

**Virginia Tech Football  
Head Coach Justin Fuente Q&A Highlights  
National Signing Day Media Conference  
December 19, 2018**

***Opening statement:***

“Obviously a big day. We got a lot of things going on with signing day, we got grades yesterday which was good. A lot of our kids did really well. Excited about that. We got bowl preparation going on and also our ticket renewal process and just want to obviously thank our fans. Hokie Nation does a fantastic job for us, supporting our kids, we appreciate every one and I look forward to seeing everybody back in 2019. We will practice today, take tomorrow off. We’ve got some community service activities that we’re going to participate in tomorrow and then we’ll practice on Friday and Saturday morning and then cut the kids loose for a couple of days and then they’ll meet us at the bowl sight on the 26th. Plenty of work for us to do to get down here in terms of trying to improve, sharpening our skillset, trying to maintain our level of sharpness and attention to detail while also getting ready for a very talented Cincinnati team.”

***On whether he believed that they needed to focus on getting junior college defenders and is it something he will do more of moving forward:***

“I say this. The couple of junior college kids we signed, we vet through that process pretty heavily and I don’t know that we set out to sign a particular position. We’re trying to look for the right type of guys that fit us. Obviously, our defensive line depth, particularly at defensive tackle was an issue and we felt like we needed to certainly do a good job of coming through those potential prospects. Everywhere else were just looking to see if anybody fit us culturally and had some interest to the region. It just kind of worked out that way.”

***On is he expecting to sign anyone else on National Signing Day in February:***

“I don’t know if we’ll sign anybody else or not quite honestly. I feel pretty good where we’re at and we’ll just kind of evaluate it and move forward.”

***On whether his staff and their experiences are conducive to bringing in a large amount of JUCO players:***

“I don’t know. I don’t think three (JUCO transfers) is a lot. It’s maybe more than they’ve done in the past, but I don’t think it’s going to become this huge movement of us doing that. I think occasionally we’ll get in there and look and see if there’s anyone that fits. I don’t think it’s a byproduct of anything other than there were a couple of needs we felt like we might ought to search around a little bit and see if there is anybody that fits. I don’t think it’s going to become anything other than that.”

***On his expectations of Keshawn King and Tahj Gary and them possibly shaking up the running back group next the upcoming season:***

“The first thing I would say is Tahj Gary has to get healthy. He suffered a pretty big injury and he’s done a great job of attacking his rehab and has a really good attitude about it. I don’t come

in with expectations for any of these guys. The conversation that we had on our official visit weekend was not a conversation centered around, you're going to walk in here and play. I'm talking about with all of them. It was centered around, on Wednesday you're going to sign and what are you going to do next. Are you going to sit around for the next three weeks and pat yourself on the back and talk about how you signed at Virginia Tech, or are you going to roll your sleeves up and realize this is just the start of a tremendous amount of work and preparation. We'll see how it goes. They're all freshmen and they don't know what they don't know right now. I love every one of them just like the kids we have right now, but it's a big leap from where they're at to where they need to be. I am also very excited to be their coach."

***On what does Jesse Hanson brings to the offensive line:***

"I'm just so excited about Jesse [Hanson] and his family, all Clemson graduates. It was a big deal, a really big deal for him to decide to stay at what is now is home in Virginia. A very intelligent young man, great family, hard worker. I think he kind of fits the mold of what we're looking for in that room terms of mentality, accountability, intelligence and toughness. Excited to have him here."

***On Bryan Hudson playing football and also doing track & field:***

"Well each situation is different. Cole [Beck] is doing both right now and Cole's situation is very different from Bryan's [Hudson], but we do have a long history here of that. There are obviously different secondary sports from baseball, basketball, track and it's different from a guy that's a thrower versus a guy that's a sprinter. There's also a difference between a guy that just goes over there and tries to earn a few points and a guy that really is elite and Bryan is elite. That spring time, the good news is for a thrower, the lifting and the training is all the same and conducive. He can be with us during that time, but during the spring he will spend a little time over there working technique and getting ready to compete in those events. We've had a lot of discussions and track and field is important in that family. He has two sisters that are involved with it. His mother is also involved with it. As he gets here and gets through the first semester we'll sit down and really hash out exactly what it's going to look like. I think both programs are excited to have him be a part of it and I anticipate that he will be able to fulfil both of those needs very easily."

***On how he feels about the receivers in this class:***

"I'm pleased with that group. I'm excited for them to get here and get to work. We have to continue create some competition in that room and I think these guys are going to do that. I think [Wide Receivers] coach [Holmon] Wiggins deserves a tremendous amount of credit for the job that he's done in that room. There just weren't a lot of numbers in there [Wide Receivers Room]. There haven't been since we've been here. We're now getting those numbers back up with competent guys that have a chance to get in there and really push each other to be productive and the best that we can be."

