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Welcome to the *Wahoo Central Podcast*. Our biweekly look into the UVA Athletic Department. I'm Jeff White from VirginiaSports.com. This is going to be a fantastic episode, because we have two fantastic guests. Later on we'll be talking to the new voice of the Cavaliers John Freeman. Joining the show right now is one of the nation's top wrestlers and that is Jay Aiello. Jay, it's great to see you again. Are you still dealing with any jet lag?

A little bit. Yeah, I've been getting up at like 2:00 AM, falling back asleep, and then I'll get up like 5:30 and be pretty awake. So then I just start my day then.

So for listeners who may not know, Jay won the bronze medal Saturday in the 97 kilograms class at the under 23 World Championships in Belgrade, Serbia. How long were you in Serbia? I mean, how much acclimation time did you have before you started competing?

So we got there Tuesday morning. And we left the following Monday morning. So was gone from the U.S. Monday to Monday Night, so about seven to eight days. But I actually got acclimated right away. I was able to sleep on my flight over. And so I just started my day right when we got there and pretty much had no problem sort of getting acclimated.

So had you ever been to Eastern Europe before or Europe in general?

Yeah. So I had actually been to Ukraine a couple of summers ago. My brother used to work for FCA Wrestling and they were doing a trip to Berdyansk, Ukraine. And so that was probably a 10 or 11 day trip. Jake Keating went on that with me as well. But yeah, so this was my second time in Eastern Europe.

So what did your traveling party consist of or who did it consist of? I know Coach Garland was there. And I think one of the Paulson brothers was there too, right?

Yes, sir. But they kind of hung me out to dry. They scheduled their flights a little different than mine, because USA Wrestling scheduled my flights and they had someone else scheduled their flights. So I was pretty much traveling. I went Richmond to Dulles, Dulles to Frankfurt, and then once I got to Frankfurt I met up with the rest of the Team USA crew. But that long flight I did have to do by myself there which kind of sucked.

So how would you now that you're looking back on it, how would you describe the experience? Are there still COVID protocols in place in Serbia? Were you able to get out and see the city at all or see the sights? Or where you just kind of found your hotel room and then the tournament.

So there were definitely some COVID protocols. And mean we had to have a negative test before we left and then we had to have a negative test pretty much right when we got there. And then obviously we wore a mask indoors and that sort of thing.

But for the most part, we were able to experience the city a little bit. We went to the site cool little fortress that's like the main hit attraction in Belgrade which is called The Fortress. So me, Trent Paulson, and then a guy from Pitt and the guy from Northwestern, one of the first days we were there just went walking like six miles and just kept asking people like oh-- there was a Starbucks right near The Fortress. So we kept asking people like, Starbucks? Like Starbucks this way? So they pointed us towards the Starbucks. Eventually we got out there and saw it.

And then the last day after I was done competing me, Trent, and a wrestler from Missouri were able to walk like some like 10 miles around the city. Went and saw I guess they have one of the biggest cathedrals in the world. So that was really cool. But yes, we were able to get to experience some Serbian culture for sure.

So you were 3-1 on the mat. I know you went out there wanting to win the gold medal. But now that you've had a little time to digest it, you happy with the way it went competitively?

Yeah, definitely. I feel like I wrestled pretty well. I mean, obviously you're always going to look back on some positions and some matches and sort of realize like, oh, I did this wrong or I could have done this a little bit better or if I would have just sort of relaxed a little bit more in the one match I lost maybe I could have won. But overall, it was just super grateful just to be there and even competing in the world championships. And then definitely coming away with a medal was a success.

So when you received your medal, did you get up on the podium with the other medal winners? Did they play the star-spangled banner? And if so, what was that like to hear that?

So if I would have won they would have played the star-spangled banner. So I still got up on the stand, announced me as representing America, which is really cool, place the medal on my neck and everything. But the guy that won was from Iran so they played their national anthem.

And that's the guy who beat you in the semis, right?

Yes, sir. Yeah, that's who beat me in the semis.

