normalcy as best we could and give him something that made him feel good because some of the guys were down, of course, you know, and you can understand why we have guys from great families and they love their parents and they missed their families things that, you know what I'll be honest with you. We also have guys like Clint Miller who never go home anyway. And he's such a great kid he's never complains, you know he's one of those kids his parents live off the grid in Idaho, he never sees him anyway. And that's how I was in college my mom's great, but I never went home, I was just a psychopath I went to Blair Academy and trained over winter break, I was only home for two days max over Christmas break every year I mean I was. No, I never went home for Thanksgiving I would be running Klockner on Thanksgiving Day thinking I'm getting the edge you know so I had to balance that I'm a lunatic when it comes to being mission focused and my obligation, honestly for me nothing else matters, so I don't sometimes I don't even understand where these guys like I've missed but I don't get it. I'm not saying that's right either. So, I actually one of the reasons why I went in the dorms because I wanted to feel. I wanted to see what they're struggling with I wanted to, and then be able to hit it head on so one night in the dorms we did. We did this big spaced out steak dinner and the next night we did go out we did game night and we're in there talking and the next night you know, I, you know just little things like that where you're trying to do something for them and I did see it, I did see a whole 'nother side of that sort of that homesickness and that depression and I got to see a piece of that. But then what I also saw was resiliency I saw guys that were saying coach, it doesn't matter. Like Dylan Cedano from New Jersey. He was so happy he didn't care. He wants to he wants to compete so bad. He's like, happy as he could be and so that was encouraging is what I'm saying he said he's I walked by his dorm room he's like coach I got spinach and tuna look how healthy I'm eating and just such a positive attitude that then lifts you up, right.

**Jeff White:** So, way back in 1995, or '96, when you were a first year what dorm were you in?

**Steve Garland:** I transferred here, that was the funny part, I never stayed in the dorms anyway.

**Jeff White:** So, this is your first experience in the dorms?

**Steve Garland:** My first experience man, at 43!

**Jeff White:** [Laughs] Very good. So, you've made it through the holidays. The team is healthy and went down to Appalachian State for kind of a different event, wasn't it? It wasn't a traditional tournament, or dual meet. What's the idea, I think you've told me before the idea this season is to get as many wrestlers as many matches as possible so guys will be qualified for and ready for NCAA postseason. Is that right?

**Steve Garland:** Correct, correct. That's the first goal obviously the ultimate goal right, to make sure we get as many guys in the show as possible you can't win if you're not there. And this helps us do that that format was beautiful for it because everybody knew their matchups beforehand. They knew where they were supposed to be it was smooth it was, I loved. I hope it continues round Robins. It was great. Yeah, but then the second piece of it is to also keep everyone else engaged and keep helping them get better. I mean we got a big roster we had 24 guys compete What a cool thing. So guys like Ray Costa went 2-0 and Justin Phillips went 2-0 or 3-0 and all these other guys were getting matches too It wasn't just that guys in the national rankings you had other guys doing great things you had Dylan Cedano who's a freshman who went 3-0, went undefeated and looked great you had Jesse Knight who went 2-1 and ended the tournament with a pin and everybody's cheering for him so it was so cool to see that that's the mission moving forward too is to make sure everybody's getting as many matches as possible now the hard part comes in. The other team has to be able to match up the other team has to be able to have bodies available too. It's not like you can just say, well it's let's wrestle two here and three there two there you got it you got to be able to line it up and it's a whole new challenge I spent the last two days, the better part of the last two days trying to match up with Gardner Webb to figure out how we're going to get as many guys matches as possible.

**Jeff White:** Yeah, I was gonna say if you look at your schedule which is available on [viriniasports.com](http://viriniasports.com) you have what looked to be dual meets coming up, single opponents but. So instead of wrestling 10 matches in a traditional dual meet against say Pittsburgh. What will you do?

**Steve Garland:** Well, that'll still happen. You'll still do the traditional dual meet. You're right we have dual meets the rest of the way. So, the way to accomplish getting as many guys matches what's gonna happen is this you wrestle the dual meet. The 10 bounce, their 10 versus our 10 and that's the team score. Once that's over with it is NCAA compliant to do extra matches not exhibition matches, extra matches that are actually countable. So, then you get as many guys as they have as many guys as you can have and you wrestle them on two mats afterwards, so you're definitely have between 10 and 11 matches this this weekend extra on top of the dual meet.

**Jeff White:** So will any of your 10 starters then wrestle again or they kind of a one-time deal?

**Steve Garland:** Potentially, yes. You know this weekend probably moving forward probably but it all just depends. It all just again, this weekend it worked out where I think that will happen. But I but I also think that moving forward it's going to depend on who the other team has. NC State for example they have a really crazy deep roster so I'm sure we'll have tons of matches for that one if he can travel with that many guys so it kind of just depends on what the other team but that is the goal, yes.

