

## **Wahoo Central Podcast: Dec. 29, 2020**

### **Athletics: Carla Williams & Football: Mandy Alonso & Joey Blount**

**Jeff White:** Welcome to the Wahoo Central podcast. I'm your host Jeff White because of the COVID-19 pandemic has been a while since we've produced a new episode. But we're looking forward to getting back to a regular schedule of shows featuring guests and topics relating to UVA athletics. It's good to be back on the air, and we're going to kick things off this week with a couple of football players, Joey Blount and Mandy Alonso, as well as UVA Athletics Director, Carla Williams. During our conversation she covers a broad range of topics as the Hoos wind down 2020 to prepare for what will be an extremely interesting year ahead. Okay, let's kick things off with some football. Joining me now are two of the many fourth year players who announced this week that they will be back as fifth years in 2021. That would be defensive lineman Mandy Alonzo and safety Joey Blount. Gentlemen, happy holidays, welcome to the show. Let me, let me start by asking you about getting home again for the first time in however many months. Joey, what was it like to walk back in the door of your house and see your family in that environment.

**Joey Blount:** I would have to say it was a sense of relaxation and happiness all in one. Just being home and embracing my mom and dad, and my uncle. Seeing them, you know, at home in an environment where we can all just catch up in real life and not be so stressed out about this COVID pandemic, and being with one another face to face, in person was just so surreal. The trek home from Virginia though, I was fighting it every second trying to get home and as soon as I got home I didn't want to leave. It was just so nice to, you know, lay around and just have some laughs with My mom and dad and my uncle so I was truly blessed just to be back home, it was the best feeling.

**Jeff White:** So you were down in the Atlanta area, did you drive home or fly home?

**Joey Blount:** Yeah I drove home.

**Jeff White:** Mandy you're down in Miami, which is a much longer drive - How did you get back there?

**Mandy Alonso:** I actually drove home and I stopped in Atlanta at Joey's. My cousin's in Gainesville, and then I ended up getting home the third day.

**Jeff White:** So how long a drive is that, particularly if you're just kind of going in one shot?

**Mandy Alonso:** Um, I want to say like 16-17 hours.

**Jeff White:** Wow. So I know you get fed well at UVA, but there's nothing like home cooking; what have your mom's been making for you the that you've missed, particularly? Manny I'll let you take that first, yeah.

**Mandy Alonso:** For me it was like rice and beans, and then like my dad loves steak so he always cooked some steak. And, just, like, I don't know her making eggs in the morning and stuff like that. That just brings me back.

**Jeff White:** Joey, what about you?

**Joey Blount:** My mom's famous pasta she makes. She made some kind of pasta with her special red sauce and the sauce that she let's cook for a couple hours. And then I had some rice and beans as well, and a nice glass of eggnog to top it off with.

**Jeff White:** So you guys went back to Charlottesville, the team kind of reconvened in Charlottesville in early July, and there were strict COVID-19 protocols in place and the team followed them for, you know, almost five months. Kind of looking back now that that is in the rearview mirror, what was the hardest part, you know, of that experience for you guys? Joey I'll let you take that.

**Joey Blount:** Just trusting each other with like a considerable amount of faith and just trusting like the person next to you that they're going to, you know, go by the guidelines and protocols that we have in place, and also just being super careful with every decision you make because it's not just affecting you but you can contact trace your team and have them miss games when they're not doing anything wrong, but you made a mistake or you're being careless, and you affect someone else. So just the decisions we had to make and then just the trust in everyone else around us to, you know, abide by the rules that were laid in hand before we started football again.

**Jeff White:** So you guys shared an apartment with Tommy Chris, right?

**Mandy Alonso:** Yeah.

**Jeff White:** I mean, did you end up spending, you know the large majority of your time with just the three guys in the apartment?