So this might be a stupid question, but you wrestled guys from Turkey, Russia, Iran, and Belarus in your four matches. How did the referees communicate? I mean what language did they speak when they were giving instructions to the wrestlers or did they not do that?

There wasn't a whole lot of communication, honestly. For the most part it's sort of they'll sort of communicate through hand signals sort of. So they start calling you for passivity or if they put you on the shot clock, I mean, you'll know when you're on the shot clock because a little timer comes up on the board and stuff. So there wasn't too much of a communication barrier with the wrestlers and the refs. Yeah, so that wasn't too hard to get past.

So back here in the states, the college season officially began last weekend. Virginia got a big win over American University. What's your plan for getting back into competition? I'm guessing you're not going out and wrestling this weekend or next weekend.

Yeah. So I'm taking a little bit of time off right now just to rest my body because we've been training pretty hard ever since I really made the team getting ready for worlds. So had a big training cycle there. Giving my body some time to rest. And we'll sort of probably get back to working out and wrestling starting next week.

As far as competing goes, we've talked a little bit. But it's looking like I'll most likely be back closer to Midland since we have two-- I think, yes, we have a dual meet this week against Maryland, which I obviously will not be competing in. And then we have a dual meet next weekend against Campbell, where there is some talk about trying to get back but it's probably unlikely as of right now.

So 97 kilograms converts to 214 pounds, I think. You've always wrestled at 197 here. Is the plan to get back to 197? And if so, how much time does it take? There are restrictions aren't there on how much you can lose and how quickly?

Yeah, so I certified back a couple of weeks ago. So I'm technically cleared to wrestle even this weekend. But it will take some time for me to get my weight down in a healthy sort of way to be able to compete at 197.

So if my math is correct and your bio on the website is correct, this is year number six for you at UVA. 2016 graduate of Westfield High School, right?

Yes, sir. That's right.

So how many degrees do you have at this point and what program are you in now?

So I graduated in 2020, spring of 2020 right when COVID was starting up. And I graduated with a degree in econ and a minor in social entrepreneurship. I always had the plan of just taking classes my fifth year, not getting a master's. So last year I actually took the fall off just not knowing what would happen with COVID and with wrestling and things. And then I re-enrolled in the spring just so I would be eligible for nationals. So I didn't get any degree last year, was just sort of taking classes to stay eligible.

And so with the extra year of COVID I was like, you know what, I didn't get a master's last year. It only makes sense for me to get a master's this year. So right now I'm currently in MS E-commerce program in the marketing and management track. And it's a good amount of work, but I'm actually really enjoying a lot of the material right now.

Good. The arc of your career is probably a little bit unusual for somebody who has reached the heights that you have in college wrestling. A lot of the top guys, a lot of your peers, nationally ranked guys had success right off the bat. I've talked to you about it in the past, your red shirt freshman year was kind of a struggle. You had some injury issues. You didn't compete as well as you wanted to. How did you kind of push through that? I know Garland has used that as an example to other wrestlers who maybe encounter some adversity early on.

Yeah, it's actually funny because right after I meddled at world someone had posted a video on Twitter of an interview from 2018 of Garland. And someone was asking him like, how did Jay sort of make this transformation? And one of the big things he mentioned in that interview, which I definitely know is true for myself, was just like the mental aspect of wrestling and of I guess just sports in general.

Everyone likes to think of you need to train this way and you need to do these certain things in order to get good. But a lot of just competing is mental. Just believing in yourself and pretty much doing whatever it takes to be successful on the mat. Willing to push through pain, and to face adversity, and to sort of not shy away when things get tough.

I mean, do you kind of use your own story as an example to younger teammates who maybe when they're having trouble early on in their careers and things aren't going the way they want? Because pretty much everyone in the program had an incredible record as a high school wrestler.

Yeah. Yeah, I definitely use that, use my story a lot to just encourage guys for sure. Especially I'll say the biggest circumstances when guys get hurt. Like you said, my red shirt freshman year it ended poorly. I ended up with a losing record. And then at ACCs I ended up tearing my labrum, my rotator cuff, and my bicep tendon in my right shoulder.

