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Radford University men's basketball has been continually improving since Head Coach Mike Jones took over before the 2011-2012 season.

When Jones joined the RU men's basketball team, it was clear that there was a lot of rebuilding to be done. They were coming off of a 5-24 season in 2010-2011 and - as if the 5-24 record wasn't enough - the NCAA vacated four of the victories due to infractions. So, in reality, Jones was taking over the reigns of a 1-24 team. He had nowhere to go but up.

Up is exactly where Coach Jones and the Highlanders went.

At first glance it appears that Coach Jones' first season at RU wasn't much of a success. The Highlanders only won six games over the course of the season. They scored 61 points per game while shooting 38 percent from the field. In addition, they didn't rebound well (33 per game), didn't spread the ball (11 assists), rarely got to the free-throw line (11 made per game), and couldn't find a hint of support in the stands.

However despite all of this, the future was slowly but surely starting to look a little bit brighter for Highlander basketball.

Freshman forward Javonte Green and freshman guard R.J. Price were selected to the Big South All-Freshman team and the foundation for the future was beginning to shape up.

Jones' second year at RU is when the upward trends became more substantial.

They scored 67 points per game and shot 40 percent. Free throws (14 made per game), rebounds (37 per game), assists (12 per game), steals (9 per game), and blocks (4 per game) all went up as well.

After the season came to a close, Jones and the Highlander Nation hoped that the 2013-2014 season would bring more of the same.

It did.

This time, the Highlanders weren't only competing with their past performances, but competing with the entire Big South Conference as well. Basketball became relevant in the New River Valley.

Radford finished the season with a 22-13 overall record (10-6 conference). Their scoring rose all the way up to 78 points per game and their field goal percentage up to 48 percent. They hit 69 percent of their free throws, pulled down 35 rebounds a game, and sank 36 percent of their three-point shots. They were also the most efficient with the ball since Jones took over, only giving up 11 turnovers per game compared to 14 in the two previous seasons.

The numbers continued to rise.

Other than steals per game and rebounds per game, the rest of the main statistical categories either stayed the same or rose tremendously. The Highlanders were looking better both on paper and on the hardwood.

Looking at the 2014-2015 season, it was once again more of the same for the new and improved RU Hoops program.

The Highlanders totaled 22 overall wins - again. They went 12-3 at home and 12-6 in the Big South. Their scoring dropped slightly from the previous year to 73 points per game, but the scoring margin went from +3.7 last season to +5.1 this season, meaning RU was much stronger defensively, negating the need to score quite as much.

In the previous season, opponents shot the ball 46 percent from the field and 36 percent from beyond the arc. This season, the opponent's numbers dropped to 43 percent and 33 percent.

Rebounding also went up for Radford, rising from 35 last season to 37 this season and a rebounding margin of + 2.9 (also an all-time high under Jones).

Contrast the most recent numbers with the numbers from the year before Jones took over, and it's clear how much of an impact Jones has had on the Highlanders basketball program.

In the 2010-2011 season, the team put up 60 points a game on 38 percent shooting from the field, 30 percent from beyond the arc, and 63 percent from the line. Defensively, they let their opponents score 71 a game on 45 percent shooting.

However despite all of the improvements, Coach Jones has continually stressed that there is still a lot of work to be done and a lot of growth left for the 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.

“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 said.