

University of Virginia Men's Basketball Media Conference

Monday, March 24, 2025

Charlottesville, Virginia, USA

ERICH BACHER: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen and members of the media. My name is Erich Bacher, Associate AD for Communications.

On behalf of Director of Athletics Carla Williams, President Jim Ryan, and Rector Robert Hardie, it's my pleasure to welcome you to John Paul Jones Arena for this exciting day for the University of Virginia men's basketball program and the entire UVA community.

Here is today's schedule of events. First, Carla will introduce our new Dean and Markel Families Men's Head Basketball Coach Ryan Odom. Second, we'll have a quick photo opportunity before Coach Odom gives his opening statement. Then we'll follow that by questions from the media.

At the conclusion of the press conference, Carla will be available for one-on-one interviews off the stage.

Now here we go. Fresh off of our 35th National Championship and 5th consecutive NCAA swimming and diving title, it's now time to welcome our leader, Carla Williams.

CARLA WILLIAMS: Thanks, Erich, and welcome to all of you. Thank you for being here with us today for this very special introduction.

I'd be remiss if I didn't also mention that Coach Dave Odom is here with us today. So thank you, Coach, for being here with us today.

We began this journey in October with a clear understanding of and an appreciation for its significance. Hiring a coach that fits UVA, a coach with character, integrity, and emphasis on academics and care for our players -- all of these traits will always be non-negotiable at UVA.

But there was another foundational goal that guided every decision along the way: winning championships.

Before I introduce Coach Odom, I have a few people to thank. This was a complete team effort. Thank you first to Rector Robert Hardie and the Board of Visitors, as well as the Virginia Athletics Foundation's Board and President Rachel Sheridan, Executive

Director Kevin Miller, the staff, and especially to our donors whose generosity gives us the opportunity to compete for championships on an annual basis.

President Ryan, we could not have gotten our coach without you, without your engagement, your support, and your leadership. Thank you.

I'm appreciative of every single staff member in the athletics department that played a role in helping us get here today with Coach Odom, but there are three that I want to thank especially. I want to express my gratitude to Wally Walker. He's in here somewhere.

Barry Parkhill.

And our COO/CFO Steve Pritzker, who's over here behind the cheerleaders.

Thank you to the three of you for countless, and I mean countless, hours of work spent on this process since October. Sincerely appreciate you guys. Thank you.

Lastly, I'd like to acknowledge and thank Tony Bennett and Ron Sanchez. Under Tony's leadership over the past 15 years, Tony, Ron, and many others are responsible for the national prominence we enjoy today for our men's basketball program, including the 2019 National Championship. We love you, and we thank you.

Coach Odom. A proven winner as a coach, an amazing person, and I know he looks like a cool customer on the sidelines, but he is a fierce competitor, who routinely leads his teams to championships.

As the search came to a conclusion, there was one deeply rooted value remaining to address: Who can we entrust with the legacy of this program that has been shaped by the blood, sweat, and tears of so many who made this one of the nation's premier men's basketball programs? Who could we entrust with that legacy? Who could we trust with Virginia men's basketball?

Please join me in welcoming the Dean and Markel Families Men's Head Basketball Coach, Ryan Odom.

RYAN ODOM: Wow, amazing. Thank you, President Ryan, Robert, Carla. Thank you for the way that you handled this entire process, the respect that you gave it. There are many folks in our business that could be standing right here, and I appreciate the opportunity to be the one to do it, and I'm humbled to be here.

Before I start talking to you, I want to get these guys right here [2024-25 Men's Basketball players] to stand up. Stand up, fellas.

I know that we're all so proud of them and what they were able to do this season.

Carla mentioned Ron, the staff, Jason, Orlando, Brad, others that were there day in and day out in what we all know is a very difficult situation with Coach Bennett retiring. Nobody obviously expected that, and we're all in awe of him in general and the man that he is, the coach that he is, the person that he is.

We obviously at VCU scrimmaged these guys right at the beginning of the season in a really hard time. I remember walking out of here just feeling for what they were going through. To be able to watch them grow over the course of the season and do their absolute best every day and stand up for one another every single day was really impressive for me to watch.

