

**Virginia Tech Football**  
**Head Coach Justin Fuente Q&A Highlights**  
**Spring Football Media Conference**  
**March 22, 2018**

***Opening statement:***

“Thanks everybody for coming and thank goodness we have the indoor. Today we will be inside. I do want to wish Coach [Kenny] Brooks good luck tonight, we won’t be in attendance because we will be on the practice field, but we’ve enjoyed watching them play.

“We put on pads Tuesday after two practices in just helmets. It was good to have real football practice again, and we will do that again today. Again, just to kind of reiterate the overall feeling right now that we are doing a lot of coaching and teaching. From my perspective, in terms of how we have practice and the value of practice and the things we want to get accomplished, not just the Xs and Os, but how we work together so we can get better as individuals but ultimately as a team, I think we have a long way to go in that manner, it was part of the message after Tuesday’s practice. I do like the way they are trying to go about it. I believe they are listening and that it is important to them. I do believe that they are generally excited because there are a lot of young guys running around out here and are trying hard. And as position coaches, it is their job to get them dialed in to the techniques and the assignments that we are asking them to do. And it is my job, as the overseer of all of it, to make us work together and we can see those strides of improvement, hopefully see some more strides today.”

***On having guys in no pads the first couple of practices and what he looks for in the guys the first few practices:***

“Well, I think the first thing we are trying to do is just install and teach, and then can they absorb it? The first four practices are just installing. For us it is punt and punt return and it is base offense and base defense. What do we retain from the season? What do we not retain? What can we move forward or more quickly on? What do we need to slow down and go back over? For the players, I want to see them take that teaching in the classroom, put it on the field and be able to repeat it. Again, I want to see them learn how to practice. I know that sounds kind of cliché, but it is really important. What we see as coaches on the practice field determines how we feel about them on Saturdays. And them understanding the importance of their execution level at practice is an important point to get across at this level.”

***On a savvy player like DT Ricky Walker and the possibility of holding him back in spring practice with a slow start in terms of drill work and reps:***

“Not right now, but there will certainly come a time when we will pull a few guys out, maybe on a scrimmage day or whatever. But we know what we got and we will pull those guys out to get more reps for everybody else. Right now it is too early to start doing those things, but it certainly nice to have Ricky. It’s always great to have examples. He has served as a great example for a long time on how to go about your business – being mature, how to practice and prepare and ultimately give yourself the best chance to play well.”

***On what LB Dylan Rivers is like:***

“I would say first of all, he is highly intelligent and when you spend time with him, you can tell he is a very conscious young man, meaning in terms of football, he wants to do well, he wants to please and wants to execute the way you are explaining it to him. He also is willing to put in extra work to do that and we saw him mostly on special teams last year and it was really amazing to watch him grow in those assignments throughout the season. Our confidence in him in special teams grew throughout the season, too. Now, he is obviously in a little bit different position. He is trying to execute the same level of growth in a quicker time while playing linebacker.”

***On how OL Kyle Chung is adjusting to a return to the center position:***

“Kyle has been working at center and has done well so far. I hope and anticipate that it would continue. That does open up a spot at right tackle, which we have gotten some good competition just at tackle. Silas [Dzansi] is working some at tackle and looked good in the one day we had everyone in pads. T.J. Jackson has worked at tackle, Tyrell Smith at tackle and [Yosuah] Nijman as well. So, there’s four guys in there competing for two spots. If we need to move them around, we will move them around. But I have liked what I have seen in a very short time from those four guys out there.”

***On with a year under his belt, how has QB Josh Jackson looked this spring and how is he helping the younger guys:***

“He’s been good so far. I think he is more comfortable with what is going on and has a better level of understanding of comfort and operation out there when he is there. It is up to those other guys to kind of catch that, but he has looked good. We still have a lot of work to do and I know we have already talked a little bit about it last week, about the defensive backfield and our young wide receivers. But those guys that we were playing as true freshman last year have figured it out in three short days of practice and look much better than they did as true freshman already, which I’m sure makes the quarterback feel better.”