

SPORTS

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ERIN EDGERTON PHOTOS, THE DAILY PROGRESS

Virginia center Francisco Caffaro, right, celebrates during the second half of the Cavaliers' win over Virginia Tech on Wednesday at John Paul Jones Arena.

A FRANCISCO TREAT

Caffaro's career night helps Virginia top Virginia Tech

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The back-and-forth Commonwealth Clash featured 13 lead changes, and in the end, host Virginia outlasted rival Virginia Tech, 54-52, at John Paul Jones Arena late Wednesday night.

For the Cavaliers, 7-foot-1 center Francisco Caffaro's career night kept the Hoos in it during the first half and then powered them to victory in the final 20 minutes. His 16 points, nine rebounds and 31 minutes were all career bests.

And for the entire bout, he battled Hokies stand-out Keve Aluma in the post. Aluma had a game-high 22 points, but the bruising defense Caffaro showcased against Aluma took a toll on Aluma and forced him to earn every bucket he had.

Here are three takeaways from UVa's (10-6, 4-2 Atlantic Coast Conference) win over Virginia Tech (8-7, 0-4 ACC).

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Virginia Tech forward Keve Aluma, right, looks to move the ball against Virginia's Francisco Caffaro during the first half of Wednesday's game at John Paul Jones Arena.

Bruising encounter shows how closely matched rivals are



DAVID TEEL

For reasons known only to residents of cyberspace, Virginia began Wednesday 47 spots behind Virginia Tech in the NET rankings employed by the NCAA. This despite considerable evidence to the contrary.

Ranked 37th, the Hokies had no wins the NET classifies as Quadrant 1, or most impressive. The No. 84 Cavaliers had two, versus Providence on a neutral court and

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VIRGINIA FOOTBALL

Rudzinski named defensive coordinator

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Army, Navy and now Air Force will all have former assistants who are part of Tony Elliott's initial staff at Virginia.

John Rudzinski is UVa's new defensive coordinator, the school announced on Thursday. Rudzinski spent 14 seasons working at Air Force, which included the last four as the Falcons' DC.

Last week, Elliott, the Cavaliers' new head coach, added defensive assistants Kevin Downing from Navy and Keith Gaither from Army to the Hoos' team of assistants.

This past season, Air Force finished 10-3 and knocked off

Louisville in last month's First Responder's Bowl. Rudzinski's unit led the Mountain West Conference in total defense while yielding 296.5 yards per game and the group was third in the league in scoring defense (19.8 points per game).

Those numbers nationally ranked fourth and 16th, respectively. And for comparison, UVa's 2021 defense was among the country's worst — 121st in the FBS for total defense (466 yards given up per game) and 104th for scoring defense (31.8 points



Rudzinski

allowed per game).

Rudzinski's task will be to turn the Cavaliers' group of defenders in the right direction. Standout linebacker Nick Jackson, the Atlantic Coast Conference's leader in tackles this past fall, headlines returning personnel for the Cavs.

In 2020, Air Force featured one of the top defenses in its history when the Falcons were third in the country for scoring defense while giving up only 15 points per game. The 15 points per game were the fewest Air Force allowed since 1997.

Throughout Rudzinski's four-year stint as DC, the Falcons were superb against the run and built

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VIRGINIA FOOTBALL

Armstrong returning to Cavaliers next season

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Virginia quarterback Brennan Armstrong is sticking around.

Late Thursday, Armstrong announced on social media he'll play one more season for the Cavaliers and finish his college career with the Hoos.

The deadline for underclassmen to declare for the NFL Draft is Monday.

"After a long talk with my family," Armstrong said in a video posted on Twitter and Instagram, "I'm excited to announce I will be coming back to the Uni-

versity of Virginia and playing one more year."

This past fall, the left-handed signal-caller was a third-team All-Atlantic Coast Conference selection, a finalist for the Manning Award and the winner of the Bill Dudley Award, which goes to the top college player in the Commonwealth. Armstrong completed 65 percent of his throws for 4,449 yards and 31 touchdowns. He set UVa single-season records for passing yards, passing touchdowns, total offense (4,700 yards) and

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