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Welcome to another episode of the *Wahoo Central Podcast*. I'm Jeff White from VirginiaSports.com, and spring has officially sprung in Charlottesville. We got a great show lined up today. My guest in the second segment will be Rebecca Jarrett, who is the consummate scholar athlete at UVA. Joining the show now is Todd DeSorbo, the head coach of the Cavaliers swimming and diving programs.

Todd, first, good to see you. And I texted you Sunday, and I said, I hope you'd enjoy some time off this week. And now, here I am bothering you for an interview. So sorry about that, and thanks for your patience.

No, I appreciate you having me on. I feel like being busy means things are going well. And if I'm with Jeff, that means things are going really well. [LAUGHS]

So you had another March to remember. First, your women's team won its second straight NCAA championship, then your men's team placed 10th at the NAAs. Both meets were held in Atlanta. Let's start with the men. That was the most recent meet.

What are your thoughts on that? The men were ninth last season. This 10th place finish is the third-best in program history. Did it meet your expectations? Exceed them? Any surprises?

I think that I would say it met our expectation. I would say in some cases, it exceeded. In some cases, maybe we fell a little bit short of what I thought we were capable of. And I think that's typical. We'll talk about the women next, I'm sure. But even for the women, there were some things that blew our minds and some things we hoped for a little bit more.

And I think any time you go to a competition like that, that's just, kind of, how it is. Certainly we're happy to be top 10 three years in a row. This year, it was, at least as far as I can remember, the national championship was significantly more competitive than it's ever been. I mean, every single race for the most part, to get into the top eight championship final or the top 16 consolation final was significantly faster than it was, than it's ever been. It's just, like, you have somebody swim really, really fast and then they don't score points because the competition was, you know, it was so fast.

And I don't necessarily know that the top end was any better than it's ever been to win an event, wasn't necessarily faster. There was a couple of records, but not many. But the depth was just-- it was out of this world. I think it's great for our sport. A lot of our guys stepped up to score and get us in the top 10. Our relays were great.

And you're just battling with a lot of really, really good teams. And I think that there's just-- Even at the top end, there's just more-- there's more challengers than ever before. So it was pretty exciting. And certainly we were happy, especially to finish the way we did in the last day.

Yeah.

I mean, I think we moved up a few spots to get into the top 10. So we really went-- that last morning we, kind of, went in swinging. And we needed to in order to end up top 10.

I mean, you had a couple swimmers set school records. They end up eighth or ninth. I mean, I think you did an interview session ahead of NAAs. And you just said, hey, if your swimmers do their best and improve on their times, you can't complain about the finish. That's, kind of, out of your hand. So you can't really gripe when a guy sets a program record and ends up scoring eighth place points or finishing ninth.

Yeah, yeah. Absolutely. And our relays were that way too. We broke school records in both the medley relays. And both of them were-- I don't think we finished top eight either of them. But we went the fastest time in the history of our program. So and that's, kind of, like, what set out to do. Like, we don't worry about your place, don't worry about who you're racing. Let's just be the best we've ever been, and that performance will fall where it will from a placing perspective. And all that will shake out and take care of itself.

What was the overall, kind of, increased competitiveness of the meet? Is that related at all to COVID years for swimmers? And I mean, were there fifth year guys, who in normal times, would have moved on?

Yeah, I think it's a combination of things. I think definitely having quite a few fifth years stay on added to the depth certainly because obviously, they would have been gone. And so if you've got 5 fifth years in the top 16, then you can look down to the 21st time. And that's what we would have actually scored had they not been there. So that certainly added to it.

I think that adding back quite a few teams from the Ivy League. Arizona State sat out last year. Some other programs, a lot of mid-majors, sat out last year. So from a depth perspective, you had a lot of teams and athletes that didn't get a season last year. So you come back with a little bit of a chip on your shoulder and wanting to have a great year and probably putting more into it than you ever have and obviously, getting better results from that perspective too. So I think those two things had quite a bit to do with it.

And then it's just-- I think once-- one team and/or one individual elevates things. You know, everybody does. It's like one of our guys said, and this was at ACCs, but it was funny. Connor Boyle, who's a first year, was swimming the preliminaries of the 50 freestyle. And Jack Akins, another first year, had swum in the heat right before him.

And Jack Akins dropped, like, a lot of time off his lifetime best. Swam really fast. And Connor Boyle saw it. He's standing behind the blocks as he's racing the very next heat. And Connor, after the race, he came over. He was like, well, I saw Jack go really fast. He's like, so I'm going to go really fast, you know?

[CHUCKLES]

I think that each team builds on it and people just step up. And so I think that was really a big part of why it was so deep.

You mentioned Jack and Connor. They're first years. They were on the 400 freestyle relay with two second years, Matt Brownstead and Matt King. A number of the guys who scored for you are coming back. How much of a hit will you take to graduation, or will you have fifth year guys coming back? And when you look ahead to next season, it looks like you've returned a really good core on the men's side.