The staff that coached here for that many years, the people that gave everything to this place, I'm so thankful for everything that they did over the course of the 15 years together. The championships, certainly the National Championship obviously stands out, but I'm totally honored and humbled to be the coach here now.

I can't thank Carla enough, President Ryan enough for that meeting that we had that day. It was evident to me that this was going to be the right place for me.

We all have times in our life where God opens and closes doors. For me personally, I was at complete peace with whatever God decided. The door was going to be opened for me to come here and there was going to be an offer, or it was going to be closed and I was going to stay over at VCU.

Sometimes we wonder in life -- the door closes on you, and we wonder, why on earth did that happen? Usually later on you figured out why that door closed on you. I'm so glad this door opened.

I walk through that door with enthusiasm. I walk through that door with passion, with humility, with a desire to help continue to build this place, and that's really what it's all about to me. This place has existed long before Ryan Odom. This place has existed before Tony Bennett.

My relationship with this place started in 1982, when Coach Holland had lost Coach Littlepage. He left to become the head coach at University of Pennsylvania. He had an opening on his staff. He asked an old friend to come work for him, and they both decided to drive and meet halfway. Dad was the coach at East Carolina at the time, and they decided to meet in Clarksville right on the border. Isn't that where it was?

It might have been -- what was it, a truck stop? Who knows, but you were eating. I have no idea what you guys were doing, but only you two could figure out that place to chance meet there.

So two friends sat there and talked about what could be and what both wanted to have happen. I was in third grade at the time. And Dad decided to bring his family to Charlottesville. Lane and I moved up with my lovely mother, who everybody loves, Lynn

Odom, and we moved to Charlottesville and started a new life. I had no idea as a third grader what a joy it was going to be and how charmed of a life I was getting ready to live.

As luck would have it, there was a house two doors down from the Hollands that was going for sale right over on Morris road right near St. Anne's. There was no air conditioning back then. I don't know what the deal with that was. We had to put the units in because Dad couldn't stand the heat. We ended up moving up here two doors down from the Hollands, and thus began an amazing friendship.

I have two sisters in Kate and Ann-Michael, that I grew up with here. This is the place that I fell in love with basketball. This is the place where I was shaped in so many ways by the former players, the former coaches.

My father shared an office with Jim Larranaga. Their desks basically faced one another. Jay Larranaga, their son, who's coaching in the NBA now, used to go to their house and have popcorn. Coach L. would always put on some movie, and we would hang out and have a sleepover there.

More than anything, Coach Holland allowed me and the others to be part of something so special. We used to sit on Ralph's [Sampson] knee. I used to sit on the sideline during practice with Jeff Jones as a little kid and dribble between my legs, and he would talk to me.

I watched not only the men's team practice -- and they would get after it every day. You learned the value of hard work and togetherness and intensity. There were times where they would get angry with one another, which is what happens. That's what winners do. They compete.

But then they would put it aside, and they would be teammates because they knew what their goal was. Their goal was to win championships. Their goal was to make a Final Four. Their goal was to hopefully push and one day win a National Championship. And it's happened here at UVA. It's happened here.

Going back to Coach Holland, I used to -- we would walk over. He allowed me to walk with Dad and him to the games. So we would walk across that bridge, go into the well, and then they would go at it with Dean Smith and Lefty Driesell and Jim Valvano, and a young Coach K. and all the greats that coached in the ACC.

Then I got old enough that I became a ball boy. How crazy is that? I was a ball boy. I used to sit behind the opposing team's bench, so I was literally giving water to the opposing team's players and had a window into the huddles, which was crazy. I don't even think we have ball boys anymore, do we? No.

For me, it was just an amazing, amazing childhood, and I'm thankful for Coach Holland, I'm thankful for the decision that you made to bring us up here, Dad. And, Mom, you for agreeing to go along on this ride.

I've got the same group of people that are helping me and have been with me. My wife Lucy, I would not be here if it wasn't for her willingness to go on this journey with me. We've moved a lot of times, too many to recall, but along the way we have come across so many great people. That's what basketball does for you. That's what universities do for you. And I've worked at some great ones.