And so I didn't wrestle at all that summer. I think I started wrestling live maybe like a month before the season had actually started. And so whenever guys get put in that position where they're hurt, they're not able to get on the mat, I just tell them like, hey, control what you can control and just don't waste this opportunity. Because it is an opportunity for you to sort of hit the reset button and focus on things that you wouldn't be able to focus on if you weren't hurt. And so just use the opportunity wisely and don't play a pity party like start feeling bad for yourself or get frustrated. Like I said, focus on what you can control.

You've had to deal with some setbacks the last couple of years, some of it out of your control. In 2020 you won the ACC title at 97. Then the pandemic hit. NCAA championships were canceled. I know that was a huge disappointment to you and to your teammates who were headed to NAAs. Then last season it didn't seem like you are ever quite at your best. Did you have some medical issues last year or did you ever feel 100% last season?

So last year right before, like I said, I had the fall off. And then I came back in the spring, so I wasn't able to practice with the team until about mid December or beginning of December for when the fall semester ended. And right when I was set to come back I actually got COVID and so that put me out for another two weeks.

And so I think just the whole process of having COVID and getting my weight down and then finally getting back into training hard, not giving myself that opportunity to recover played a little bit of a factor. I was a little bit worn out come national time and just going through all that. But yeah, I think one of the biggest things, and I sort of realize this right after nationals that ended was, in 2020 I was competing really well.

I was really confident all my skills and all my abilities. There was no doubt in my mind that I was like one of the best wrestlers in the country. And I still felt that way I think my last year, but I just for some reason wasn't competing at that same level. And yeah, that was definitely really frustrating for me. But yeah, I think just like feeling a little bit worn out maybe from having COVID right before the season had got underway and cutting weight and all that.

At what point after the season did you-- I mean, at what point in the spring or maybe it was even the summer did you feel like, hey, I've got all my energy back. I'm back on track. I'm 100%.

Man, it's hard to tell. I would say definitely like the trials, the U23 trials I definitely felt it because I was out there competing again. It's always hard to tell in the practice room because it's just it's not the same. You can practice great and then wrestle poorly on the mat still. So I'd probably say it at the U23 trials I was like this is me. This is how I know I can wrestle.

So your former teammate, Jack Mueller, is also one of your closest friends. He joined Garland's staff as a volunteer assistant this year. What's it been like having Jack back in the wrestling room again but also kind of backing your life on a daily basis?

Jack's been amazing for a huge number of reasons for our team. I'll start there. So he's just got a really great wrestling mind and is obviously like fresh off of having success in college and some success outside of college as well. So that's just really helped I think, one, like the younger guys coming in and our lighter guys in general. Just him being able to work with them and show them things and being able to get on the mat with them all the time.

And then you also throw that in for recruiting too. Jack's back, like a guy that a lot of kids will come in and work out with. So he's been really great as far as the wrestling side goes.

And then he's also been just a really good sort of mentor for a bunch of the younger guys as well. I know he was reading a book on mindset with a couple of guys. And he's always-- I talked to him this morning and he's like yeah, I'm doing film with like five or six guys today. So he has that energy and that fire in him right now. And it's been really awesome to have him back.

And then apart from the wrestling, just as a friend, it's always great to have one of your best friends back in town who you can get dinner with and just hang out. And be able to talk through some things that maybe you don't feel as comfortable talking with someone else with. So that's been awesome.

Injuries and health are kind of the X factors in all sports and wrestling is no exception. If Virginia is able to field the team, the lineup that it wants to this season, it looks like a really strong group on paper. There's an awful lot back from last season. You're healthier. You're coming off the big off season. What do you think about the team's prospects for this season?

Yeah, like you said, staying healthy is the name of the game. I feel like if we can stay healthy we could have a really good team out there. I know that we'll have guys who will step up and do well, even if we don't have the lineup we want exactly.

