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Written by AJ Neuharth-Keush

Radford University men's basketball head coach Mike Jones has reconstructed his team from the ground up after being brought into the struggling program in 2011.

Jones was hired by RU after he led the VCU Rams to the Final Four as an assistant coach in 2011. His job at Radford: rebuild a program that finished 1-24* (0-16 conference) the previous season (*Four wins vacated due to NCAA infractions).

Before embarking on the journey of his first head-coaching job, Jones expressed his high hopes and extensive plans for the program.

"I don't flinch at the challenges that are presented," Jones said. "We are going to make this a successful program. We're going to build on the traditions that are already here and lay our own footprints. We don't expect to be perfect, but I can guarantee you that we are not going to embarrass the university, we're going to do everything we can to bring pride to Radford University."

Currently more than halfway through his fourth season at RU, Jones has stayed true to his word.

Jones came to Radford with a barrage of incoming freshman player, including current redshirt junior Brandon Holcomb, senior guard R.J. Price, senior forward Javonte Green, senior forward Jalen Carethers, and senior forward Kyle Noreen.

Four of these players currently make up the starting lineup and have evolved into leadership roles over their three-and-a-half years at RU.

The first year with Jones as head coach and a roster made up of young, potential players went as expected - no miracles happened. The team finished 6-26 with a 2-16 record in the Big South Conference while averaging 61 points-per-game and a field goal percentage of 38 percent.

Nobody expected Jones to completely turn the team around in one season. However,

freshman sensations Price and Green were named to the Big South All-Freshman team and Jones went on to prove what he's capable of doing in the offseason.

The team was starting to show some signs of life.

In the offseason before the 2012-2013 season, current players YaYa Anderson, Lucas Dyer, Rashun Davis, Taj Owens and Kion Brown all joined the red and white in an attempt to make basketball relevant once again in the New River Valley.

The team eventually finished the season with a 12-19 record (7-9 conference), doubling their overall wins from the year before. They were knocked out of the Big South Tournament in the first round in a heartbreaking overtime loss to Winthrop.

It was time for offseason improvements once again.

The Highlanders put in the work, the effort and the time in order to mature and grow as a team heading into the 2013-2014 season.

This was when the Radford Nation started seeing drastic improvements.

The players started fitting into Jones' coaching style and complementing each other's strengths. Price and Green started taking on leadership roles while continuing to improve their game.

By the end of the 2013-2014 season, the points-per-game for the Highlanders jumped from 67 to 78 and the field goal percentage shot up from 40 to 48 percent. The team also reduced its turnovers per game from the previous season by about three.

Radford finished off the seasons with a 22-13 overall record (10-6 conference) marking the first time in two decades that an RU men's basketball team totaled more than 20 regular season wins.

The 22 wins also tied a Big South record for most wins in a regular season.

Heading into the current season, it was more of the same in the offseason for Radford basketball. Players matured while new team members began to find their role on the squad.

RU is currently 24 games through the 2014-2015 season and the Highlanders hold a 17-8 record (8-4 conference). Until losing to Charleston Southern Friday night they were riding an eight game winning streak and now post a 10-2 record while playing at home in the

Dedmon Center.

However, the recent success may leave a lot of fans wondering: Why? Why is the team such a Big South threat all of a sudden?

A lot of fans may also be wondering: How? How did Jones take a 1-24* team and turn it around in such a short amount of time.

Price gave his input.

“Coach Jones did a heck of a job recruiting every year,” Price said. “This year we’re just veterans. We have juniors and seniors mostly on the team playing big minutes...we know how to play together and we work hard every day at practice.”

Green weighed in on the recent success as well.

“Coaching,” Green said. “We’re buying in to what coach has to say. We’re buying into the game plan and we’re going out every night and executing it.”

Jones doesn’t feel as though coaching is the whole part of the equation. He believes there’s much more to the progress that the team has made.

“I give a lot of credit to our coaching staff for going out and getting the kind of talent that we have. We are one of the most talented teams,” Jones said.

“But if you have that talent and you don’t work you’re not going to get better. And we’ve continued to work day in and day out and that’s why we’ve shown improvement steadily,” Jones continued.

However, Jones stressed that there is still a lot of work to be done if the Highlanders expect to continue growing as a team.

“You feel good about the direction that the team is going in certainly,” Jones said.

“Someone asked me today or yesterday if ‘I thought that we’re peaking too early’ and I said ‘no because I think there’s so many things that we can get better at’,” Jones continued.

The Highlanders take on Longwood on Friday in the Dedmon Center in an attempt to kick start a new win streak.