

**University of Virginia Football Media  
Conference  
Tuesday, Oct. 8, 2024  
Head Coach Tony Elliott  
Press Conference**

**TONY ELLIOTT:** I want to take a second. I've got to apologize to my man Logan Taylor (Boston College offensive lineman). I didn't realize in the heat of the moment I said the wrong last name in my postgame, a name from back, a young man that played baseball at Clemson. I said the wrong last name.

He came up gave me a big hug. It's been bothering me since then. I didn't realize it in the moment.

I want to take a second because Logan was a great representative when he was here, chose to go be closer to family. He was doing a great job for them.

So Logan I want to apologize for saying the last name. No ill intent. Wish you the best the rest of the way. I feel like I needed to do that. It was one of those honest mistakes. I know how I am about my name. I wanted to apologize before I started.

**Q. Andre Greene, first of all, as a high school recruit, highly sought after. Can you talk about him development wise what could you pull out of him? And what's been the focus you guys are trying to pull from him since he got here?**

**TONY ELLIOTT:** Prior to coming to UVA, I was aware of Andre, previous institution. Recruited him heavily. I think kind of came down, was in the top runnings. I knew a lot about him. I think the biggest thing for us is he needed opportunity. He just didn't have a ton of opportunities at his previous institution. So with the combination of what we knew coming out of high school, there was a limited footage to really go off of, but you knew the potential was there. He just needed an opportunity.

When he showed up here, you could see that there's a ton of talent. Just needed a little bit of development. Just some time invested in understanding the playbook, also the fundamentals of the position. So those are the things we saw, just a young man that's very talented.

Once you meet him, have a chance to be around him, he's a charming young man. Great smile. Very respectful, very, very conscientious. Just needed an opportunity.

I'm happy for him to now because again coming in as a transfer is always tough. Gotta fit into a new locker room, have to learn a new system. So he's really taken to that.

He's around the building all the time. Even on his own time, he's here putting in work. Just happy to see him have success and hopefully that will breed more confidence to continue to persevere through the development process, which hopefully will develop him into an outstanding player in the future.

**Q. I think the phrase we heard a lot during the offseason was competitive depth And you see Kendren (Smith) and Trey McDonald and Andre Greene all these guys. And you see, switching, how do you evaluate that step in the process of creating –**

**TONY ELLIOTT:** I think it was critical for us but we're still in that building stage because not every position is at that competitive depth stage yet, right? We know where we are as a program.

You've got some older guys. You've still got some freshmen you're trying to grow up. So I think collectively we're better than we've been in the three years that we've been here as a staff, but still not where we desire to be because you want to have competitive depth at all positions.

It helps the guys to improve. That's really the only way you get better, to be honest with you,

is to have competitive practices. And because we have more depth we're able to be more competitive on the practice field which I think translates to more results on the field.

**Q. One thing to have one good game in an area, running or passing, but to back it up with the run game against BC, a defense of that caliber, did you learn something? Do you feel much better where that part of the game is?**

**TONY ELLIOTT:** It's a challenge week-to-week. And every game presents different opportunities. But for the guys to find, finding the second half, what I was probably most proud of in this past week's performance is that it didn't start as fast as we wanted to. Didn't have as much success offensively or defensively as we initially wanted, but they just kept fighting, and they persevered. And then they were able to have a little success and that bred more confidence which allowed them to keep pushing.

It was a defensive type of game. We knew that BC's defense is really good. And our guys, once they settle it in, made it pretty difficult on them to put together drives that ended in points. But we want to run the football. That's the mentality. That's what we desire to do. I think sometimes -- I've said this before, you can too easily get caught up in stats. For us it's being efficient, being effective. And I thought in the second half we were a lot more effective with the run game which allows us now to do more things in the pass game, play a little faster with our tempo.

There's a lot of things that come off the ability to be efficient running the football.

**Q. I asked you about Antonio Clary, do you have an update on Chris Tyree, Trell Harris or others?**

**TONY ELLIOTT:** So A.C. (Antonio Clary) is dealing with a little swelling in his knee. Got a way to get MRI and all that underway to figure out

exactly the extent of the knee. Don't anticipate that he'll be able to go this week until the swelling calms down.

Trell (Harris) is day to day. Hopeful for Trell.

And then Chris (Tyree) is dealing with kind of groin area. You want to be really, really careful with that so it doesn't progress to any type of sports hernia. So we're waiting on results from - - actually waiting on an MRI.

