

Bulldog hot on Huskies trail

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The UNC Asheville men's soccer team consists of eight forwards, eight midfielders, six defenders, one substitute goalkeeper and one YouTube sensation

Lassi Hurskainen, a junior who also doubles as the team's starting keeper, exploded into the world of social media a week and a half ago. His video, a 3:45 montage of soccer tricks, ball skills and spontaneous dance moves, has since amassed more than 2 million views.

"I knew it would be popular, but I didn't think it was going to be this popular," **Kenny Paradiso, Hurskainen's friend and video collaborator,** said. "Any athlete in college is going to receive attention for a trick shot video, but this is huge."

The video was in response to the University of Connecticut's quarterback Johnny MacEntee, who uploaded a similar video showcasing his football talents just days before. Paradiso saw the "Trick Shot Quarterback" and began to formulate a plan.

"I saw it and shared it with Lassi and I knew how talented he was and I was like, 'Lassi you could do some of these tricks,'" Paradiso, a senior multimedia arts and sciences student, said. "The idea wasn't to film

it at first, but I knew how much Lassi likes to make videos and stuff so I said we should just do a video of our own and he was really stoked."

The pair went to the drawing board to brainstorm ideas and possible tricks. They then enlisted the help of **Jesse Tanas, a biology student,** to assist in filming.

Tanas, 22, said he received a lot of attention for his part in the process.

"A lot of random people come up to me at school and say, 'Hey are you Jesse? Did you film that video? I got to know if it's real,' and I'll tell them it is real," he said.

The video was filmed in six evenings and in small increments.

"We all had a lot of classes so we had to film it in the dark and turn on the lights," Hurskainen said. "The tapes were only one hour so each session was one hour long."

Hurskainen then employed the skills he learned as a mass communication student to edit and produce the film at home. He uploaded it on YouTube in the small hours of Valentine's Day morning.

"We were all taking bets of how many views it would have the next morning and I said 300 views," Hurskainen said. "There were 100,000."

Aside from racking up an incredible audience size, the video made an impact on a global stage.

"It's received attention from around the

world," Hurskainen said. "Japan, Mexico, France, it's all over the news. It's reached every single country in the world."

Hurskainen and his comrades have also garnered attention on the Internet and in national and local media.

"I had 250 friend requests in two days and three fan pages made about me," Hurskainen said. "The video has been on the Huffington Post, WLOS and ESPN has asked me for permission to use it on any of their shows."

With attention comes criticism, and Hurskainen's video has become victim to claims his tricks are fake, that the ball disappears and he employs the use of electronic devices. However, Hurskainen brushes them off with a modest air.

"I don't want to say anything bad," he said. "I think everyone could do this video if they just had the effort and the time."

Although the team's endeavor thrust them into the limelight, Paradiso insists notoriety was not their intention.

"We weren't trying to make Lassi famous, we just put it out there because he likes making videos and it's really cool," he said.

After the success of Hurskainen's first video, the group said they might make a sequel, but not immediately. Instead, the possibility of a collaboration with **senior men's basketball player and slam-dunk artist,**

Check out more from Lassi's photoshoot at TheBlueBanner.net



John Williams, may be on the table

"I want to see John do well and he'd like to make a video," Paradiso said. "If he wanted to I'd be ready and willing."

Williams, who has already shot into stardom this year by making SportCenter's Top 10 with a dunk against Big South Conference rival Liberty, said a video may be on the horizon.

"Kenny mentioned doing a collabo with Lassi like where he kicks the ball up and I dunk it somewhere crazy," Williams said. "I said, 'Yeah, I'll do it.'"

With Hurskainen's video accumulating views and spinoff versions constantly, it would be easy to think one could get lost in the spotlight. Luckily, UNCA's men's soccer head coach, Matt Kern, gave Hurskainen a few words of advice.

"Coach Kern told me you have to enjoy it, but at the same time there's going to be a lot of people criticizing you," he said. "He told me not to let this distract you because it could be quite interesting."



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