**Mandy Alonso:** Yeah, pretty much. So we'll have maybe Noah come over because he lived in the same apartment complex but like really just the football guys,

**Jeff White:** What, what were the online classes like? I know you got a little bit of that last semester but it was pretty much all online I think for most students this semester. How did your grades suffer because of that, how big of an adjustment was that to just be, and I guess you were in your apartment taking classes too so you really didn't get out a whole lot.

**Mandy Alonso:** Yeah, pretty much not at all but like my grades didn't really suffer that much. I just thought like it wasn't like as real of a, an experience as it usually is like when you're in the classroom and you're like ready to learn. It's like a lot better than when you're in your dorm room or like in your room just on a computer, listening to someone lecture.

**Jeff White:** Yeah. What about your thoughts Joey?

**Joey Blount:** It was definitely different. You don't have the experience of, you know, walking to class, you know, finding the seat, the right seat in the class, and the professor having the one on one conversations. And a lot of the classes I had to take were asynchronous so I didn't even meet with my class, it was all within like week spans you had to finish certain assignments and just turn them in. Just a lot of like self-teaching and self-responsibility to like, remember your class and then put aside time to sit through the classes. And I think it kind of helped with grading, the way they graded It was very helpful this year as well with all the COVID.

**Jeff White:** You've told me before that you're a guy who doesn't hesitate to participate in class and speak up and I know you're an extrovert and you like to be around people - was that a tough, tough adjustment? You know, is there a mechanism in a zoom to kind of speak up the same way?

**Joey Blount:** Yeah, it was definitely tough for me. Like you said, very extroverted person so being... kind of had to learn introverted traits, and for the classes but I think the extraverted parts of me allowed me to, you know, speak up if some time in the conversation that kind of awkward, or if the zoom or discussion got a little bland, just to spice things up a little bit.

**Jeff White:** So, tell us what went into your decisions to return for the 2021 season, then the 2021 spring, too. Is this something... I mean, every, you know, fourth or fifth year guy had this, you know, had this possibility. Is this something you talked about among multiple players, or was it kind of a very much an individual decision for everyone?

**Mandy Alonso:** I think though it was like, like, the fourth and fifth years, like, everyone was, like, talking amongst, like, at least like me and Joey would talk about it to each other. And then like, you would talk about it with other players but like at the end of the day, you're like, you got to make your own decision. And in my case, like, I was just like thinking, like, my goal is to reach the NFL and, like, if my best chance is coming back next year, and performing better, and just getting that extra year of, like, experience that that'll help me, like, then I'm going to take the opportunity because, like, I don't want to, like, live in regret, be like "Oh, I could have come back and, like, put in another year of work and done it."

**Jeff White:** What about what about your case, Joey?

**Joey Blount:** I was on the same lines as Mandy, and we frequently talked about it with each other and talked about it with other teammates trying to figure out, you know, this is a bit of a big life decision coming up, trying to figure out what your next couple years are going to look like for yourself. So I was on the fence of, you know, declaring and coming back and I just tried to figure out what I was going to do, but I suddenly saw it as my best case scenario. I was injured most of the year, so I didn't get to put any film up that I needed or wanted to. So my best bet was to come back and show those who watched, you know, paid attention that with an extra year experience, and more film that I gave my shot at, I gave myself a better chance to get to the NFL.

**Jeff White:** I mean, both you guys have NFL aspirations, I know you saw what happened last year, particularly with Cece, there were just so few opportunities for guys to work out and sign as free agents with the camp shut down. Did that... do you think that played into guys thinking, you know, when they were trying to weigh whether to come out this year or come back for another year knowing that, you know, it's probably not going to be a typical offseason for the NFL?

**Mandy Alonso:** Yeah, 100%, at least for me that was, like, my biggest thing because, like, for like Hasis and Eli, where like they didn't even get a chance to go to like a mini camp or get scouts to come and watch them, like that was, like, the biggest deal for me, because, like, I want it to be, like, I want to have like a real chance, where, like, it used to be, how regular, like, where you would get a shot and get a workout. And like, not just have those chances taken away from you because of COVID.