Yeah. We're certainly young again. We're only graduating three guys total. And all three of those guys were at NCAA. So they certainly made an impact. Justin Grender was top eight in the 200 backstroke, and Casey Storch scored in the 400 IM. We're going to miss their point certainly, but we're going to miss their leadership even more.

But strictly from a performance perspective, I don't know if we, like-- we will be-- even without those guys, we'll be better next year. We've got a great group of recruits coming in this fall. We have a small class, but they're pretty powerful. And then like you said, our 400 free relay that set a school record and was fourth in NCAA is first and second years. So the future's pretty bright. Those guys will keep developing and keep improving. And like Connor Boyle, for example, he just missed out on scoring. He was 17th in the 50 freestyle.

So you got, like, with a little bit of improvement, which he should, he'll be in scoring position next year. Jack Akins can score a little bit more. All those guys just improve, will get better from that perspective, as well as the incoming guys. So I think our relays just keep getting better, and the team overall just keeps getting better. So I'm really happy and proud about how they did this year, and I'm certainly the first person that we look ahead immediately to the next year. And I'm really excited about next year as well.

The men arrived in Atlanta for their meet a day or two after the women went home from Atlanta after winning. What were your thoughts? I mean, obviously, it ended the way you wanted it to and the way a lot of people expected it to with Virginia winning going away. What sticks out to you about the women's meet this year?

I think the way, the manner, in which they won. I know last year we won by a pretty big margin. But again, I think that the competition was a little diluted last year because of COVID. And so we knew this year was going to be significantly more competitive. I think that the meet would have been a lot closer had our women not performed at the level that they performed at.

Certainly, the fashion in which they did it, the record-setting fashion in which they did it, was just mind-blowing. And the fact that the competition was significantly tougher all around, you almost had to break a record to win an event. I mean, there were, I don't know, seven or eight NCAA records out of-- Probably over half the individual races had NCAA records. A lot of the relays had NCAA records just to win.

And you could break a record and not win. I mean, Gretchen Walsh, right? She broke the existing NCAA and American record of 100 backstroke and got second. But I think to do that with that type of competition was just extraordinary. I see the men and women every day in practice. So I know what they're capable of and I watch them.

But when they actually do it in competition with the biggest pressure and the most stress and the highest expectations, and they actually perform and actually do what they're capable of, is just makes you really proud as a coach because you see their hard work and you really want that hard work to pay off for them. I mean, I was shocked. I was shocked at how impressive. They were. I mean, I knew they were capable of it. But for them to all do it all together, all at once. And the entire team, it wasn't just stars. It wasn't just the people winning and breaking records. The whole team was really on fire.

I mean, ahead of the meet, you expressed your confidence that the pressure of being the favorite would not affect your ladies and they would handle it well. Privately, were you as confident that that could have-- it did-- not it did not--

[CHUCKLES]

It did not seem to faze them. You got at the first day. What, you won one relay, finished second in the other. So you got that start that you wanted and never really looked back.

Yeah. I mean, there's always a little bit of anxiety, I guess, when you go into a competition like that. Because you never know the first, like, what's going to happen on their very first race, right? I mean, you know they're capable. Even at NAAs this year with the first night, with those first two relays. We won the 200 medley relay, but we were slightly slower than we were at ACCs. And then our 800 free relay was-- I don't think either of those two relays were as good as they could have been.

But I think that our team-- I think they were-- I think they were also a little bit anxious. And just to, like, get that first swim, those first relays out of the way. Even though they weren't-- they didn't break a record, they still won. Even though they didn't break a record in the [INAUDIBLE] relay, they still got second. And we, kind of, thought we would get second relay. So it wasn't, like, we were disappointed that we didn't win it.

So even after that, I was like, all right. I, kind of, told them if you can just be as good as you were at ACCs, we're going to be in a good position. And those relays were basically about as good as they were at ACCs, but they weren't significantly better. And that I think to a lot of them, was a little bit disheartening. But then what was mind blowing was the way they came out the next morning.

And the next day when you come out and Cuomo get second in the 500 free. Maddie Donohoe goes a lifetime best and scores. Alex Walsh breaks the NCAA and American record in 200 IM and Ella Nelson and Abby Harter had great swims and score. And then you get Kate and Gretchen being the two. Only three women ever have gone under 21 seconds in their 50, and they are two of them. Lexi Cuomo goes a lifetime best and then they win the relay. And so, like, I think they just needed to get the jitters out a little bit on that first night and then they were, like-- it was smooth sailing from there.

Yeah. Your swimmers won seven individual races in all. Kate Douglas got three, Alex Walsh got three, and her kid sister, Gretchen Walsh, got one. As a head coach, knowing how hard these swimmers work, how hard they train, the dedication it takes, how gratifying is it to see them rewarded with a national championship?

I mean, it's amazing. Because again, you see what they're capable of every day. We see it every day in practice. Everybody else only gets to see it once a year when they're at NAAs or maybe ACCs as well, but to see them actually do it-- Take Kate Douglas and Alex, for example. Last year, each of them only won one national championship individually, right? And it's funny I say they only won one like there's a lot of-- most people don't win any.