Unfortunately right now as a result of what's happened and transpired with the hurricane, we also got like Karson Gay's surgery was delayed because we don't have the resources available right now in town.

Really with Chris Tyree we won't know until we get the scans back. And we're going to err on the side of cause of action. I would anticipate that he wouldn't go this week. Clary wouldn't go this week. But Trell's hopeful. He's getting better every day. But for him, his is a deal that's going to bother him off and on for the rest of the season.

It just becomes more of a pain tolerance type deal with the knee.

Trying to think if there's anybody else. (Dakota) Twitty will be down this week, but we anticipate he'll be back ready to go next week.

**Q. What is Malcolm Greene's status?**

**TONY ELLIOTT:** Malcolm, last Thursday, decided that he wanted to exercise his redshirt option. And I respect the decision. Did everything the right way.

Malcolm's been a great addition to our program. Really helped establish the culture in a competitive situation. And with one season left really wanted to try to maximize that opportunity.

He's going to exercise his redshirt option and look elsewhere next year to be able to find a position that he feels like he can maximize that one year of eligibility that he has left.

But all positive. No issues there. It's just strictly a young man -- he had to wait his turn before he got here. Last year played a little bit. Was splitting some time with Corey, and I get it. I don't blame him. He's leaving on good terms. Everything is good. It's just kind of where we are in college football.

**Q. Do you have any update on Kempton Shine?**

**TONY ELLIOTT:** Kempton Shine, I anticipate he'll be back later this week. Had to get a little work on the knee, but he's progressing well. I anticipate that Shine will be back this week.

**Q. Just the message to the team, when you have success and it's about managing that success as you move forward, how do you balance that – the comeback win for Wake Forest game, high emotions. Then you have doubt from Maryland. How do you help as a coach to navigate those emotions?**

**TONY ELLIOTT:** I think there's a lot of things we try to use. We try to use every tactic and hope that one of them sticks and helps them internalize it. But the first thing we create daily focuses so we can focus on what we need to do process-wise that particular day.

We have a 24-hour rule. You celebrate it for 24 hours and then you flush it and move on to the next, because the reality is you've got to go right back to work. Sunday is a day off. And then Monday, Monday morning, 7:30, we're right back in here. And we've got to process the areas where we need to get better and turn our focus to the next opponent.

When you look at the schedule-wise, you really don't have a ton of time to stay too high. And we also talk about playing the game with emotion but not being emotional.

This is a game where it's the next snap. You have to be able to compartmentalize and move on quickly. That's kind of the mentality that we try to establish.

We use a lot of different motivational videos. At times I feel like they probably get tired of just hearing Coach Elliott say it. I try to get people that they recognize, sports figures, anybody out there that's kind of reiterating the message.

So we try to help them just compartmentalize so they can focus on the work, because at the end of the day that feeling that you get to feeling in the locker room after the game is a result of how committed to the process were you throughout the course of the week to be able to play your best football for three hours so that you can experience those 15 minutes or so of joy. And then you start right back over.

It's actually not as glamorous as people may think. You have to be very regimented. It's falling in love with the mundane, to be honest with you. That's what we're trying to establish, and that's what produces the results.

If you focus strictly on the outcome, you'll shortchange yourself and shortchange the process. And then you won't be able to replicate the outcomes consistently. That's how we try to get these guys to think.

**Q. With the thinner secondary, what's the challenge this week? Especially with Louisville's passing attack, 14<sup>th</sup> in the country in passing yards.**

**TONY ELLIOTT:** You had to remind me there. I appreciate it. They're very good. Very well coached. Very fast. Everything is coordinated offensively from the timing to the offensive line sets, all of it is great and coordinated.

The biggest thing for us is the guys getting their opportunity, they've got to be ready. It's all about preparation. So eye discipline -- eye discipline, formation recognition, understanding

situations, and then trusting your preparation so that you can play fast because they have speed all over the field.

Their quarterback, man, he'll pick you apart. Very accurate, can throw it from the pocket. He can throw on the run. And then he also makes a lot of the off-platform throws and different arm angles, like, how did he get that ball to that guy?

We're going to have to prepare well. Our guys are going to have to do a great job of studying so that they can process things quickly. And then they've got to trust their training and they've got to play fast.