I'm so thankful to be home here at UVA. I'm motivated to help continue to build this place and hopefully return it to greatness, and I couldn't be more humbled and thankful and grateful to be here. I walk through that door grateful. There's no question about it.

I do want to take a second to thank Ed McLaughlin at VCU as well, who gave me a chance to come back to the commonwealth and coach that team and coach those great players and those great young men that we had at VCU.

That was a hard day the other day telling them that I was leaving, and it's a part of life. It's a part of life. I'm thankful for the two years that two friends were able to spend together and thankful that we were able to cut down nets together. Certainly I want to do that here with all of you.

Thank you for being so good to me as a child, those that were here at the time, and I'm looking forward to meeting everyone, new people that are here. Our students are so important to the overall health of this program. Our donors and boosters and fans are so important to the health of this program.

I can't wait to walk out of that tunnel with our team to a packed house on that first night. Then when the victory happens, to get the Old Song going, to put our arms around one another and get ready for the next one.

Thank you. It's an honor to be here. Looking forward to getting to know everybody. I'm excited to talk to you as well. Sorry it was so long, but go Hoos.

Q. Earlier today you referred to it as a full circle moment. What does it mean to look out here and see so many of Coach Holland's former players and other people you met when you were just a boy in Charlottesville?

RYAN ODOM: Yeah, obviously I talked a little about that just a second ago. It means everything to me. I'm extremely blessed to be here.

To have a front seat to watching so many highly successful people work together as a youngster was a blessing for me. A lot of them went on to play, continue to play in the NBA and at other professional levels, but so many of them have gone on to do great things outside of basketball.

That's really what it's all about is helping these young people at a key time in their lives continue to grow, and our job is to mentor them. Certainly that part will never change. They are all the same age. No matter the climate change that has happened in college athletics, these young people still need us, and they need the adults to be there for them.

Certainly Coach Holland, Coach Bennett, Coach Jones, all the former coaches that have coached here, that hasn't changed from coach to coach. This place is about values. This place is about growth. This place is about education and doing it the right way. That's not going to change.

Q. 16 years ago Tony Bennett sat here and shared the philosophy that his dad taught him in building a program that would last. Would you share your thoughts on what you learned from Dave about building a program that would last? Part two, what does it mean to have Dave here with you today?

RYAN ODOM: It means everything. The fact that Mom and Dad and Lane, certainly my two boys, Connor and Owen, and Lucy are able to witness this is so special.

My mom, I want to talk about her for a second before I answer that question because, when the Wahoos were out of town and they had the road game against Carolina or they were down at NC State or Georgia Tech, my mom would get in the car and take me up to Wintergreen. That's how I learned to ski.

She was unbelievable at -- if you really think about it, as a parent, the key time in a child's life is exactly the moment that I was here, from third grade to ninth grade. When I was here, that's the time that you really spend with your parents, and they help shape you, and they help you mature. Then all of a sudden, you get into high school, and you start doing this a little bit to your parents. Then it's off to college and then you can't get those moments back.

What I'll say about my parents is they both were active participants in my childhood. They were there for me. They were there for my brother every single day. I'm thankful for you two and the guidance and the love because ultimately it comes down to love.

How does that translate to a team? Well, my job is to love my players, whether a guy is scoring 18 a game or he never gets in the game. My job is to help them grow. My job is to help them become men. My job is to challenge them and tell them when they're wrong. My job is to be there for them when they're down and help build them back up because we all have adversity, we all go through it, every one of us. And how you respond to it, there's no better lesson than that, the Virginia lesson, that united pursuit that has happened here. There's no better lesson than that.

I'm just really thankful that I'm a part of it now, that I get to continue to share in that lesson. Life's not perfect. It's rocky. It's a roller coaster. There's a lot on these kids

nowadays with the social media and things they have to deal with. So as their coaches, we have to be there for them.

Dad was always there for his players. When Dad was sick last year, most of you don't know, but he had heart surgery this time last year, and we almost thought we lost him. I remember being in the hospital, and at that point in time, Dad had turned 80 a year before, and my brother and I decided to put a book together for him.