But they each were probably capable of winning more last year, but they only came home with one. And Kate, for example, got second in her two other events last year. So to see them come out this year and just have a lot-- I think they both had a lot more confidence throughout the year. I think they've had-- And I think the Olympics probably helped with that. But to actually see them do it and accomplish it is pretty impressive, and especially again, against the competition that they were against. Because in pretty much all of their races, the second place person would have won last year, if not the third place person.

Take Kate's 100 fly, for example. You know, that was-- Honestly, at the beginning, she was not favored to win 100 butterfly. She was not picked to win the 100 butterfly by anybody. I don't even think she was picked to get top two. But that's because she had to beat the defending national champ and NCAA record holder. And not to mention that defending national champ is the Olympic champion, Maggie Mac Neil. And she also had to beat Torri Husk, who is the long course American record holder and was fourth at the Olympics 100 butterfly.

So she had to go through, basically, two of the best swimmers in the world to win that event. So and no different than Alex's 4 IM or 200 butterfly. It's really gratifying to see them accomplish the goals they set out to. And, you know, and then for Gretchen especially, because she's, like-- three races at ACC, she got second. And then her first two races at NCAA, she gets second. So to see her win in her last event, you know, it was just really-- I'm just really happy for her because she swam really, really well and had to win, but, kind of, stuck it out. After getting second, second, second, second, she's like Todd, I'm tired of losing. [CHUCKLES] I'm like, yeah, but look you're losing to.

[LAUGHTER]

So Gretchen is a first year. Alex is a second year. Kate is a third year. Emma, I don't know how-- She's got three years of eligibility left. Do your fellow head coaches at UVA ever tell you they're jealous of the fact that you get your top athletes for four years, or maybe five with the pandemic. Because athletes this elite in football or basketball or soccer or baseball would probably be gone sometime before they graduated. I know it's the same across the board. So the playing field is level in swimming. You're not the only one who benefits. from this.

Right.

But it's nice to know you're going to have Gretchen Walsh for four years and.

Oh, yeah. Oh, absolutely. All of them, you know? Yeah, I mean we're fortunate certainly that we've got them. But we obviously-- at some point, they're going to leave. So we've got to reload. [CHUCKLES]

Yeah. Looking ahead for the women. I mean, the swimmers that I mentioned, they have eligibility left. You go into next season presumably from a very good place, don't you?

Oh, yeah. Absolutely. I think, like on the women's side, we graduate two fourth years who were on our NCAA championship team. Both of which scored and both of which have been, like, our man, you know? Alexis Wenger got second 100 breaststroke. And she's been integral. She's on two American record-setting relays. Jessica Nava. And again, they're also captains. So replacing them and their leadership is probably going to be harder than their points and performances.

But fortunately, out of 17 women on the NCAA team, we're only graduating two. And then you've got the youngsters coming up that can continue to develop. And you have first years like Ella Bathurst, who was at NAAs this year and just missed scoring. She won her lifetime best in the 200 backstroke, but just missed out on scoring. So she continues to develop and can move into a role to help us. And then we've got eight incoming first years this fall. We also have some great divers coming in. So I think again, on paper, we should be better next year than we are this year, which might be scary to some people. [CHUCKLES]

Yeah, absolutely. That's bad news for the rest of college swimming. Not every college program has the same coaching staff, one coaching staff for both teams. Virginia does. For you and your assistants, how grueling is this whole postseason stretch? I mean, I know it's exciting because this is what you trained for all year. But I mean, you go to Atlanta. You do that, you come back, and do it all again with the men. That's a long stretch of long days, right?

Oh, yeah.

Long days at the pool.

Yeah, it is, it is. It's pretty brutal. You know, but-- especially our staff, we love it. We have fun. We enjoy it. We're passionate about it. So it's like-- I'm not going to say it's like vacation because certainly it's stressful and exhausting. But we love every minute of it. So it makes it a lot easier to bear the long days and a couple long weeks. But it's two weeks out of the year. And it's the most exciting time of year as well. It's the busiest and most exciting. So it's just a fun time.

I asked you about this after you won the first team title last year. But how much do you think the stability and the continuity of your staff, having those assistants have been with you for the most part since day one here, how much does that help, do you think?

Yeah. I mean, I think it's huge. I think just the consistency and seamlessness from year to year has been really good. Especially each year, as with the coaches and athlete relationship, you get to know the athletes a little bit better. You get to know their needs a little bit better. You get to know the way they work mentally, emotionally. And so to be able to build each year upon the next one is pretty big.

And a lot of my coaches have full autonomy with their groups and with the athletes they work with and with developing them. So to be able to sit down at the end of the season and say, OK, with each individual in your group this is what we need to work on for the next year, we can focus on that through the summer and get a head start on it, it makes a huge difference. And they're all great people and a lot of fun to be around. And the team really enjoys all of them. So it just makes things easier.