But yeah, staying injury free is pretty important. But I feel like we can compete with any of those top teams. We had some really close deals last year with Tech and we beat Pitt last year.

Right.

We've had good matches with NC State the past couple of years. And so it's just getting over that little hump of maybe taking some of those tools. I think we split with Tech last year 5 and 5 match wins. We just got to get maybe a bonus point here, a bonus point there, win that extra sixth match. So I feel really confident with the group of guys we have.

So when you were at Westfield High School in Northern Virginia you not only were a state champion wrestler, you were a big time football player. Do you miss football? Are you able to follow the team here at all?

Yeah. I follow our team. I wouldn't say I miss football too much just because I know I love wrestling. Football for me in high school was just me and all my best buddies did it. So that's what really made it fun. Just going through those four years of high school, I guess, just like always working out with each other and always being with each other. And so that's why I really enjoyed it.

But yeah, I follow our football team here and there. It's cool to see some of the stuff they're doing this year. And it's definitely cool to see what they've been able to do with Bronco over the past six years that I've been here so yeah.

Are you able to get out to Scott Stadium much? I know once you get into full wrestling season you guys are often competing on the weekends.

Yeah, I think I've been to like two games this year. So it's been good. It's definitely like the atmosphere, like I said, it's completely different than when I first got here. So that's always really cool to see how the program sort of turned around.

I will wrap it up with this then. Notre Dame is coming to town this weekend for a big game. Give me your prediction on what's going to happen Saturday night.

It's going to be high scoring I think. Our offense has been explosive all year. If we could just get a few stops in there I think that would be the game for us. So I'm excited to see. Hopefully the Hoos can pull off a win.

Yeah, looking forward to it. Well, listen, thank you so much for your time. Good seeing you. And look forward to following your progress again this season.

Awesome. Sounds good. Thank you, Jeff.

All right. OK. We're going to take a short break and then we'll be back with the Hoos new radio play by play announcer. So stay tuned.

Did you know that more than 50,000 Wahoo fans have already downloaded and are using the UVA sports app? It is the best way to keep track of Virginia athletic scores and news in addition to some great fan contests. You can pick your very own sports preferences and never miss a final score or breaking news. And don't forget that you can listen to all of our coaches shows live or archived on the app. Go to the Apple store or Google Play and search for Virginia sports or UVA sports. So don't miss out and download the UVA sports app today.

OK, now I have the pleasure of welcoming in my newest colleague who happens to be someone whose been a friend of mine for many years. That, of course, is Crozet's favorite son, the new voice of the Cavaliers, John Freeman.

Freeman, I appreciate your coming up for air long enough to do this interview. How is the whirlwind that is your life? I know whirlwind is kind of a cliché thrown around. But I think in your case it's probably apt.

Yeah. Well, it's good to be on with the true Croatian sensation himself in Jeff White. I like to say, I'm pre Dairy Queen era Crozet, as a true Crozet original. But I do mean it and I said this in a tweet one time earlier in the week that I really try and avoid clichés when going on the radio, but there's no way to describe this more than a dream come true.

It really is something that I've dreamed about since I was a little kid. Growing up in Crozet to one day be the voice of the Cavaliers. And I've been fortunate enough to intern for both Mac and Dave, the voice of the Cavaliers, in my life. And then just the way it's all worked out.

You said it, whirlwind is the perfect way to describe it. You never really get to choose when an opportunity knocks on your door, you just have to choose to take it. And that's what happened to me and here I am in Dave Kane's old office with some of his stuff still in it. I'm texting him.

And in fact, his phone to my left has one blinking voicemail and it is from Jeff White himself. So one day I'll listen to that voicemail, maybe your final message to Dave Kane. But it's incredible. I can't believe the turn of life and I'm so thrilled to be here.

I mean, you should probably take down that Denver Nuggets poster that Kane had in his office now that he's working for the Bucks but we won't go into that. I'm just thankful you're doing this podcast whenever I would talk to Kane about getting on he'd tell me to check with his agent. So you're not big timing me like that.