**Jeff White:** You guys have been as tight as brothers. Ever since your first year I kind of always figured you would be something of a package deal with like, whether you'd either both come back together or

neither of you would come back. Was there any scenario where one would have done one thing and the other did the other?

**Joey Blount:** Maybe.

**Jeff White:** Maybe, alright we'll leave it at that. On a more serious note, there was a lot of talk about the mental well-being of student athletes, you know, in the fall and, you know, during the pandemic. Did you feel any extra strain, you know, because of the pandemic and, you know, how you had to take classes and all the restrictions that were related to the football program, did that take any kind of toll on you guys?

**Joey Blount:** 100%. Further on that I would just say... I love all the guys on the team, all my brothers. Spending time with them was great, but it got to a certain point where our routine was so monotonous that it was repetitive to the fact that it was wake up, work out, back home. Wake up, work out, have practice, go back home. There was rarely any time to, you know, go up to the second floor of McCue even, or just watch film like everything was on zoom we had to do it spaced out. I talked about before, we were really just hanging out with the three of us constantly. So I think you've heard a lot of the friendships and chemistry the team didn't allow us to be as cohesive as we were in previous years because we weren't able to go out and be with each other, you know, have time away from football to hang out, and definitely the mental aspect was very stressful.

**Jeff White:** What about you, Mandy, the same, same type of deal?

**Mandy Alonso:** Yeah, and to add on to that, it was just, like... Each week, like, going through a week of practices, like, it's tiresome and, like, on your body, and on your mental because you're preparing for an opponent and then, like, getting to, like, Thursday, Friday, and, like, especially what happened with FSU, like, when you get a game canceled, like, after that we were thinking, like, every week, like, is this team going to cancel or is this team going to cancel? And then, I feel, like, that was probably the biggest decision for not to go to the ballgame. Like visit the team.

**Jeff White:** Yeah, I was going to ask about that did that kind of play that played into it I guess.

**Mandy Alonso:** Oh yeah, I think that was probably like the biggest issue, like, nobody wanted to stay here for Christmas and then not play in a ballgame or have it risk not being playing in a bowl game. So like, it wasn't going to be the same experience either, so those were, like, the cases that were made.

**Jeff White:** What do you guys think that fans or people outside the program don't necessarily appreciate, you know, about what this was like for student athletes and not only football players but all the fall the sports at UVA and even the winter sports that were training went through it too. You know, is there a misconception out there do you think?

**Joey Blount:** I'll just, I'll just say a sacrifice. And as I mean like just a time put into just... There's so much, like being tested like three times a week. And like us playing on the sun chance of like we don't even know, some people get it randomly, like you don't know if you can't really do it you can, you can't do enough not to get COVID so if you got it, you're kind of screwed. But just a constant sacrifice and just hoping that the next game will be played.

**Jeff White:** I mean, were you holding your breath every time you know it was time for the results to come back even though you knew you've been following the protocols? Is that a nervous period?

**Mandy Alonso:** Yeah, it was very nervous.

**Jeff White:** I don't know if it happened the same time every week, when you found out but I'm sure people are holding their breath, a little bit.

**Mandy Alonso:** I'll say the first couple months were like that until like we went through like a streak where there was like no cases for a while, and then once we got a few cases we were like... After that we were like "Oh damn, we might get it."

**Joey Blount:** Yeah.

**Jeff White:** So, what do you appreciate, maybe more now that you took for granted before the pandemic? Joey I'll start with you.

**Joey Blount:** Something I appreciate more before...

**Jeff White:** Or something maybe you took for granted that you're not going to take for granted now, going forward.

**Joey Blount:** I would just, for football, just say like the fans, and just the ability to have like the home field advantage the same way. I'm never going to take that for granted again, just saying having the fans out there is a big impact. And I really miss them out there, but also just like, personally, just like hanging out with my friends, like being with friends, really. It was very strict, I would say, the people you can really hang out with and how much you hang out with them.