"They're all different. Two of them played quarterback this year in Jaden [Payout] and Tayvion [Robinson] both played quarterback essentially the entire year. Whereas Elijah [Bowick] and

Jacoby [Robinson] have been training at wide receiver. It'll be interesting to see where that process goes, but I'm excited about the athleticism of all four of them."

***On where Amare Barno might eventually end up playing:***

"I don't know where he'll end up. We have some insight into his background. He's from this part of the country, played out in Kansas, knows some people that really feel like he's got huge upside. He's got a great frame. I don't know what it's going to look like or where he's going to go. We've asked him to trust us through this process and our reputation of developing players both in the weight room and as actual football players and ultimately we'll do what's best for him and what's best for Virginia Tech as his career unfolds."

***On how much does he pay attention to other programs heavily recruiting the state of Virginia:***

"Well we don't put too much stock into what other people do, we're pretty concerned about how we do things. I'm pretty excited about the kids from our state that decided to stay home. I think that they're a really talented group of guys that want to be here for the right reasons. We try and do things the way that we want to do them, focus on the things important to us and the good news is we have a great product to sell."

***On how exciting today is having 19 new guys in the fold:***

"I'm thrilled that every one of these families trust us and trust our program. I understand that their parent or guardians are essentially handing of their most prized possessions into our responsibility and I'm honored to be charged with that. These kids decided to come to Virginia Tech for all of the right reasons. To be part of a great academic and athletic environment and I'm looking forward to watching them grow and develop through the year. Everybody is going to talk about who's going to play immediately. Part of my message is I've had NFL players at every position and NFL general managers and scout and not one of them has asked what did he do as a freshman. That's not what they care about. These coming in and rolling their sleeves up and getting ready to work hard and develop into the best people, the best students and the best athletes they can be is our primary mission. I'm excited to get them here. We've been developing these relationships with these kids for a long time. We may not know everything about them, but we know a lot about them and we've been with them for a long time. To finally have them signed and make it become official and let me get to talk about them and really focus on the next step is a fun part of the job."

***On when Brion Murray come on Tech's radar and what about him stood out:***

"A month or so ago. I'm not sure about the date. A kid that we have been tracking for a long time. Really took our time with, quite honestly, to continue to find out more and more about him. He came down on his official visit and a bunch of people from his past came up and spent the day looking around Virginia Tech, which I thought was pretty cool. It said a lot about the kid. He's from Delaware, was in Kansas and when he came down there were teachers, coaches and all sorts of people that wanted to come down and see where he maybe possibly going to school and support him, which I thought was pretty neat. It spoke volumes about his character and

what people thought about him. He's a guy that we took our time with evaluating in trying to figure out if he was a guy that fit us and certainly checked all of the boxes."

***On what has made Zohn Burden such a great recruiter:***

"Zohn [Burden] does a very good job for us. He has a passion for recruiting. Recruiting has become position oriented. Will Pritchard is in Zohn's area, but pretty quickly there, the position coach becomes a primary recruiter and the area coach becomes kind of the supplementary recruiter. We hand them off pretty quickly. All that being said, Coach Burden has done a great job servicing both his area and being a great supplemental recruiter when it's handed off to the other position coach and a great job with his own position. I don't know what it is about it. I think he has a passion for it, he enjoys doing it. He certainly has a laid-back mentality. Very calm and collective with the kids, but he also has a unique ability to connect with kids from different backgrounds and ability for them to talk and get comfortable with him."

***On his thoughts about early signing day and the bulk of the signees getting in early:***

"Driving into to work today thinking about this being signing day, it was really odd. It used to be, as a coach, on signing day you've just gotten off the road for an entire other month of January and you were going to work until about noon and go have a good time and that's over. Now you have signing day and then you get ready for practice and you go. It's just weird. I think knocking a leg off the drama is a good thing, I do like that part of it. I'm not sure that as this goes on and on that it won't come back to being a little bit of a circus like it became in February. I'm really looking forward to my Christmas break now because this thing is pretty much wrapped up. I think it's important to continue to evaluate the benefits for the kids. I don't know the answer. Some may like, some may not. It seems like it's becoming more normal and we may never go back, but I think that's important that we try to give these the best opportunity to make a good decision. To be able to get somewhere that they're choosing for the right reasons, that they're passionate about and that they're confident in. You read all of the horror stories about recruiting and there are plenty, but there are so many things that happen in recruiting that don't get talked about. We get to eat so many great dinners with families across the country and it really makes you feel better about the direction of this country when you sit down with these families that worked hard to instill values in these kids. That's the fun part for us. I really enjoy that part of it and I think our staff does too."