On a more serious note, you know Dave well. You've interned with him. You've kept up with him over the years. What was your reaction when you found out about his opportunity with the Bucks and that he was going to take it and that this job would become open?

I'm forever indebted to Dave. He had to take an opportunity in the NBA on such short notice. That's how these jobs work. That's how sports works. Jobs pop up and they need to be filled very quickly. And somebody has to take them quickly. And in the end, they have to leave quickly. And that's what Dave did. And that's certainly understandable and just part of the industry.

What that did was open up opportunity for me. And I'm forever grateful that when Dave presented the information to UVA that he was taking the job with the Bucks or at least thinking it he did me a massive favor and said, I know a guy who lives in Nashville that can drive to Louisville on Saturday to call this game. And before I know it, I'm getting a phone call from Dave about that. And the next day I'm getting a call from my new boss, Brad Ferrell, at Virginia Sports Properties.

Of hey, are you able to call this game? Who are you? Are you capable of doing this? Can you send a tape?

And I think about the chain of events of what led to me sitting here in his office and being the new voice of the Cavaliers. And I can say maybe I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for Dave making that recommendation. So I told him he can pick whatever restaurant in Charlottesville he wants when the NBA season comes to a close and he comes back to Charlottesville. I owe him dinner and probably a whole lot more.

So then that first game you called, not the first UVA athletic event you've called, first football game you call ends up being one of the more dramatic games probably in program history overall, but definitely in recent history. It's decided in the final minute with the touchdown by the Hoos and then a missed field goal by Louisville. I mean, that's quite a game to start with. And it wasn't a run of the mill blowout one way or another, it was something for the ages.

It had been some time since I had called a football game.

American football, right?

Exactly. Yeah, I caught a lot of soccer but those are pretty limited in how long they go. And the thing that I remember so much about that Virginia Louisville game is just how fast everything happened. I get told officially on a Tuesday afternoon, you're calling a network football game on Saturday.

And I had followed Virginia football, but not to the extent that you would ever need to have that expertise for the level of a broadcast that this network deserves. And knew absolutely nothing really about Louisville football. So it's just this crash course of familiarizing with the teams, getting the game on the air, fulfilling all the sponsor reads and production. And simply just getting to Louisville. And knowing where to be and getting credentials and all those things.

That by the time the game rolls around, there was this moment of how much have I thought about actually how I want to call this game and the style of it? And thankfully, it was quite the show. I mean, it was a wonderfully played football game. There were so many good big plays and dramatic comeback.

And I'll be honest, by the time we got to the fourth quarter physically I was about done. My voice started cracking and I wasn't really prepared for the physical demands of such an epic comeback, which is why at the very end I'm trying to deliver these really, in my view, big calls for such a massive moment of the season.

And not sure I had all the gas in the tank that I needed to get there, but you live, you learn. And I'm so grateful to have gotten some more games after that. And hopefully it can be a little bit more polished heading into some future broadcasts.

I mean, as you quickly learned college football is just a marathon these days with all the passing, all the media timeouts and everything. The day of the two and half hour college football game is long gone. It seems like the three hour college football game is a thing of the past too.

You have deep roots in this area. I mean grew up in Crozet. You graduated from Western Albemarle High School. You graduated from UVA. You've been doing the play by play of a variety of UVA athletic events for many years. What was the response from friends, family, people you know from this area, UVA fans when it became official and you were announced as Dave's successor?

It's been incredible. I'm just amazed at how many people view this job so highly. They love this school. They love this athletic department. So for a lot of friends both really close and in some cases people I haven't talked to in over a decade or I went to high school with, them seeing somebody that they know that was their classmate or was their friend growing up or an acquaintance along the way I think it means a lot to them. Not because it's me, but because it's somebody from here. It's somebody who followed a similar path to them. And I love having that role of being a local keeper of Virginia and Central Virginia and the state as a whole.