**Jeff White:** This is probably a good time to mention that you wrestling Gardner Webb at mem gym on Saturday. And as a reminder to fans unfortunately, there is no public admission to home matches at this time due to the state guidelines and the UVA protocols. Hopefully that'll change at some point but for now, that's the deal but you had at the Appalachian State event you had 11 guys go undefeated down there you've mentioned a couple of them. What about your team in general this year I know that unfortunately that injuries always become a big storyline hopefully they will be a non-factor this year, those are hard to predict but team you have when it's healthy. You finish last season strong and perform really well in the ACC before NCAA matches were canceled. What do you think of this lineup, Bob? Jay Aiello, Louis Hayes, Brian Courtney, some seriously talented experienced wrestlers back.

**Steve Garland:** Yeah, we're anchored. Louis Hayes is ranked in the latest ranks and 12th in the country and he is – gosh, the way he competed this past weekend the gains he's made the last two years, he just chain wrestles but I was, I did an interview this morning I was explaining, he just chain wrestles and what I mean by that is you see one guy look for one thing the whole match, he's hitting on no joke, no exaggeration, he'll hit six or seven different moves in one sequence. And that's really hard to do in our world that's really hard to do in our sport. And so, what he does is he overwhelms his opponent well here's the other thing, his weakness used to be mat wrestling now, I would argue he's the best guy in the team and then Jay Aiello was ranked high secondly his ranking as low as fourth so anywhere between two and four. He's wrestled everybody, he's seasoned, he's been there. He's got worked to do too but he knows that but he's been there so you're really excited with that but then the other guys like Justin McCoy, he'd beat three guys ranked in the top 15 last year, including two in the top 12 one in the top 10 in ACC matches, and somehow no one knows who he is, it's crazy that the Luan kid from Michigan, he was beating 6-2 before Luan, defaulted he beat the young man from Virginia Tech and he beat young man from Chapel Hill, he beat the young man from Arizona State stop me anytime so that's four guys I was wrong, not three. So, it's like, so he is a guy that when he's on we just feel like he's such a great representative and he can do some special things So, and then you got these other guys like Brian Courtney who, he looked awesome this weekend. And so, if he can wrestle like that the rest of the year. We're gonna be in good shape and then it goes Michael Battista is 10 times better than who he used to be and Quinn Miller, he's another guy that he beat a nationally ranked guy this weekend and look great and. And so, you've got these other filler parts and they need to do their part right because they have all have really high goals Quinn Miller still wants to be a national champion people don't believe that but we're crazy enough to believe it. And so, if those guys do their part, it's going to be great. Now, the reality is the ACC conference is legit I think last ranking the four teams ranked in the top 12. Last year what was it four teams in the top 10, so it's every weekend we got to bring it every weekend you have your work cut out for you.

**Jeff White:** Now, for your guys, for any athlete, the actual competition is the reward for all the hard work and all the training you put in and all the sacrifices you make. In a normal season, your guys would have already wrestled a bunch of matches before Thanksgiving before Christmas. It's getting a later start this year it's a more condensed season, a smaller season. Have you taken steps to try to keep the atmosphere lighter and more fun so it doesn't become so much of a grind where there's no there's no light at the end of the tunnel there are no matches to look forward to? They're just training and training and training.

**Steve Garland:** Yeah. Gosh, that's always a concern. And I think to be honest that was good reminder for me Jeff that I probably need to be thinking about that moving forward because I have been pretty intensive late, but that's why we tried to do the mission, the Christmas thing, that's why we did over the mini camp we did a wiffle ball day, which was awesome by the way, you got to see my wiffle ball skills. Like all I got this world, I'm telling you I'm a wiffle ball freak. So, so we did that one day and then we did a team handball tournament. So I think we have been trying to keep it light but we need to continue to do that you're right because I'll also say this a guy like Jake Keating, who is a stud too by the way he just beat a nationally ranked guy, beat two nationally ranked guys this past weekend, took third at Omaha, back in November at the world world trials he's awesome, but he he's a guy that he's been through a million matches in his life so it's good for him that we didn't start till January in my opinion. I think it's good for his body. So, my hope is physically speaking, I think we're actually going to be in good shape. Like you said the mental though is, your right is, we got to continue to make sure they're having fun in there and it's early, so they were so excited to compete hopefully that'll continue but that's something to be mindful of for sure.

**Jeff White:** We'll go well good luck on Saturday against Gardner Webb. Good luck the rest of the way hopefully everybody stays healthy and this team can do what it's capable of.

**Steve Garland:** Thanks, buddy. Thanks for everything, man.

**Jeff White:** Take care, we'll see Steve.

**Steve Garland:** See ya.

**Jeff White:** I want to thank Justin Anderson and Steve Garland for taking the time to join the show this week. As a reminder, you can listen to previous episodes by searching your favorite podcast provider for wahoo central podcast. Last time out, we caught up with Athletics Director Carla Williams and Mandy Alonzo and Joey Blonde from the football team for a pair of enlightening conversations. As always, we encourage you to subscribe to the podcast and also to take a moment to provide a rating. For more information on UVA athletics visit the department's official website. [virginiasports.com](http://virginiasports.com). You can find my stories there by selecting the content button on the front page and you can also follow me on twitter at, [@Jeffwhiteuva](https://twitter.com/Jeffwhiteuva). Finally, if you haven't done so yet, download the UVA sports app from the Apple Store or Google Play. There are more than 30,000 subscribers to the app, which has something for everyone who follows UVA sports. Thanks for listening, and Happy New Year.