**Jeff White:** Mandy, any thoughts?

**Mandy Alonso:** Yeah, I would say the fans and just like being able to go and, like, do regular stuff, I don't know. Like go out with no mask, or, like, just anything, like being able to hang out with the boys, or like anybody outside of football really because, like, we're like in a bubble, you could only hang out with football players. Like, it didn't get annoying, but it was like, all right, where's the rest of the UVA here.

**Jeff White:** So, Coach Grizz's offseason conditioning program begins in early February I believe, you guys have had seasons where you had to get surgery either after the season or, you know, during the season in some cases. Where are you guys physically now? You both look healthy, and what do you do from a physical, you know, strength and conditioning standpoint between now and the time you go back because I know, Coach Mendenhall, you know, expects guys to come back and shape. Joey?

**Joey Blount:** I feel great. Um, you know I was a little banged up after the Tech game, had some things to check up on but came back fine. Just right back to it, right back into the grind. Can't be at the trainer's when I'm home, and try to make myself better before I come back.

**Jeff White:** Do you have access to a gym and weight equipment down there?

**Joey Blount:** Yes. A whole gym and weight equipment.

**Jeff White:** What about what about you, Mandy, in Miami?

**Mandy Alonso:** Yeah, I work out in my backyard, my dad's got like some weights here, and then sometimes I'll just go to like my high school field to go run and stuff. And like, it's basically like the same stuff that I was doing over quarantine.

**Jeff White:** Did you, I think... I think there were close to 10 guys, you know, in your situations who decided to come back for another year - any surprises in that group? Or were you expecting, you know, that kind of response from people to come back?

**Joey Blount:** No, no surprises for me.

**Jeff White:** Mandy?

**Mandy Alonso:** Yeah, like you could tell like during this, like, throughout the season, like, who was like on their way out, or like, who were on the fence.

**Jeff White:** What, was there any message, anything you can share at least from your exit interviews, you know, looking, looking forward to?

**Mandy Alonso:** It was just like talking about how, like, as coming back for a fifth year, like, at least for me and Joey as well, like, we need to step into, like, more leadership roles. And like, take ownership of this team. And just carrying it to another level.

**Joey Blount:** You know we have some guys who are coming back that were here when the first of the coaches were here with from the 2016 class. So the ability for us to step into more leadership roles, and have guys come into potential roles, definitely. At DB we have a lot of younger guys who are stepping up and proving themselves, so opportunity for us to be back and help lead them in the right direction. And, you know, we have kind of a younger team right now as well. So just putting them on the right track, or the right... for the right change in the culture.

**Jeff White:** Well, good. Well listen, I hate to break up your vacation like this so I appreciate your time, and best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy Holidays, and we'll see you back in Charlottesville in 2021.

**Mandy Alonso:** Yessir. Thank you.

**Joey Blount:** Take care.

**Jeff White:** See you guys. Coming up next is our conversation with UVA Athletics Director Carla Williams.

Carla, thanks for joining the show. Let's start with football. Through no fault of its own, the team did not end up playing all 11 regular season games, but it did play ten, and it made it to the finish line. Looking back, would you have thought before the season that was realistic?

**Carla Williams:** No. I think when we started talking about this in March, actually, when we were sent home with student athletes home and shut down and everything, we started talking about returning. And as we got closer and realized that a lot of or some of our peers were coming back in June, we decided to wait to just see if we could learn just a little bit more to help us be successful, and when we came back in July, you know, we didn't know. We had no idea, we didn't know if we were going to play any games, let alone 11 games or 10 games, and so as the season progressed and we realized just how committed the players were and started to learn more about how to stay safe, we started to feel more confident that we could at least play as many games as we could control, and so we felt really good about us being able to play the games and it was a matter of whether or not the games could actually happen.

**Jeff White:** You fully supported the football team's decision not to play a postseason game. What made you comfortable with that decision?