It's interesting, I got the job over the weekend. And I had to drive to Charlottesville from my home in Nashville on Monday to make the Tuesday basketball game. And I had coordinated with Jim Daves at Virginia Athletics about the press release and when it would go live. And I knew it was going to go live at 10:00 AM Eastern on Monday.

And I'm driving from Nashville to Charlottesville. And I got up really early, because it's a very, very long drive. In this case it ended up being 12 hours because of traffic. And I know this release is going to go live at 10:00 AM Eastern time. And I had just gotten past Knoxville. And I'm in the middle of nowhere Tennessee, knowing that a press release about my life and my wife's life completely changing is going to go live at 10:00 AM.

And nothing glamorous about it. I pulled over into an industrial parking lot as the news went live. And you wouldn't believe the action that my phone--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

Notification after notification. And my car reads out texts to me. So I plugged it in and truly for the next nine or 10 hours I didn't listen to a single song on the radio or anything else other than just my car reading me texts from people that were texting me. And honestly, it felt amazing. That drive could have taken 20 hours and I wouldn't have minded doing it.

Your first men's basketball game or the first one in this capacity did not have unfortunately the storybook ending that your first football game had. But still, it was the first time in more than a year that fans were back in JPJ. The atmosphere was great. Was there a point before the game or during the game when you kind of looked around and took all that in or were you just so focused on prepping for Virginia and prepping for Navy and calling the game?

I've made a really concerted effort to be present for everything. It's so easy for me to just put my head down and say, oh, I've got to work or this is stressful to get all these games prep for and doing it in a city that I wasn't living in three days ago. But I really know that I don't get these moments back. I'm not going to get it to walk into JPJ as the official voice of the Cavaliers for the first time ever again. It'll be the second time. And then before you know it hopefully the 205, 101,000 time down the line.

So even last night doing the basketball game I love every interaction that I have. Whether it's fist bumping with the ushers on the way in. It's a family atmosphere. You know it, Jeff, when you go in. You're so good at knowing who everybody is and what they do and they know you. And I look forward to that.

And last night was just the beginning of it. But there was a moment where you go through the media entrance and there's the immediate portal right in front of you where you walk in and you're floor level. And there you are at the corner of the court. And the arena is all lit up.

And I get there really early so it's completely empty. And there was a moment where I just breathed in deep and said, please, please nobody wake me up from this dream. Don't pinch me. Don't wake me up. It still doesn't feel real.

Well, I kind of prepped a question for Coach Bennett during the day, had the game gone better and had it been a comfortable win, which did not turn out to be comfortable at all in any manner. Where I was going to bring up you and Kane to Coach Bennett in the post game, but it was not the right time or place for that. So maybe that'll come later. But what was the first UVA athletic event that you remember watching live or on TV as a kid? Anything stick out or the most memorable--

Yeah, it's hard to chronologically put it all together. You know when you're a kid, what you remember when you're five versus what you remember when you're nine, you don't end up in recollection figuring out which one came first. A couple of things I do remember that stand out.

One, a game against I believe it was Texas in Scott Stadium. My dad took me. We had the very last seats.

The Tiki Barber game, right?

One where it absolutely poured rain.

Yeah, that was it. And Tiki ran wild I think in that game.

And I think Anthony Poindexter just stood a guy up and ripped the ball out of his hands. And I distinctly remember a few of those plays. I also remember going to Virginia men's and women's basketball games. And I don't recommend this because I think it's illegal but we would park on the other side of the railroad tracks and then walk over to [? U ?] [? Hall ?] over the railroad tracks. And what I remember about those is not just the basketball, but we lived in Crozet. And we would get in the car and we would listen to the post game show on the way home all the way to Crozet. Until if it was a night game we ran out of signal. It would go static.

Yeah.

And that was really my first exposure to the Virginia Sports Radio Network. I grew up listening to it coming back from games. And before you know it, I became a huge UVA fan. And then grew up listening to the games that were on the road. And when I think to how I got to where I am now and how happy I am to be in this job, it all starts from being a little boy and Crozet listening to the Virginia Sports Radio Network saying, I want to do that one day.

