

Welcome to another installment of the Wahoo Central Podcast, which we record every week in our University Hall studio. I'm your host, Jeff White, from VirginiaSports.com, and it's time again to talk football. Training camp opens Friday morning for Bronco Mendenhall's team. My guest today is defensive end Andrew Brown, who is heading into his fourth and final college season. Andrew, great to see you.

Great to see you.

You ready for camp?

Most definitely.

So UVA is beginning its second-- heading into its second season under Coach Mendenhall. How do things feel different this year than on this day last summer?

Well, you know, last summer there was a lot of tension going on, as far as it being a whole new defense, all new coaches going into the new season. This year, I feel like it's more a sense of comfortability with these coaches and with the schemes and understanding the concepts of the defense now and the ins and outs of it.

And I feel like there's more of an aggressive approach, as to where last year it was more of a-- I would say more of a, like, nervous type. Because we didn't know what to expect. But now that it's back again, you know, we know what's going to happen. Going into it, we're more prepared mentally and physically.

You dislocated your shoulder against Duke early last season.

Right.

You had to have surgery on it in December. You weren't able to do a whole lot during spring ball while you were rehabbing. How's your health now?

110% now. I'm good to go.

Good.

Yes sir.

Had you ever had any problems with your shoulder before?

Never.

What was that-- going through that rehab process-- like? I know you had the toe injury early in your career.

Right. Pretty much the same thing. You know, just trusting in the process. Taking it day by day, step by step, not losing patience and faith. Just praying every day, you know, for God to bring me through it. And he did it again. So that's what it was.

Even with the injury, you led the team in tackles for loss last season. How much did it affect you on the field? You didn't miss any games, but if memory serves it was touch and go there for a while, wasn't it?

Most definitely. It definitely affected my play. You know, more so on the run game than anything. I would say in the pass rush as well. But I'm not--

Tough to raise your--

Definitely. Definitely.

--raise your arm to bother a pass?

Definitely. And I tried to disguise it the best I could, you know? Especially as what I put on film and things like that. But now that I'm pain free and everything, it's going to be-- going to be a great season coming up.

You have a new defensive line coach-- kind of new-- Vic So'oto-- though he worked with you last year as a graduate assistant. First of all, I'm sure, like everyone here, you were sorry to see Ruffin McNeill go.

Right.

But what's your relationship with Vic like, and what's it been like working with him in kind of this capacity now?

Ah, man. Vic is a technician. Best coach I've probably ever worked with as far as mentally, physically. But not just that but really breaking things down to where anybody can understand it. And he relates it to other things, not just on the field but off the field, as far as breaking things down into detail and things of that nature.

But other than that, he tries to make sure that you understand the entire concept of the defense and why we're doing it. Not only what to do but why you're doing it and how it helps, you know, other players around the field around you. Pretty much get adapted to what you're doing--

Does it help that he played in Broncos defense himself?

Oh, yes. Most definitely.

You know, he-- I would guess he knows it inside and out because of that.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. That definitely helps as well, because he's been there. He's been in my chair. He knows, like, what we're going through. So what more to relate to than somebody who's been through what you've gone through, you know?

Vic played in the NFL. Have you two talked about what you need to do to not only help the team this year but to raise your NFL stock?

Yeah. I feel like he can definitely help me do that as well. He's a great dude, a great coach. You know, he's been there. He's done it. He's been to the NFL and things like that. He knows what to do.

What do you need or where do you need to improve as a defensive lineman? When you go back and look at tape from last season and the seasons before that, where can you get better? Where do you need to get better?

Two things. I've had a lot of time to think about this. My dominance in the run game and being more clean with my pass rush moves. Those are my main--

How do you get better in the run game? I mean, I know there's some live tackling, but--

Right.

--is it just a question of technique?

Yep. Technique. You said it. Technique all day long. You know, that's what it comes down to-- physicality. You know? And with my shoulder being like that last season it was kind of difficult. But now that I'm good, I'll be able to do it a lot more easier, I should say.