**Carla Williams:** You know they had earned our trust starting in the summer, because they showed us that they would be committed to the safety protocols, that they wanted to play, and so we felt like, you know, we could trust whatever their judgment was in how to proceed. And so week to week, they just kept proving it over and over again, that they were really mature and confident in being able to control the things that they could control, and so once we get to the end and I was, you know, on the field for that Virginia Tech game and I could tell, you know, when they came off the field, they were spent, they had... they had done everything that we had asked them to do and they had given all that they could give, I think, emotionally and physically, and so even when the conversations started after the game about the bowl, we trusted their judgment because they have been so dialed in since July.

**Jeff White:** Virginia is not the only team going this route. Have you been surprised at all to see how many teams have kind of followed suit around the country?

**Carla Williams:** No, no I'm not surprised at all, I mean, it's... when you're in this everyday and you see the impact that it has on everyone: the young people, the coaches, the staff, the training staff, the medical staff, and you know that football is a game of attrition anyway without a pandemic, you know, and then you add in the pandemic and the stressors that all the protocols bring to bear. No, we knew that it'd be incredibly difficult for a lot of these bowl games to be played, and we knew that there would be a lot of teams that just weren't able to do it at the end.

**Jeff White:** The end of 2020 is finally at sight. This has obviously been a year unlike any other - what's been your biggest challenge as Athletics Director, over the last nine months?

**Carla Williams:** The biggest challenge? Because there, there have been so many, and we've all learned a lot. I'd say that, just trying to safely navigate the mental health aspect of all of this has probably been the biggest challenge, because it's, it's an element that we work with daily, but then when you throw in all of the stressors of maintaining the safety protocols and quarantining and isolation, it's just really difficult, and then being away from family and peers, you know, that probably was the most difficult to balance throughout the last few months for everyone, not just student athletes, but the staff as well, because it has been a mental drain. So this break was welcomed and, of course, you know many of us have jumped right into winter sports. So just making sure that we're keeping our finger on the pulse of, you know, how this is impacting everyone from a mental health standpoint is the biggest challenge.

**Jeff White:** Did you have regular communication with student athletes over the semester to kind of see how they were doing? I know you don't have as much physical, you know, running into people in the hallways as you might in a normal period.

**Carla Williams:** Yeah. Yeah, actually, it may have been the contact that we did have resume may have been more meaningful, because it was more substantive in our conversation. So, yes we had regular calls with SAAC which is our Student Athlete Advisory Council and other student athlete leadership groups. We had conversations with about everything. And so, we had student athlete meetings with a faculty advisory group, you know, so there were many opportunities where we had an opportunity to talk to the student athletes about their mental health and the struggles that they are facing

academically, in their sport, physically, mentally, so the interactions may not have been physical, but they certainly were very sensitive over zoom.

**Jeff White:** With the benefit of hindsight now, is there anything you would change about the COVID protocols that have been in place here?

**Carla Williams:** No, I mean I think that our numbers, bear out the fact that our doctors in the universities, neurologists, and epidemiologists, and infectious disease doctors, all did a wonderful job of identifying what our safety protocols should be and then the staff and student athletes did a great job of following those, and so... and those adjusted so they weren't set in stone, you know, in March and never changed, they changed as the environment changed, they changed as the community spread changed and so there's nothing that I would change. I'm just very thankful to our staff, our medical staff for giving us great advice throughout.

**Jeff White:** Yeah, I was going to ask you about your sports medicine teams, you know, whether that be key physicians or athletic trainers, they've been at the forefront of all these protocols and putting in long hours and, you know, Kelly Pugh for football has been kind of leading that effort, you know. How important have these staffers and groups been over these nine months?

**Carla Williams:** There's no way we do any of this without their expertise, you know, starting with Dr. John McKnight who's our team physician, and then Kelly Pugh and Ethan Saliba, Brittany Bond, I mean, you can just go through our entire sports medicine roster, and, you know, they became, you know, kind of a crew that had to serve everyone, every sport. So normally they work with their sport, this time because it was all hands on deck for everyone, you know, all of our athletic trainers had to work with every sport and they did the testing and, and they helped with VDH and making sure that the folks who were in quarantine had food and that they had contact with someone each day and... so, yeah, our sports medicine staff, they have been the MVPs for this fall, and that's true for all of our colleagues across the country. Our team physicians, University physicians, and sports medicine staff. A lot of people don't realize it, but they did all this related to COVID while they were still managing injuries and surgeries and rehab that come along with normal sports participation. So they have been champs for sure.