What was the first UVA game you ever called and what sport?

I know exactly what it is because I didn't think I'd ever get another one. So it was for Virginia lacrosse when I was in college. I was a guy who was just around, at that time at McDonald Virginia Sports Network WINA locally. Had done some high school football. Hosted, produced anything I get my hands on. Just waiting for a big opportunity. And there was a lacrosse game that opened up and it was in Durham, North Carolina to face Duke. And I think Duke was number one in the country.

I had never broadcasted a lacrosse game. I didn't play it in high school even though it was offered. I didn't grow up in a lacrosse family and really barely knew the sport. And found out I think on a Monday that they needed me in Durham on Saturday. I didn't know how to set up the equipment, none of that. And I went into Doug Tarring who has become a good friend of mine and in my opinion, the best lacrosse analyst that's ever existed. And I went into his office at St. Anne's Belfield, which is where he was the athletic director. And I was like, how does this game work?

And he pulled out a sheet of paper. And he drew a goal on it and then drew a circle around the goal and said, this is the crease. And that's how we started. And a few days later I was calling a game with him at Duke. And I hope that tape got burned. I hope it never sees the light of day. Who knows what it sounded like. But I was able to get a few more games and then got a lacrosse gig and the rest is history.

These things kind of run together but you did call the 2011 national championship game, right?

I did.

In college. Yeah. Not College Park, that was Baltimore.

It was in Baltimore on probably the hottest day in Baltimore history.

It was brutal. Brutal. You mentioned your wife, Christie. She is a UVA graduate as well, right?

She is.

Is she excited about it? I know she's from Nashville, but is she excited about coming back this way?

Yeah, I wish she was here. So she works at Vanderbilt hospital. And hoping to transfer her nursing profession over here to Charlottesville. So I wish she was here with me. Right now she's holding the house down in Tennessee. But she loves fall. And I texted her today saying this is probably the best peak fall day that you could have and how much I wish she was here. It's bright orange in Charlottesville.

And we love this city. We love Virginia. We love Charlottesville. We love this school. Everything about it. We've always talked about if there ever was an opportunity to get back to Charlottesville that we would want to take it. Now, thankfully Dave didn't hold this job until he was in his 70s. But I was fully prepared to apply as a 65-year-old to be the voice of the Cavaliers. Would have never gotten it. But nevertheless, we always hoped that there was a pathway back to Charlottesville. And to get it in this way is perfect.

So we'll go back into the archives. Not only did you attend Western Albemarle, you were a football player of some note there, right?

I mean, depends on who you ask.

I think you-- didn't I see somewhere you were in all district defensive back? Is that right?

Yeah.

OK.

Yeah.

Anyway, I don't know. I know you've had interaction with Bronco prepping for these games. But a number of the football coaches have or have had sons who played football at Western. Have you had a chance to bond with any of them over this or has it just been too crazy?

I mentioned it to Bronco when I first met him. And the funny thing is my dad is the PA announcer at Western. And he's been since the school opened, like 40 some years I think he's done it. If you've ever been to a Western game, he's loud. He's expressive. He's a funny guy.

So I think they all are more familiar to be honest with my dad than they are with me. But I hope that changes pretty soon. But Crozet is an interesting thread that ties a lot of us together. So many people in the athletic department, you included, and the coaches and staff, live out in Crozet.

You're working most closely in football with Tony Covington in men's basketball with Jimmy Miller. How well did either of those guys kind of before you got thrown into this? I think you'd met Jimmy before.

Yeah, I'd called games with Jimmy as a fill in a couple of years ago on the national championship season. We spent time at the Battle 4 Atlantis in the Bahamas. So certainly know Jimmy. I had never met Tony Covington until I shook his hand in Louisville a few hours before we went on air.

Cov has been so good to me. He's been so encouraging, so helpful, energetic obviously, and supportive. When it came down to trying to get this job, it was a national search. And it's such a competitive industry and Cov was on my side. And he was willing to tell people that. And I'm so appreciative of it. He's another person that I owe dinner.