He didn't know it was happening, and I don't know how we had time to do it, but Lane and I forged on and went through all the stops, all the places that he coached, and reached out to the former coaches that he coached with and all the players that he coached over the years and had them write something for his 80th birthday. Lucy had helped me and Lane put the book together.

I can't tell you how much he cried and still looks at that book and reads what all the people that impacted his life, and obviously he impacted their life, over the course of his time in coaching, and he's still got that sitting right beside his desk in his back office, and he'll cherish that for the rest of his life.

That's what coaching is all about. It's about relationships. It's about being on a team. There's nothing better than being on a team. It's the closest thing to a family.

For me personally, to be a part of the Virginia community, Charlottesville community and this team, because it's going to take all of us to continue to build this place, and my parents were great examples.

Q. Ryan, your move to Utah State then your move to VCU, what did you learn about building a roster, putting it together in this kind of time period? And what are the NIL resources here at Virginia that makes you believe you can be competitive?

RYAN ODOM: There's no question, certainly in this day and age, NIL matters. The revenue share obviously is happening and a real thing.

Virginia, in talking with Carla and talking with President Ryan, the goals are very simple. We want to be top 10 in the country. In order to do that, you have to have the resources. Certainly that's where we're at right now.

What did I learn at Utah State? Utah State obviously it was a bit out of network for me personally. What a challenge to go to a place that's an unfamiliar place and try to do it.

One of the reasons that I went out there was the steep tradition that has existed there forever. You can Google it. You can look online. Just Google the Spectrum. Spectrum magic is real. It's packed every night. The students there care about the university.

So I wanted to coach at a place where people really were married to the basketball program and really cared about it. What I found there was exactly what I'm going to find here. The former players, it's a brotherhood. It's a true brotherhood.

When I left and went to VCU, that was an opportunity -- obviously I was familiar with VCU and the steep tradition there, the Final Four, Shaka, and certainly Anthony Grant, Mike Rhodes, Will Wade, all of those coaches that have come before me, Jeff Capel, even before that. There's so many great coaches at VCU, and the standard is the standard. The expectation is to win championships.

So those two jobs, no doubt, I feel very prepared to take on what everyone knows is a daunting task, following Coach Bennett, following a legend. I'll be honest. I'm at peace with that. I'm not afraid of it. I wouldn't be standing here if I was afraid of it. I'm excited about it, and I'm going to need him, quite honestly.

I called him the other day, and we had a great conversation. He's very happy right now. He said to me, he said, yeah, we were watching your game against BYU the other night, and I asked Laurel, I said, do I have more gray hair than him? And Laurel said, yes, you do. And he said, you just wait. You just wait until he gets in that chair, and he's right, it's coming.

But I'm not afraid of the pressure. I'm not afraid of that. As a coach and a competitor, that's where you want to be. You want to be right in it. You want to be able to stand toe to toe with whoever you're going against and do your best, and there's no question that we're going to do that here.

Q. Gazing around the crowd, I saw Griff, I saw Matt.

RYAN ODOM: Yes!

Q. What can you tell us about the composition of your staff?

RYAN ODOM: Similar to -- I will say I'm so thankful, I would not be standing here if it wasn't for all the former players that I've been fortunate enough to coach, certainly as a head coach starting at Lenoir-Rhyne University. Neill McGeachy is the first one to give me my first opportunity as a coach, my first head coaching job.

Then Tim Hall at UMBC obviously gave me my first Division I head coaching job. Obviously walked into a situation where there was very little hope, seven straight 20-loss seasons, and it was a daunting task, a different scenario than this, right?

Then Utah State was a little bit of a flyer. John Hartwell, I love that guy with all my heart. He gave me a chance to go out there and do that. My staff has been with me every time, every time.

VCU, and what I found there, the coolest thing about VCU to me was I had my staff go from UMBC to Utah State and then Utah State all the way to VCU. I thought it was really important that I had guys from the VCU family join me there and join our staff there.