I know you cannot talk, by name, at least, about recruits who have not yet signed their letters of intent. I know you have a pretty good idea who's joining the program this summer. When you go beyond that, I guess it would be the high school class of '23, '24. How is recruiting going? Are these championships and these top 10 finishes having-- I would imagine they have the desired effect on guys, men and women you're recruiting.

Oh, absolutely, absolutely. It certainly doesn't hurt, that's for sure. And I think even the success of the women has helped our men's recruiting. And obviously, our men's team has been successful too. And they have come-- the men's team overall have probably improved even more than the women have, even though the women are national champs. The guys just started pretty far behind.

But I'm excited about both teams going forward. And certainly, I'm looking real far ahead, OK? Great. So we've got Gretchen for three more years, but then she's going to be gone. So who's going to fill that-- who's going to fill that role? Who's going to fill Kate Douglas? Who's going to fill Alexis Wenger, who is graduating this year? Alex, Emma Weyant. So you, kind of, always have to be a little bit-- looking a little bit a year or two ahead just to make sure that-- I, kind of, have always said, I don't want to ever have to rebuild. We just want to reload.

Is the-- I mean, in a lot of sports the transfer portal has become a huge deal, particularly in men's basketball and football. Is it as active in swimming as it is--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

I know you haven't taken a ton of transfers, but you've taken some key ones.

Yeah. I would say it's certainly-- I don't know that it's as active as football and basketball. But relatively speaking, it certainly is-- it's as active or significantly more active than that system used to be. So yeah, I mean, there's a lot. There's a lot going on. You know, it's obviously easier to transfer now. A lot more people thinking about it. And on the swimming side of things, it's significantly more active now than it ever has been before.

Yeah. This is not an Olympic year, but competition at the top level never really ends. What's on tap for your swimmers and divers for the rest of this semester and then the summer before you reconvene as a team?

Yeah. So we've got to-- actually have a really quick turnaround. In four weeks, the last week of April, we have the world championship trials. So just like the Olympic trials, it's a qualification meet for world champs which has been canceled and put back on and canceled and put back on. It was supposed to be back in Japan. And it was canceled. And then it was rescheduled. So now it's in Budapest, Hungary, in mid to late June.

And so the world championship trials are that last week of April in Greensboro, which is great because we're really familiar with that pool. So we'll take a crew down there. And it's the same selection process as the Olympics. So the top two in every event and make that team. And the world championships is the second most elite competition next behind the Olympics. And it's really a stepping stone towards the Olympics. So it's a pretty big focus for our athletes and a lot of others around the country.

So we'll see how we do there. And then we'll have about a month, the month of May, and then we'll leave for world champs early June. There's, like, a week-long training camp in Croatia and then head to Budapest for about 10 days. So that's about a three-week period there. Beyond that, the rest of our crew will be focused on summer nationals out in California at the end of July and just really trying to spend the summer to develop some skills that are going to help them advance their collegiate career heading into next year.

And you're head coach of the women's team, right? The US women's team. Yes.

Yeah, yeah. So hopefully, we get some girls on the team so I'm not alone. [LAUGHS] And yeah. So I'll be going-- I'll be gone for three weeks this summer in June for that competition. So it should be fun.

Well, so much for the idea you getting a little bit of rest this spring. But I guess it's a good problem to have. It means things are going well. So anyway, well, I will let you go. I appreciate your time very much. And congrats on another great year. And looking forward to seeing what 2022/23 brings.

Yeah, thank you. Appreciate it.

All right. Well, we're going to take a short break and then we'll be back to talk with one of the university's most interesting undergraduates.

Hey, this is John Freeman, the voice of the Cavaliers. And with my busy schedule, the best way I've found to keep up with Virginia athletic scores, news, and fan contests is the UVA sports app. You can pick your sports preferences and never miss a final score or any breaking news.

You can also listen to all of our coaches' corner shows live on the app. All you got to do is go to the Apple Store or Google Play, and search Virginia Sports or UVA sports. Join the more than 50,000 Wahoo fans who are already using the UVA sports app.

OK. Joining me now is one of UVA's most talented and busiest student athletes. And that's Rebecca Jarrett from the women's soccer team. Hey, Rebecca. Great to see you again.

Hi, how are you?

So tell me, how many hours of sleep do you get on a typical night?

Seven. Seven to eight.

All right. Have you always been someone who's on the go and filling up her hours ever since you were a girl?

Yeah. Since I was young, I've always liked to do stuff. I've always been pretty busy. I think in my four years here I've definitely been super busy. But I think as I've gotten older, I've tried to be more intentional about the things I give my time to because you only have so much of it, whereas when I was younger, it was like, let's do one million things in five minutes.

Yeah. So first things first, you suffered a serious knee injury late last summer. Ended up missing the whole season. How is your rehab going? How much physical activity are you doing these days?

Rehab's good. I'm running mostly and lifting. Sort of, that phase of the rehab. So it's really just about getting the strength back. So I got hurt-- I had surgery in September, and I was on crutches for seven weeks post-op. So you lose a lot of muscle definition in that seven weeks. So now it's just really, really about building that back and getting that strength back to then be able to play and whatnot in the future.