**Q. You've had several Ivy League transfers the last couple of years. I know that (inaudible) athletic arena, and Kendren (Smith), (Paul) Akere and Tyler Neville, has their intelligence helped them make the transition from FCS to FBS?**

**TONY ELLIOTT:** I think the first thing is socially it helps them and academically it helps them because they've already been in that environment. So you can take that piece out of the equation. So any anxiety related with that they already are kind of ahead of the game. When you look at those guys, they were high-performing, high-functioning football players in the Ivy League. They already had evidence that they were able to take care of business in the classroom. But then also football does come pretty easy to those guys.

I think it starts with the character that they have. They're able to make the transition socially and academically. And then their body of work illustrates to us that they have the capacity from a football standpoint to make that transition pretty quickly.

**Q. Ben Smiley is a guy that's been in the program for a long time. He talked to the team last week, just what was his message -- and it's also unique him and Antonio are the only guys**

**who have gone to a bowl game in this program. How much do you lean on them?**

**TONY ELLIOTT:** Ben will be mad at me for me sharing this because he was kind of sentimental with the guys. He told them that he loved them, he loved being a part of this team. He felt like this team, very similar to the 2019 team that had success, that if we stay focused and we stay committed we can have a potentially similar experience.

Told them to cherish the moment because it goes by fast. And he's committed to doing everything he needs to do to help this team experience the postseason like the 2019 team.

**Q. With the offensive line, the sacks allowed is down compared to last year, three something last year, 1.6 this year per game. What's the key? Are you guys doing anything differently that's helping the O line or is it just those guys, maybe the maturity?**

**TONY ELLIOTT:** I think it's the combination, maturity. You look at the sacks last week, one of them is on the quarterback. He's scrambling, if he throws the ball away we have one sack in the game.

I think the guys are maturing. The quarterbacks are protecting themselves a little bit better. I think it's just more maturity and those guys playing together and committed to the preparation so that the communication is where it needs to be.

And then Anthony does help being back there because he can get them out of some situations. And then also he's doing a better job of making sure that we don't just take unnecessary sacks by getting rid of the ball or pulling it down and running.

**Q. You touched on the Louisville passing game they're ranked I think No. 8 in the country in explosive plays, 20-330 yards. What makes them so good at it? Is it just the other teams --**

**TONY ELLIOTT:** No, they're really good. They're efficient. They're fast. The running backs are really good. They find the creases. And then they can hit the creases. And then they break tackles and they can go. So they've got a lot of juice, as we say in our meetings at the running back position.

And their wideouts are extremely fast and they can also make contested plays down the field. If you get the ball and their tight ends, their tight ends can really run.

They've got great team speed. And the quarterback, he's an experienced guy. He looks very comfortable in the system. He gets the ball to the playmakers. And then he's got the ability to run, too.

I think the first play of the Notre Dame game, he pulls it on a zone-read concept or (inaudible) design read, but he goes for about 50 himself. So I think it's a combination of the system and then they do a great job of -- they challenge you too because they play in multiple personnels.

They give you a lot of different sets. They challenge your discipline. They also challenge your toughness because they'll come right downhill at you. And then they've got great skill and tight ends that can really roll.

If you're a step late, a play that may be designed, a shallow crosser for a 5- or 6-yard gain, and if they catch you in the right coverage and they break a tackle, then they're going for a long win.

I think it's a combination of the scheme, the players and then you can see that the guys that they have just have a knack for -- there's certain guys you can watch on tape and see like he's got it, he's got that "it" factor where he knows how to make a big play.

**Q. Antonio Clary brings so many intangibles that you can't clone. How do you help Caleb Hardy come in and a player still have that impact? Where have you seen him develop?**

**TONY ELLIOTT:** You use Antonio Clary to help. And like today, he was on the back end like a coach. And I split my time between watching the defense and offense. Standing back there with him, he's coaching every play. He's helping

Caleb and helping mentor, helping those young guys understand where their eyes need to be, what they can do on certain particular calls, when they can drive on routes, when they've got to stay on top of routes.

So I think that's the first thing is Antonio staying engaged, which he'll obviously do because he loves those guys on the back end. Takes a lot of pride.

And those guys have got to put in the work, which you'll see. And then hopefully that translates to being able to produce on the field. And Caleb played a lot of football for us last year, too. Hopefully it doesn't take long for him to kind of get back in the groove. And he's played more snaps the last couple of games than early in the season.

Hopefully it's the combination of him seizing the moment, his opportunity, and then leaning on the leadership and guidance from Clary.