To watch -- I told them this the other day. To watch Darius Theus and Bradford Burgess, who played in the Final Four -- I would add Ahmad Thomas because he was new in that. Although he didn't play there, he was a great player at UNC Asheville. To watch them integrate and become a team with our staff was a great example for our team at VCU. It was incredible. They were connected every single day, and they were a big reason why we had the success that we had.

It's going to happen here too. It's really important that we do the same thing here.

I'll go back to how I started this with Coach Holland and Dad. I always felt that my time with Griff was cut short at UMBC. He left after two years and went on to become the head coach at Longwood. It's well documented the success that he had there -- two NCAA Tournaments, graduates, the way that he ran his program. So proud of him.

He didn't have the training that I had along the way. I was fortunate enough to watch a lot of other people do it. He had two years, think about that. Two years and then he had to take over a program. That's pretty scary, if you think about it. I know I would have been scared.

The fact that he was able to -- and his staff and his players were able to win like they did was really incredible. So now there was no question that, if I was able, if this door was opened for me, that I was going to ask him to come. He and Julie and his family to come here with us.

This place means so much to him as well, and I'm excited that we get to do it again together as friends. He knows all of my staff already and has worked with some of them, Bryce Crawford, and shared an office with him. So I'm so thankful that my staff's going to be able to join us here and excited about new members as well that we'll continue to announce at some point.

Q. I'm just wondering have you had conversations with current players about where they stand in terms of opportunities with the team? And if you have to build through the portal, what do you look for when you're recruiting the portal?

RYAN ODOM: Good question. I think the first thing was we had a meeting with the guys two nights ago. Was it two nights ago? Man, this thing's running together. It was two nights ago.

This is the second time in this climate that I've done this. What I've encouraged these guys to do is to be themselves. The best way to get to know one another is to have conversations, individual conversations, and then get on the court.

Right before we came up here, these guys did a workout for 30 minutes with our staff. Kyle Guy was out there, Zay was out there, Chase was out there, Coach Curtis was out there, Ethan's around. Like they're all out there working, getting in the gym, doing what they do.

I'm really proud of these guys and excited to begin to meet with them over the next week, and it's not something that we want to rush. One thing that I told these guys is there's no judgment. There's no judgment if you put your name in the portal. That's okay. Because I made this decision, because this situation is what it is, they have to figure out what's best for them.

We have to figure out -- obviously they understand we have to figure out what's best for UVA and this program going forward. But my job is to communicate and find out why did you choose Virginia? What do you like about this place? Ultimately, we'll have to come to a decision, do they want to stay? Do they want to find another situation? There are no hard feelings.

Initially, we're going to do our best to continue training them, helping them in this intermediate time. Ultimately, we have to prepare. We have to prepare to put together a championship roster and one that we're all going to be proud of, and we have to get to work once it's done.

It is challenging when you have a coaching change. The best thing you can do or hear sometimes is I'm staying. The other best thing that you could hear is, quickly, I know what I'm doing. I'm going somewhere else. This is the place that I think I'm going to go to, or these are the two schools that I'm going to look at.

Again, there's no judgment. These guys understand, there's no judgment from us, and we want what's best for each of them, whether that's staying here or finding a new opportunity. That's part of transitions, and we understand that. But our job is to continue to every day come in here and chip away.

We have a lot. There's a to do list, and my assistants are helping with it. If there's a to do list, it's long. The days are long. Trying to respond to text messages of people that are trying to be nice, and it's not easy to do that.

Any head coach that takes a new job understands it because it happens so fast it's unlike any business out there. It's not a normal thing to leave one place one day and all of a sudden you're at another place the next day and you have all of these people looking at you, okay, now what? That's daunting.

So you just have to chip away, and that's what we're doing. Certainly the connection with the former players, connection, most importantly, with these guys is paramount. Connection with our donors is huge. Just learning, learning Virginia again.

Sorry I'm so long. Dad, I got it from you. My bad.

Q. There's been a photo floating around of you, I think as a 12-year-old, in U Hall in all your UVA gear. It's been floating around for a month or so, I think. Maybe people were just envisioning this happening. One, what do you think that 12-year-old would think of this day?