What are the benchmarks you're shooting for? Like, what's the next box to check off in your rehab? And if all goes well, when would you be cleared to train again?

Yeah. I set pretty short-term goals, like I said at the beginning, and I like to do it all at once. So if I have some pretty well-defined and pretty close objectives, I, kind of, shoot for those. So right now, like I said, it's about strength. Still trying to hit certain percentages of my max in the weight room, hitting a certain percentage of my maximum speed when I'm running outside on the field, things like that. So those are, sort of, like, the milestones that are in my immediate future. And then the goal is to be able to play and be back to normal, whatever that looks like, back to normal by pre-season time so.

What is a typical day for you like this semester? Are you around the soccer team much, or is your rehab and your training all on your own with athletic trainers?

This semester, I've been around the team a lot. In the fall, I really wasn't, and that was really difficult. I would spend a lot more time on the table in the athletic training room. So I would go and train at 3:45. I would go at around 3:00, and I wouldn't be done in there until 5:00 on some days. So the time when was in there, the team would be training or doing whatever.

So we didn't overlap much. I would be in the locker room in the meeting before the session and we would go our separate ways. Whereas now, I will go to the meeting before training, go in the athletic training room, do a couple of little things, and I'll go on the field during the training to get my running in. And then I usually will go back up and do some more stuff in the room. But I try and plan my running to be during training sessions so at least I'm running around the field or on the field or around the team at the times that they're out on the field.

Was this your first major injury?

Yes. I always say, if I'm going to do it, I'm going to do it big. So I--

Yeah, you did it big.

--started with a big one. [CHUCKLES]

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

Was it tough? I know you-- I don't know if you were at every game, but I'm sure you were at as many as you could attend. Was it tough being a spectator, particularly in the NCAA-- during the NCAA tournament games when your team needed you all along but really couldn't use you at that point?

Yeah, it was definitely a big adjustment for me. The first couple of games, I was still a fall risk. So I was on crutches, but I had a full brace, and I was very limited mobility. So I would watch-- I also couldn't stand up for very long, I would watch the game up in the press box, like, at the top, the home games, at least, like, at the top of Klockner so I could sit down, but I could also get up and move around if I needed to and not really get in anyone's way. So usually I sit up there with my mom or my dad, or both would come up and watch with me from up there. And then later on, once I was a bit more mobile and it was a little bit safer for me to be on the sidelines, I was there.

So I was at every home game except for one. We played Penn State right after I had surgery. So I was still in the hotel room with my mom. But other than that, I went to every home game. And I traveled a couple of times where it was feasible and possible. But sometimes, the traveling wasn't great. To be sitting on the bus and not being able to my rehab at home wasn't great. So I didn't go to every game, but I went to as many as I could. And it was definitely difficult, especially at the beginning when I couldn't do anything at all.

I would just stand there and watch. And I couldn't help them shag balls, or I couldn't do anything at all. I was just standing there. So I felt, sort of, like, a piece of furniture, you know? I just don't really do anything. So at the beginning, it was really difficult. But that super and limited time was relatively short in the grand scheme of the season. So near the end, I would be on the field during the warm up. I would be in some way involved. I wasn't doing anything. But, like, get people water or, like, doing something which was very helpful for me to have a role even though it wasn't obviously what I had been used to in the past seasons.

Knee injuries unfortunately, are not uncommon in women's soccer and women's sports. Have you leaned on any teammates who have dealt with similar setbacks?

Yeah. I have more friends than I would like to that have had the same or very similar injuries. So I've definitely gravitated towards those people, especially in things like going to games. It's a hard thing to articulate why it's unpleasant because I'm happy that we're playing, I'm happy to be at the game. But there's also a part of you that's a little bit unsettled.

So someone who's had the same or similar injury can, kind of, relate to that. So that was really nice. And it's unfortunate that I have so many friends that have done it, but I do have quite a few. And then on the, sort of, not on my team. But being in the athletic training room, spending as much time as I do in rehab, there's a couple of other people in there who have relatively long-term or similar injuries to me. So you, kind of, bond because we're together a lot. So I would say there is a pretty-- unfortunately, there's a pretty big community of people that have or can relate to the same experience.

So athletes who have gone under, have had to deal with injuries, and have been sidelined sometimes say that they've turned it into something of a positive experience because there are things they learn about their sport when they're watching that then they can apply when they return. I mean, have there been any benefits in that regard from being a spectator and watching the team and watching your teammates that you think will help you when you get back on the field?

Yeah, definitely. I think especially at the beginning, sitting up in the press box-- I've never been up there. I went once on my official visit when I was, like, 15. When I first came here, I did the whole tour and I went up there. But I'd never sat up there and watched the game. And that vantage point of being somewhat of a bird's eye view is an awesome way to watch a game. If I could watch a game from up there every time, I would.