It doesn't seem all that long ago that you graduated from high school early and enrolled here mid-year.

Right.

I know you have football goals that you still haven't attained and that you want to. But what is the UVA experience off the field been like for you? I guess it's been 3 and 1/2 years now.

Right. You know, it's all what you make it, in my opinion. You can make it a big social scene if you want to, but it's all about where your focus is. And as for me, you know, I have made sure I balanced everything out well as far as football-- you know-- and what I did off the field. It's a pretty cool experience. You know, just everyday life.

What are you majoring in?

American studies.

Where you came in in January, are you on track to graduate in December?

Yes sir.

Good.

Yes sir.

So you were the Gatorade National High School Player of the Year as a senior at Oscar Smith High School in Chesapeake. You went to the ESPY Awards in 2014, met Kevin Durant, Jameis Winston, Jim Brown, and many others. In retrospect, was it a blessing or was it a burden to come into college with all that hype and all those expectations?

Ah man, it was a blessing, you know? Because after the injury, it kind of just puts you in perspective. Like, one moment you at the top, and the next moment you at the bottom. So what are you going to do to get right back to the top? You know, am I going to fold, or am I going to use this as a stepping stone? So that's what I did.

One of your fellow starters on the defense is outside linebacker Chris Peace, who told me last year that you two are as tight as brothers. You guys go back to middle school, right?

Right.

How did you meet? Were you in class together or on a football team together or something other than that?

Well, when I first moved middle schools, when my mom had passed away, he was one of the first people I met. Because I started summer training with the football team before school even started. At my new school, he was one of the first dudes that I started to talk to on the team. And then after that we had classes together. And just from there we started building our relationship.

He ended up moving to the other side of the water, ends up. Did you guys stay in touch kind of in high school, or did you just reconnect when he committed to Virginia and you ended up here?

Yeah. Pretty much we left Indian River High School at the same time. So we pretty much stayed in connection with each other, like you said. And then there would be times where he would come on my side-- you know, spend the night at my house-- and we do whatever. Ultimately, we made the decision to go to school together.

What's it like-- I know all these guys, by the time you've played with them, kind of become brothers to you. But

what's it like to be out there with someone you have that history with and that connection with and you go back that far with to be in the huddle with him on defense and being making-- to be making plays alongside him?

Well, there's a lot more--

Is that special?

Yeah. It's a lot more special and a lot more personal. You push each other to be great, I will say, even more, because it's more personal. You know, like that's pretty much like my brother, you know? So I want to make sure that he's good on top of everything. So pretty much we compete with each other, things like that, like who's going to get more sacks than you? Who's going to get more TFFs this year. Stuff like that. So, that's how it go.

There are a couple of holes on the defense, but with players like you and Quin and Micah and Chris and Eli and Juan and Tim back, there's also a lot of experience. This is year two for everybody in Coach Mendenhall's three four. You know, just on the defensive side, do you see that kind of greater comfort level that you talked about for the whole team going into training camp?

Most definitely.

Do you see it on defense?

Most definitely. Because you've got very talented players on all three lines of the defense. So it does establish a lot more comfortability, I should say, within the defense.

I know the true freshman got here this month. They spent a lot of time training with themselves. Have you had any contact with the group, the ones who play on defense, and any first impressions of them?

I mean, they definitely want it bad, you know? As I want them to want it bad. And it all just comes down to what you going to do when the pads come on? Are you going to be ready, you going to fold, or you going to barbecue? You know? We'll do a barbecue.

Let's talk about one of your favorite topics, one of your passions. Music is a huge part of your life. For listeners who are not familiar with your story, describe what you do musically, and tell us how you got into it.

OK, so before my-- well, no, right after my mom had passed away, my grandma had enrolled me into piano classes, because she wanted me to play in the church. So after I took about one to two years of piano lessons, I was just online and I was playing with these different sounds, you know, on my keyboard.

And I always wondered how to make music like they would play on the radio. So eventually my dad found this

program for me called FL Studio, and my grandma had bought it for me one Christmas day.

So it's a piece of equipment?