RYAN ODOM: He would have never expected it, no chance, not a chance, because the 50-year-old didn't expect it either back in October. Go ahead.

Q. Two, did your parents happen to save any of that gear you were wearing that day or any of your UVA gear back from when you were a child here?

RYAN ODOM: They saved the photo. I know the photo. Ms. Holland probably remembers the photo too. I don't know if it was you or you that took the pictures, but one day that picture was for the camp brochure. They asked me to go into U Hall and dribble the ball and they were taking photos of it because they needed it for the camp brochure.

Mom obviously kept everything back then. It was a different time. I can remember going in Ms. Holland's basement and going -- she had the dark room down there, amazing photographer. She probably still has pictures of me from when I was a kid. But I can remember going into the dark room down there in the basement and seeing all the photos that she had of all of her sons, the players up there, and how special that was.

But Mom saved that photo, and it's a poster in Dad's office still to this day. So little known fact, but in the interview process when I came to meet President Ryan and Carla that day, the first -- one of the first questions was why Virginia? So I had Lucy print those two pictures. So that was -- I just put them right in front of them. Why Virginia? That's why Virginia. That's the starting point of why Virginia.

Obviously you know all the other reasons that this place is so special and why it's been so special to me.

Q. In the last decade you've come in as head coach at four different programs. What have you learned about taking over a new program, and what are you going to prioritize in your first few months of your first year here?

RYAN ODOM: It's about the people. It's about the people that you put together. Once it's settled, you go to work. That part of it is not much different from place to place. How you put the team together, how you cultivate the team, how you get them to connect with one another, how you get them to become a unit, it's core values.

It's celebrate, tolerate. That's something we do after every game. That's how you build your culture. You celebrate all the things that you know lead to winning. It's not complicated. You don't tolerate anything that leads to losing. That's the message every single day that we come in.

So I've been fortunate to be at some great programs and with some great people. I'm excited about this opportunity here to do the same. It's going to be a challenge. There's going to be good days. There's going to be bad days. So the people that you do it with is so important, and that's really what it comes down to.

All the successful organizations that are out there, the one common thread is the people. The people are connected. The people are smart. The people look after one another, and the people are competitive.

They're not afraid to think outside the box at times and make tough decisions. Certainly I know that I'm going to have to make some tough ones here no differently than I have at other places.

Q. I know short term and long term recruiting philosophy might change what's the tradition now, but what is your philosophy balancing high school recruiting and portal recruiting, and what traits do you look for?

RYAN ODOM: Character first. We have to have the right people here that fit this university. This is a great university and one where you're going to get from this place, and I want my guys to be immersed in it.

The fact that our freshmen live in the dorms with the students, I mean, that's so special. To get that college experience that first year is what it's all about, to be one of the students, and that's this place. Certainly I want to continue to make sure that we're doing our part there.

I think you have to have a healthy balance. Our recipe at VCU was get the best high school players that you could possibly get, whether they're coming straight from high school, prep school, didn't matter. Find the best players that fit your university and fit your style of play. Retain your players. There's nothing more important than retention because they understand the culture.

That's why I'm so excited about these guys right here because I know they've been taught the right way. This culture here is strong. So retention. We would not have been able to do what we did at VCU or at Utah State if we weren't able to retain our players.

Then you fill in with the transfer portal. Some years it's going to be a big change. It just is what it is. There's going to be more guys from the portal, and one-year guys are great sometimes, and I've been so fortunate with one-year guys. I've been so fortunate. There are examples at each place where I have tight relationships with these kids that had tremendous success, and our staff has tight relationships with them.

Jack Clark from VCU, prime example. Taylor Funk, Utah State, one year.

So that's really important to retain your guys, and it's really important to fill in. That's a puzzle to me. My wife is a puzzler. And a coach's job, a staff's job is to put the pieces together and make them fit and then go to work.

It's probably not going to work right away. You have to keep, oh, that's not the piece. Okay, we've got to move it over here and reshift it and shift it around. Okay, now we got it. Now we're playing. You feel it? Okay, let's go. That's coaching.

Q. Once you do have the pieces of the puzzle in place, I'm curious how would you describe your ideal style of play and your philosophies on either end of the court?