So getting that view. And to also be-- usually, Jaime would be next to me or someone on our staff would be there. So I would be listening to what they were saying and what they were taking note of. So that view just in and of itself was very valuable. And there were things that I had seen in the run of play that I wouldn't have if I was on the sideline, let alone on the field. So I think there's a couple of little things that I can glean from that. But I think I've learned more about myself as a person in this time period than I have or will as a player, at least at this current stage of it.

What have you learned?

I think-- like I said at the beginning, I've always been a go, go, go kind of person. And when this happened, it's stop, stop, stop. There's not a lot of stuff that you can do when you are on crutches. I couldn't drive for six weeks, seven weeks. I had to rely on other people. Had to ask for help all the time. And I typically am not someone that likes to do that, or I wasn't used to doing it. And at the beginning of this, I had no choice. It was either ask for help or-- there is really no or. There's no alternative.

So I think I got over that pretty quickly. I had to survive. I think I learned the value in asking for help and leaning on other people. This is also very much so uncharted territory for me. So again, in the same vein, being comfortable to ask for help is something that is relatively new to me. I also had to take up a different, sort of, leadership style. And I think I'm-- in a normal season, I am less vocal and more a lead by example kind of person.

I don't necessarily say much in training before and after. My mouth doesn't stop. But actually, during I'm not typically someone who's super vocal. And I think not being able to play, the only thing I can contribute is my voice, really. So that's been something I've had to amp up. Because like I said, I'm not obviously playing. So if I'd like to contribute something, that's really the most direct and tangible way I can do it. So things like that that are newer to me that I've been trying to focus on or trying to work on or improve on in this time.

There has been a significant addition to your resume, which was already impressive. You are the creative director and co-founder of *UNCUT at UVA*. For listeners who are unfamiliar with this endeavor, can you explain what *UNCUT* is? What prompted you to get involved?

Yeah. So *UNCUT* started at Chapel Hill at UNC. So for them, it's a non-profit, and here we started it as a student organization, which is essentially the same thing. But it's basically, it's similar to things like the *Players' Tribune* where it's essentially a first-person journalism by student athletes that share a range of things. So current stories we have are about injuries, mental health, things like that. And there are some that are coming down the pipeline that are more lighthearted and fun and about personal passions and projects of student athletes.

But it's really anything that a Virginia student athlete wants to share beyond their athletic experience. We create a space for that. And it's been a really cool way to, one, meet new athletes I've never met before, but also, sort of, emphasize the fact that these are super-interesting and dynamic multifaceted people that sometimes, press or just the nature of, sort of, your life here, you don't get to see some of the more niche parts of the experience. So it's been a cool way to highlight that and shed light on some really cool people, and also share really impactful, sometimes really sad, stories where people have grown or learned a lot, which is really awesome.

So how do you get the word out? We have 27 varsity teams here. How do you get the word out to your fellow student athletes that this is a platform on which they can share their stories if they're interested? And how are you getting-- how are you spreading the word in your community?

It's a hard balance because there are some people in my personal network, or people that I know, friends of friends, or teammates, or whatever, who I know would have a really exceptional story to tell. So the first phase is balancing. Is it appropriate for me to ask you to share? Are you going to come to me anyway? Sort of, balancing how do we get that ball rolling.

Because I would never want to put someone in an uncomfortable position. Like, oh, Becca asked. I have to do it. Because like I said, some of these are super personal. So I would never approach someone like, hey, you have this traumatic event. You want to write about it? So it's, kind of, a balance of figuring out who I can approach and who we can't.

The rest of it we really just let it happen naturally, and we're really trying to figure out some little, like, social media and promotional stuff to continue to get the word out there so people know it's a space they can come to. But we really prioritize letting people come to us. We don't interview anybody. If you halfway through say, actually, I don't want to publish this. It's gone. No one will ever see it again and we will never bring it up. So it's really just a matter of letting it grow organically just because of the nature of the work.

So you are listed as co-founder. Who are your fellow co-founders? Who else is, kind of, in the leadership team of this group?

Lacey and Lachlan, both of which are on the soccer team as well. And it was actually the two of the really started this thing. It was their idea to bring here. Lachlan has a friend who was involved at the original UNC one. So it was her idea, and they approached me about helping them figure out some logistics and get it off the ground. So I came in the very early stages of them figuring out what was up and what was down. The three of us figured it out from there. But it was their initial initiative. And they asked me to help them. And that's kind of how the leadership portion of this, forum. But it was definitely the two of them who brought it here and had the idea.

So when you launch any kind of new project, it's inevitable that things will come up that you hadn't planned on, and maybe there's more work than you thought. Has that been the case where there's more--

Yes.

--more details than perhaps--

Yes, it's more everything. It's more work. It's more time. But it's also more fulfilling than I really had anticipated. From the time they approached me about the idea to the time our first story went out last month was over a year. And in that year, it was building the website and finding people to take photos and people who are interested in marketing, people who are knowledgeable at SEO. I mean, like, the most random assortment of people that we could pull together to be a part of it. We had people come and go. Some people that were initially interested and then fizzled out. People that weren't initially interested and then amped it up.