**Jeff White:** We've moved on from the fall sports, and winter sports are underway or will be soon, basketball among them. We've already seen both the men's and women's programs have to pause because of COVID issues - what's your level of confidence that these teams will be able to complete their seasons and that, you know, around the ACC the same thing will happen?

**Carla Williams:** Yeah, you know, it's... you know, we've said all along that basketball would be really, really hard to play. And, you know, it's the nature of the sport, the close proximity, offense, defense, you're in each other's space, it's indoors, you know, high exertion, you can't wear a mask and play a sport where you're going to exert yourself physically, you know, so it's no secret that it was going to be difficult to play basketball this year. And we've had our challenges, but so has college basketball across the country - men's and women's - and I think we'll continue to see that throughout the year there'll be a lot of play, pause, play, pause, all year, and, you know, it's our hope that our student athletes will remain safe and we've done a really, really good job of that. Even though we've had to pause both programs, we've only had one positive student athlete, you know, so it's... you have to be more cautious because of the logistics of just playing the sport, and so we'll continue to do that, just like everyone else

around the country who is trying to play basketball, and hopefully we can allow the student-athletes to play as many games as they can play.

**Jeff White:** Other than football, all of our fall sports and football teams will be competing in the spring, along with all the teams that traditionally compete in the spring. What is that going to look like, if you could even say, and is there a chance because of, you know, logistical issues with scheduling that teams will not always play in their traditional venues?

**Carla Williams:** There's a chance that anything could happen. We have the only thing that we know we're going to do is we're going to practice, we're going to prepare to play, and we'll play if conditions allow. And so, there's so many variables that will impact us this fall: the venues, the travel, of course the virus decides how all of this is going to go, but injuries and how it impacts our teams and, you know, the community spread, you know, has been a big issue for, not related to sports, but just related to our communities and trying to get through this pandemic and so, you know, we can't play sports full speed if our local health system is stressed, you know, so that's going to impact what we can do, what we can and cannot do, so we're very mindful of that. Dr. McKnight does a wonderful job weekly of briefing us of the community, the local health system, our region, and also for the Commonwealth of Virginia, and also nationally, so we feel like we're really educated thanks to Dr McKnight and the staff. And so we'll try, we want to make sure the student-athletes have the opportunity to practice and train, but I do think we're all well aware that there will be, you know, a lot of starts and stops.

**Jeff White:** At a recent Board of Visitors meeting there was a presentation about some of the changes in the scope of the master plan. Can you give us a little update on where things stand?

**Carla Williams:** Yeah, yeah. So, you know, I think we mentioned, you know, several months ago that we were going to reduce the scope of the master plan, and so we've done that, we're working through the final details of that, but the external scope of it was reviewed with the board and approved so it still captures everything that our sports need, everything that our student athletes need so it'll still be a transformative project for athletics. We're behind schedule, but so is everyone when it comes to fundraising and facilities management, and so we're excited, we're so ready to hit restart in January to complete the next phase which will be the football operation center. We've already completed phase one, obviously, that was the natural grass fields that football was actually able to use in August. The football facility will be next, and then the renovation of the McCue Center and then the Olympic Sports Center will be the last phase, so we are full steam ahead, looking forward to January so we can roll out this new design to everyone.

**Jeff White:** Do you have any idea when, if things go according to plan, you know, the football operation center could be ready, or is it too early to tell?

**Carla Williams:** It's too early to tell because, quite frankly, the pandemic has created so much uncertainty, but we know that it will take two years from start to finish to, you know, the start of breaking ground to moving in on day one is probably a two-year endeavor, and so we know it's at least two years.