RYAN ODOM: It's been different at different places, and I think you have to -- obviously it's been well documented I love offense, right? I love offense. Coach Shaver, my college coach, is sitting back over there behind the cameras, who was an amazing mentor. I learned so much from him. Our players learned so much from him at Hampden-Sydney College. An amazing mentor, an amazing coach.

Obviously he learned from Dean Smith, one of the best to ever do it. We played fast. We played fast at Hampden-Sydney. So that's where I learned the speed of the game, and we pressed. We're up full court at all times.

It was hard to play more than 27 minutes. I was fortunate to be able to play early as a freshman, and I made a lot of mistakes. I think I had 10 turnovers in my first game, and he still started me.

To be able to go through and have those growing pains at Hampden-Sydney was really, really special. To develop those relationships that we had there was really special. But that's where I fell in love with a fast game. Certainly you could see that at all the different stops.

Lenoir-Rhyne, certainly that team ended up making the Sweet 16 that year and led the country in 3-point field goals made per game at like 12-1/2 or something like that. It was so special. They were shooting a 3 before the defense knew what was coming.

The defense left a lot to be desired that particular year. Had we combined the two, I think that's one of the areas that I've evolved as a coach through my -- through help through my assistant coaches and others. Certainly we've become a well balanced team because ultimately what wins in college basketball is you have to be balanced.

Our best teams have been balanced on both sides of the ball. This year's VCU team was a prime example of that, and there have been others. Certainly you've got to defend in order to win championships, whether that's picking up full court, you have to defend at half-court. You have to be able to defend at the end of a clock. You have to be able to rebound the basketball.

Those are all things we emphasize every single day, but we certainly want to play fast in transition and we want our guys to get out and run. That takes effort. That takes a level of conditioning and a standard that is excellent, and it's tough to do.

Coach Curtis is going to get us there, I know that.

Q. There's a lot of different models for how you kind of player management and recruit players. Some schools use the general manager model. Who are you going to be leaning on to help with roster management? Are there certain people already built in place here?

RYAN ODOM: Yeah, we're going to have a team. Obviously we'll have to -- not have to, but we will hire a general manager for our program. Obviously I'm going to lean heavily on our staff. That's the way we've always done it in terms of evaluation, character evaluation, what our needs are in that particular year.

We have to sit in a room and go at it and figure out who's available, what do we need, and then start to attack the recruiting. We're playing at an elite level, a top 10 level. In order to compete with the best of the best, you have to recruit well, and you have to sign great players, and you also have to sign guys that understand their role.

Every year it's a little bit different, putting a team together. That's why it's so fun to put it together. Helping guys understand what you're doing right now really helps our team, so we need you to do that and continue to do that. Everybody can't be the leading scorer. Everybody can't be the leading assist guy. So you have to put them in the right places in order to do that. Certainly recruiting is a big factor in that.

I'm confident in our ability to recruit. If you look at it, every place that we've been, we haven't had this. If you think about it, this place, we haven't been able to recruit to the academics here and the chance for a kid to come here and get one of the best educations that exists and be trained by professionals there on that side.

Then obviously the facilities here speak for itself. The infrastructure in place is topnotch. So Virginia deserves the best. So that's what we're going to try to do every single day that we come in here as a staff is try to push our guys to be their best.

Obviously you have to get ahead of recruiting. It's not just who's coming in this year. It's down the line. You've got to get ahead in recruiting, or you're going to be behind. Certainly that's something that we're going to do here.

We have contacts all over. This is a global game now. I've always had international players on our teams. This past year Max Shulga -- is Max here? Is he here yet? Where is he? Yeah, Max. He was the A-10 Player of the Year at VCU.

And Max followed me from Utah State to VCU, and I'm so excited for what's next for him. I believe he's an NBA player, and time will tell. But he's a part of our family, and I'm really proud of him and all the others that played for us at VCU.

It says a lot that you're here, Buddy. I appreciate that.

ERICH BACHER: Thank you very much, Coach Odom. Welcome. Thank you all for attending today's press conference. Go Hoos.