So just managing personnel was something that we weren't sure how it was going to work. There was also a couple of small logistical things like having meetings during the peak of the pandemic. How do we figure stuff like that out? How do we navigate compliance? How do we make sure we're not getting in trouble?

All of those smaller things that we didn't really anticipate. In my head, it was, sort of, like, make a website and boom, done. When it's-- that is not what happened. So in that year, there was a ton of small and large things that, kind of, I wouldn't say derailed us, but, sort of, reframed what it is exactly that we're doing and how we're going to go about it. So, yes. A lot more than I thought at the beginning.

You are a gifted graphic designer. Are you in charge of the design of the website, and do you get to put your talent to use in that area?

Yeah. So I did design the website. The Chapel Hill branch, the original *UNCUT*, shared a template with me, and I ended up reworking most of it and taking a lot of those elements out. Kind of, repurposing them. But they gave me a basic template to work on a website. They built this site.

But we do have another graphic designer whose name is Jack. And he's a first year here who is spearheading that. I have set visually what the things are going to look like. So the, sort of, overall identity of *UNCUT at UVA* I did establish, but with a lot of help, of course. But he actually does the implementation. And the actual designing in the day-to-day, I don't do that. If you need help, I will happily help him. But he's, kind of, running point on that.

I have no doubt that fellow student athletes will be among those who read these stories and identify with a lot of what's said. You're also hoping to reach the portion of the student body that's not involved in athletics to maybe show that you are not a one-dimensional group and that there's more to you and more to your stories than just sports.

Yeah, that would be the goal. We do have a couple members of our team like Jackson, who I just mentioned, a couple of others, who are not student athletes. They are students here, but they're not athletes who are involved and who have been really great in helping us bridge that gap. I think one of our-- one of many, but one of our larger objectives is to bridge that gap in a sense and be able to, yes, be a community among athletes, but a community that touches other facets of the university, including the non-student athlete population, including administration, including parents. There is no real target demographic here, just humans. And I think that's been pretty important to us. How do we navigate that and how do we spread the word beyond our immediate circle is definitely the goal.

In February, you were one of three student athletes from UVA named as recipients of the Weaver-James-Corrigan scholarships from the ACC. The others were Courtlyne Caskin from women's lacrosse and Owayne Owens from men's track and field. The award is worth \$6,000 to each of you and it goes to seniors who quote, "have performed with distinction in both the classroom and their respective sport, while demonstrating exemplary conduct in the community," end quote. First, congrats on the scholarship.

Thank you.

This is your fourth year at UVA. I know you have a number of things going on academically in terms of majors, minors. Where are you academically in terms of the degrees you're pursuing?

Yeah, so I'm in my last semester of my undergraduate degree. So in May I will graduate. And then I'll be here the following year doing a master's program, which I started last fall. So I'm in a little bit of a transition period. So last semester, I took one class from a master's program and this semester I'm taking others for it. So it's, sort of, like, a four plus one, kind of, program. Because I'm obviously, already a student here, it's, kind of, easier to seamlessly integrate both the undergraduate and graduate program at the same time. So I'm finishing my undergrad, but also starting my master's program.

OK, your bachelor's degree will be in what? Media studies?

Media studies and American studies.

OK. So you've got a double major. You also have a minor, right, in--

Yes. Social entrepreneurship, which is in the Batten School.

OK. And then your masters will be in--

Media studies as well.

All right. Whenever your soccer career is done-- under basically, the, what do you want to do when you grow up, question?

[CHUCKLES]

How much time do you have for me to answer?

[LAUGHTER]

I think in an ideal world, if I could pick my dream job, it would be something in an ad agency setting. I've always really been interested in advertising, I think, since I was younger. I think people turn the TV off and mute it when the ads come on. I've always been someone that's like, make it louder, I want to watch. So I've always really gravitated towards advertising. A lot of the stuff I do study now in undergrad is, sort of, marketing is advertising related. So I think that foundation has been laid. And I don't know what my ideal job title would be, but I know that's the industry that I want to end up in. And I've done a couple of internships and things to, sort of, help me parse through that.

You have been, and perhaps still are, a fellow in the Meriwether Lewis Institute for Citizen Leadership. Is that an ongoing deal?

Yes, it is. So the bulk of it was in the summer previously, but it's an ongoing thing. And actually, one of the people I've mentioned who's a part of *UNCUT* who is not a student athlete, I met her through MLI, and she's been awesome. So it was a really great experience for me. And I think I met a ton of people that I would have never met in any other capacity. And that's, sort of, like, what I was saying before.

It's been important, especially with *UNCUT*, to figure out how to reach these groups. And I think from just a personal standpoint, that was a really cool experience to meet people and interact with people. Yes, it was primarily through Zoom, but meet and interact with people who now I do see in person that I would have never met. And those are leaders from across grounds. Whether those are people that are in student council or have their own student group. It was just a really wide range of diverse folks which is really cool.