**Q. (Anthony) Colandrea played well last year in that game both running and passing. Are there things you can look back at last year and use again because it's the same defense, similar personnel for Louisville? Or do you think they'll know exactly what to look for?**

**TONY ELLIOTT:** They've had time to study themselves, just like we have. So there's going to be some things that are part of your DNA. So there will be things that will be carryover. And the challenge is just getting your calls matched up against the best defensive look. And that you can't predict that with 100 percent accuracy. There will be some things that will carry over. But also, too, we've got to lean on the things that we've been doing well, protect him with any tendencies that we've created.

So there will be a little bit of combination of studying last year, but a lot of it will be based off the body of work from this year. And now you've got five games or so in to really study your opponent.

**Q. You talked about the before the season, cross training some guys in the slot, now Suderian (Harrison) and Chris (Tyree). And I know Kam (Courtney) played a lot there. Are there other guys able to play that position?**

**TONY ELLIOTT:** So you've got Kam (Courtney) and Jaden (Gibson) is having to roll there. Obviously Tyler (Neville) will take some of the pressure off because he can do some of those things there in the slot. But you've got to use all of those guys. And formationally you can move guys around and get them into that position.

So we're not quite as one dimensional last year like we were last year with Malik (Washington) in the slot. We got more bodies that can take off some of the load until we get (inaudible) until we get Chris back.

Suderian (Harrison) is day to day. He practiced today. Hopefully by the end of the week he'll be feeling good enough to maybe give it a go.

**Q. How about the Tony Muskett off the bench the other day, got you in field goal range.**

**TONY ELLIOTT:** Big play.

**Q. Were you surprised, any hesitation throwing the ball in that situation?**

**TONY ELLIOTT:** No, going back to preseason camp and just how competitive the competition was and then watching him every day in practice and then seeing him sit right here in the front row and lead from his position, no question at all.

We gave him -- because he earned it -- the 12th man award. We don't make that play right there, then things could have been different.

No surprise. Kind of that's who he is. I know in the event that there is a situation that he needs to go in the game, he's going to be ready.

**Q. You mentioned Suderian (Harrison) I was reminded about (Dre) Walker, where's he at?**

**TONY ELLIOTT:** I think he's about another week away or so from being ready to roll. Just kind of bone bruising, gotta let it heal up. But he's back moving around a little bit. I anticipate another week or so he'll be ready to roll.

**Q. In 12 personnel you would like to have more depth at tight end. Where is John Rogers? Whate have you seen the development?**

**TONY ELLIOTT:** John Rogers is ready to roll. And John Rogers came in showing signs of like this young guy could be a young guy that could contribute and then he has a hamstring. He's down a little bit.

He's back now healthy ready to roll. And so he'll be, as we said, called up to the big leagues this week. But he's a competitor, smart kid, tough, fast.

Biggest thing for him is he's playing in a position where there's a lot going on. So getting up to speed will be the biggest challenge for him because when he was down with the hamstring for a couple of weeks, obviously he wasn't -- I wouldn't say as engaged -- he was focusing more on his recovery and rehab and not necessarily on the actual game plans because you've got to get the guys ready that are going to go.

**Q. There is only so many touches to go around, ideally would you like to get the ball to Xavier (Brown) more than five times in a game?**

**TONY ELLIOTT:** Ideally you would. Again, at that position it's who gets the hot hand. I think early on we didn't have a ton of plays early in the game just because we were three-and-out a couple of times and trying to establish the run.

And different calls have different personnel packages. But yes he's a guy that we want to get involved more in the right situations. So, do we have an ideal number for him? No, but I anticipate that he'll have more than five touches. And he's a guy that needs more than five touches because each time he touches it, you're seeing that he has the ability to have a big play.

**Q. Jeff Brohm was complaining the other day that the opponent the last couple of weeks off to fast starts and its put them behind the eight ball so to speak. Does that impact the way you look at things when you scout them in terms of maybe how you script plays to try to maybe take advantage of that?**

**TONY ELLIOTT:** Great question. I think for us, the way we script plays is to try to get off to a fast start regardless of who we're playing. I anticipate that they're going to try and get those things corrected that didn't allow them to get off to a fast start.

When you script your plays, you're trying to get your team off to a fast start. I don't know if you looked for anything in particular to say other than if there's something glaring on the tape to say, here's something that's repetitive. But a lot of times it's not anything repetitive. It's kind of different things. So when we've gotten off to a slow start, it hasn't been the same thing each time.

So it's typically something different. But each time you start a game, you want to have kind of like an opening script type thoughts to kind of get your guys going fast.

I think you focus more on what you're doing as opposed to what they're doing. But we've also got to be able to ready to react in case they do something that's different.