**Jeff White:** You announced on your Twitter account recently that you were not a candidate for the open athletic director position at Georgia, which is your alma mater. Why did you decide to take that step and post that?

**Carla Williams:** It was an obvious question and I knew I needed to address it. Questions were coming at me from a lot of different places so I felt like a statement was probably most appropriate. I put a lot of thought into the statement, but in a nutshell the same reasons I was drawn to Virginia initially remain, and my conviction has only gotten stronger. I place a premium on people. As athletic director here I am most fortunate to be able to work with President Ryan, he is a huge part of why I love being here. We have been one of the premier programs in the country for many, many years, and because of the talent and commitment of the people around us, because of our coaches, because of our student athletes and our supporters, I'm convinced we can be the best athletics program in America, and I want to be a part of that.

**Jeff White:** As if you didn't have enough on your plate, this fall you were a member of the ACC committee to help identify and vet candidates for the Conference Commissioner position which recently went to Jim Phillips. What are your thoughts on his hiring and did you know him before the process and what do you think he can do, you know, in building on John Swofford's legacy?

**Carla Williams:** Yeah. First I was honored to just be a part of the process, and the presidents and chancellors of the ACC made the selection. But I was, I was excited to be a part of the vetting process and identifying what we thought the conference needed, and I did know Jim Phillips before this opportunity for him, and I think the world of him. I think he's super smart, he's known in our industry as a really gifted administrator and loves student athletes. He cares about diversity, he is very competitive and Northwestern has done an excellent job across the board in all sports, including football, to be, you know, competitive and compete for championships, and so at an academically elite institution, so, I mean, I just think that it was a perfect choice for the ACC, and I've already spent time talking with him over the phone, and I'm really excited to have him come in and, you know, carry on the legacy of Commissioner Swofford, and he'll be able to add his own, you know, legacy to the league based on where he's been, and he was at Notre Dame before Northwestern, had time in the Big Ten, he'd been in the SEC, you know, when I was there, so he's... he's been around and he's seen a lot, and so I just love the fact that he brings that diverse background of experience to the conference.

**Jeff White:** Because of the pandemic, fans have not been able to participate in UVA sports in the same manner they previously had by actually going to games and cheering the teams on. Before we let you go, is there any message you have for the fan base or anything you'd like to say to them?

**Carla Williams:** You know I was talking to one of our players last night who is coming back, one of our seniors who's made the decision to come back, and, you know, he said "I hope that we can have fans in the fall," and we all do. I mean that was such a huge loss for us. I was so happy for the players that they had the chance to play, but running into Scott Stadium and knowing that our fans weren't going to be in there when the team came out of the tunnel, you know, that was hard. That was tough on the players too. It was tough for us, because we know how that impacts the environment. So, you know, our fans did a great job of following us and supporting us from afar, and we are we are so hoping that things go well enough that our fans can join us next fall for all of our sports and in full fledge next winter also for our winter sports as well. So, thank you to the fans, we appreciate your support that you've given us

during a very, very difficult nine months, but it's because we hope that we'll be able to see you in the fall that we keep pushing through.

**Jeff White:** Well thank you for your time and happy holidays and hopefully 2021 will be a little better for all of us than 2020 has been.

**Carla Williams:** Yes, I hope so. Thank you, Jeff.

**Jeff White:** I want to thank Mandy Alonzo, Joey Blount, and Carla Williams for being my guests on this, which is the 270th episode of the Wahoo Central podcast. As a reminder, you can listen to previous conversations by searching your favorite podcast provider for "Wahoo Central podcast." We encourage you to become a subscriber and take a moment to provide a rating. For more information on UVA athletics, visit our official website: [virginiasports.com](http://virginiasports.com), where you can read my recent articles by selecting the content button on the front page. You can also follow me on twitter @JeffWhiteUVa, and if you haven't done so yet, please download the UVA Sports app from the Apple App Store or Google Play. Thank you for listening and happy holidays.