You have hosted a podcast with your soccer teammate, Claire Constant. You did an internship with Morgan Stanley. You're a marketing research assistant at the Darden School. You represent the women's soccer team on the student athletics advisory committee. Those are just a few of your non-- really non-soccer activities. When you arrived at UVA out of high school, were you always planning to be this involved with things or did it--

No, not at all. One of my bigger, I wouldn't say complaints, but one of the things that I regretted after my first year is that I wish I knew what was available to me when I first got here and clubs I can join or things I could do. Because I just really had no idea. I think that's also why *UNCUT* has been really important to me, is I really like the idea of creating a space for people to be a part of something that they can really do anything. And anyone that's approached me about asking, my first question has always been, what do you want to do and how can we make that fit for you?

Like, one of the guys who does photos mentioned that he might be interested in learning some videography, kind of, stuff. So we let him basically do whatever he wants. So I wish that there was a clearer roadmap for me. And I think that infrastructure is a lot more well established now, or maybe it was there and I just didn't find it. But when I first came here, I really had no idea what was available to me. And I had little initiative to go out and find it. And that developed later on for me.

And now it's something I'm very intentional about. I think something like the ACC post-grad scholarship was really exciting to me and I really appreciated that recognition because I do try to be relatively holistic and I put myself on being able to do things beyond go to class and go to soccer. So it's a newer thing, but it's something that I definitely am very intentional about or have grown to be very intentional about in the latter half of my tenure.

So what do you do for fun when you're not--

Sleep. [GIGGLING]

Sleep? [CHUCKLES] There you go. You have represented the United States at the U16 and U20 levels. I know when I interviewed you last year, or maybe it was 2020, for an article, you said that you'd love to one day play for the senior national team. Has the injury changed anything about your feelings for soccer? Do you miss the game more than you thought you would? Do you--

I definitely do. I wouldn't say it's changed any of my goals, really, but it's changed how far forward I think. Right now it's very difficult. Nine months plus is a long time to conceptualize at the beginning. So when I first got hurt, the end was like, oh, that's a myth. I don't even know what that will look like. So I don't really-- when it comes to soccer right now, it's hard for me to think super far in advance just because I'm very focused on my rehab right now.

So it's hard for me to articulate clearly what my long-term goals are because it's just hard to really see at this current moment. But I will definitely say, I miss playing more than I-- I wouldn't even say more than I thought I would because I never really thought that this would happen, to be completely honest. But I've been reminded of how much I like playing, just in how much I've missed it. But I wouldn't say that's necessarily surprising or anything. It's just-- it just is.

UVA continues to pursue its first NCAA title in women's soccer year in year out. It's one of the nation's best programs. I'm going to proceed with the assumption that you will be back with the team in pre-season and playing this fall. What-- obviously, there were some significant losses with Deonna moving on. But you return a lot of talent too. What are your thoughts on what will be your, I guess, your fifth, the fifth team you've played on at UVA?

Yes. I think every year I'm always like, oh, this team's going to be so good I think I say that every year, and I always get really excited. Again, it's a little bit different for me right now just because I'm not in training every single day. But from what I do see and what I am around in film and things like that and obviously, I know these people very intimately, I think it's going to be a really good year. And I think it's an exciting time right now, especially the spring. You always get more time to really do everything, training, lifting, watching film, just getting better. So it's, kind of, a funny thing for me right now to be at a different vantage point. But at the same time, I can observe a little bit more than I ever have. So maybe I would have felt this the previous years. But right now, I just think it's an exciting time to be on this team and watch what's going on and how people develop. And I think the fall is going to be really, really good time for us. So I'm really excited. And like you said, I too am proceeding with the assumption that I will be able to play then.

Good. Well, good luck. Good luck with your rehab.

Thank you.

Good luck with your studies. The first of your-- OK, so get the first of your two degrees in a little more than a month, maybe six weeks or so. So good.

So soon. [GIGGLES]

Yeah, time flies. But anyway, thanks. Thanks for your time.

Thank you.

And look forward to seeing you back on the pitch.

Thanks so much.

All right. Take care.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

And that will do it for episode number 298. Thanks again to Todd DeSorbo and Rebecca Jarrett for joining the show. And thanks for listening. Your support is crucial. And we would appreciate your taking a minute to rate and subscribe to this podcast. Previous episodes are archived under the media button on the front page of VirginiaSports.com, which is our official website. You can also find them by searching your podcast provider for *Wahoo Central Podcast*. In recent months, we've touched on basketball, football, baseball, swimming, wrestling, lacrosse, among other sports, and there's much more to come. My stories are archived on VirginiaSports.com under the content button on the front page. And I also post links to them on Twitter where my handle is @JeffWhiteUVA. Finally, be sure to check out the UVA sports app, which has been downloaded nearly 70,000 times. It's available from Google Play or the Apple Store. We'll be back soon with another episode. Until then, enjoy the spring, and go Hoos.

[MUSIC PLAYING]