It's a computer software. And my dad bought me these Logitech like computer speakers-- not too expensive, you know, from Walmart-- to get me started. And I was starting creating my own little beats and things like that. Wasn't anything too fancy.

But every year, as my dad saw me starting to get more serious with it, he would buy me more equipment-- more advanced equipment that would help me. And then eventually he bought me some pretty top-end speakers from Guitar Center at Virginia Beach. Like eight-inch JBLs-- very nice. And a keyboard. A mini keyboard that plugs into the computer with the mouse, obviously.

So from then, that's when I really took music seriously. And I always had the ear for it, but I just never knew how to make it. So once I learned how to make it, that's when I started getting better and better and better through the years. So that's pretty much the background behind it. But what I actually do is I produce hip hop music, R&B music, things like that. And it's pretty much making beats.

Right

You know, that's what it's called. And what the name-- Drizo Beats-- that came just one boring night, just sitting down, thinking, what would I call myself? You know, what would be my industry name, as far as my music is concerned? And I came up with Drizo Beats. So, it's been that ever since.

Have you done anything with the music department here or taken any music classes or anything at UVA along those lines?

Uh uh. But one thing I did do was I discovered a lot of talent's here. And it's funny that you mention the music department, because there was one point in time where the student hip hop organization, they hosted one of the best producers in the game today-- 9th Wonder. And he had came, and he gave a chance for all the local producers to come around to him.

Obviously, students had more of a leeway to get in contact with him because it was through the university. So he gave, like, feedback sessions and things like that for us to get kind of an insight as to where we stand, our potential in the game, what we could fix. It was a pretty cool experience.

Obviously, this is something you can do at the same time with football. Whenever football ends, is this kind of your passion? Is this your mission in life? Will you be doing music full time whenever football ends for you?

Most definitely. That's what I want to do. That's what I plan to do.

You still play piano?

Yep. I'm not, like, the greatest out there, you know? But I could do a little something. Not anything--

What about-- you mentioned hip hop, R&B. Do you listen to other kind of genres of music? Are you just kind of across the board?

I make-- I actually listen to a lot more genres than I thought I would over these past few years. Because you've got to branch out and things like that. You can't stay in one box. Nowadays, people are sampling music from all over the place.

So in order to do that, you got to open up your horizons and really listen to different types of music. So I listen to classical, jazz, reggae, gospel-- things like that. Just different things.

Jazz. Anybody ever tell you you sound like Wynton Marsalis when you talk?

No.

Ten years ago, this coming December, you lost your mother. From your posts on social media, interviews you've given over the years, it's clear that her memory inspires you on and off the field. You wear your number nine jersey in her honor, right?

Right.

Is she kind of with you every time you take the football field or everything you do?

Most definitely. That's the first thing I think about when I wake up, last thing I think about when I go to sleep.

What did it do to your relationship with your father? You guys seem--

It strengthened it.

--very close.

It made it stronger. Because, ultimately, I'm his son, you know? So when my mom passed away, pretty much he picked up where she left off and made me into the man I am today.

Is he up here at all the games?

Yeah. All the games.

Does he go on the road too?

Most of the games, yes sir. Like, games at Oregon, things like that, little more difficult to get to.

All right, we'll wrap up on a lighter note. One of your teammates, Chuck Davis, won a nice chunk of change in the Virginia lottery this summer. Has he been taking you guys out and treating you? Do you give him a hard time about this?

Well, he got a new nickname. We call him Dollar Davis now. But other than that, no, he don't treat us. It's just a once-- like, that's--

It's a crazy story, isn't it?

What are the odds? You know? Yeah, that's just one of them things where he just lucked up.

All right. We'll end it here. Thanks again for stopping by. Good luck in training camp and throughout the season.

Yes sir. Thank you so much.

In less than 24 hours, football will become the first UVA team to start practicing for the fall. The women's soccer and the others will follow closely behind. For schedules and information on all our teams, visit VirginiaSports.com. As always, thanks for listening and check back next week for another Wahoo Central Podcast.