And then just also on game day he's such an enjoyable person to be around. And he brings up the energy of broadcast. But yeah, there's times where you can just get so serious around a broadcast sometime and there's so much going on. To have someone like him whose been in some really pressure packed situations as a player just be part of the broadcast and be that calming influence and steadying influence on the broadcast while still bringing the enthusiasm and energy that the fans deserve. I think he's a wonderful partner. And can't wait to work with him on Saturday versus Notre Dame.

You have called a number of sports in your career. But I know that soccer is near and dear to your heart. I know you'll be able to follow the teams here. Will you be able to occasionally call games in the fall or is that all just going to depend on the American Football schedule?

We'll see. Yeah. I'd love to pitch my boss on Virginia soccer on the Virginia Sports Radio Network. I think we might have to start locally on radio. But actually I call it a Virginia soccer game a few weeks ago. How about that?

Yeah, I remember that.

So there's ACC Network Extra, which is usually school produced. And then there's ACC Network which can be school produced but often the announcers are from around the east coast and not hired by the school. But there are a lot of local ACC Network Extra broadcasts produced by the school that need local broadcasters. So it's in the fall, so it's pretty busy around then obviously with football. But if there ever is a chance to slip in and call a game I'd love that.

It's a program that has given me so much. I grew up going to Virginia soccer games. I grew up going to Virginia soccer camp. And I think that love of the game helped me in my job in Nashville in calling Major League Soccer. And my job in Nashville calling Major League Soccer helped me get this job with Virginia.

But the surreal part of broadcasting, Jeff, is I called that Virginia versus Denver men's soccer game on ACC Network Extra a few weeks ago from my living room in Nashville. That's just the way broadcasting works now. You plug-in a good quality microphone. And the video services team is so good at Virginia that they make it easy. You literally sign in to a Zoom meeting and they present you with a bunch of camera feeds and you're good to go.

It's a surreal experience. It went to halftime, we had some pre-produced segments and I didn't know what to do. I went and unloaded the dishwasher and then came back up and called the second half. It is such a strange thing. So broadcasting in 2021 and beyond can happen in some really strange ways.

Well, we're on Zoom now. I can see that your new office needs some decorating. So I will let you get to that. I'll see you at JPJ on Friday night and then at Scott Stadium Saturday for the big game with Notre Dame. But anyway, congrats. Welcome back. And thanks for your time. And I look forward to working together for many years.

Yeah. And while I have the opportunity, I want to thank you as well. It was a crash course to get ready for these football broadcasts. And those football broadcasts turned out to be an audition that went successfully enough to get this job. And you're one of the first people who I called to say tell me everything you know about Virginia football.

And I know you had a lot to do those days leading up and you made time for me. And that helped. And I want people to know that. And you were so kind to do that. So I appreciate that. And looking forward to working with you some more, partner.

Happy to help. And I will put that on your ever-growing tab, ever expanding tab.

I owe you dinner too. I'm running out of nights for dinner.

Yeah. All right, take care, John.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

And that will do it for this week. Thanks again to Jay and John for joining the show. The *Wahoo Central Podcast* is coming up on its 300th episode. And from the first episode, the support of our listeners has been crucial. Please take a moment to subscribe to and rate this podcast.

To find previous episodes, search your favorite podcast provider for *Wahoo Central Podcast*. They are also archived under the media button on the front page of VirginiaSports.com, which is our official website. Guest this year have included Kate Douglas, Brennan Armstrong, Steve Swanson, Kip Turner, Diana Ordonez, Chris Glaser, Michaela Meyer, and many, many more. If you're looking for my stories, they're archived on VirginiaSports.com under the content button on the front page.

I'm also on Twitter where my handle is @JeffWhiteUVA. Finally, be sure to check out the UVA sports app, which has been downloaded more than 60,000 times. It's available from Google Play or the Apple Store. We'll be back soon with another episode. Until then, thanks for listening and go Hoos.

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