

Virginia Tech Football
Special Teams Coordinator & TEs coach James Shibest Q&A Highlights
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On inheriting Greg Stroman when got the job and now with him graduating, who he is looking for to fill the returner position:

“A guy like Greg [Stroman] has to be so hard to replace, he was obviously very explosive player, too. But his ability to field the ball and his decision making, that’s the first thing we got to find a guy we can trust who can do those things back there, with ball security reasons. So, we looked at some guys, like, Hezekiah [Grimsley], [Sean] Savoy and [Bryce] Watts did it a little bit late last year. You’d like to see a guy, like, [Caleb] Farley, who is banged up but have the possibility to do that. Also, the guy might not even be on campus yet either, with maybe a new guy. Whoever is back there, we are going to put someone we trust back there, whether he can make a play or not. We are still working, a lot of the guys have not done it at the college level. So it will be interesting.”

On mentioning the new returner might not be on campus yet, if he tells current guys that:

“Well, a little bit I do. Now, there’s a big difference between fielding punts and fielding kickoffs, I can tell you that much. It takes a special person, you know? As a punt returner, there is traffic everywhere. With kickoff return, you have a little bit of room in front of you and it’s a little easier ball to catch. Coach [Justin] Fuente talked about it the other day, saying it could be several guys. I know there are a couple guys that you have seen them do it on tape, but again, you can’t always tell their true ball skills and catching the ball off of the tape sometimes. We start working that stuff in the summer, with having punters kicking to guys. It will be interesting because it is a concern and we got to find a guy or two that we trust.”

On how tough it will be to replace K Joey Slye, especially the consistent touchback piece:

“I think we have two guys who have talent, they just got to be able to go do it in the games with Brian Johnson and Jordan Stout. Brian came in when Slye was hurt late in the season and had a decent touchback percentage for a guy who was going out there as a redshirt freshman. But Jordan Stout probably has a little bit stronger leg. We have worked at it a little bit this spring and got an idea already, but I think both guys will be good candidates for the kickoff job. Field goal wise, I think the competition will go through fall camp. Somedays they look really good and have ability, but being able to go out there in front of 70,000 people and perform is different. Brian had the opportunity to do that late last year and got some experience with that.”

On the evolution of the tight end position and how he plans to use that position this fall:

“We were just talking about that earlier, with how we got the TE room about where we want it. We had to use Sam [Rogers] and Steven [Peoples] in that kind of role when we first got here. But Chris Cunningham, I can’t say enough, has gotten better and better. Dalton Keene as a true freshman did an awesome job and he’ll continue to improve. Now you got Drake [Deluliis] coming up and now is finally getting some reps in spring. That room is starting to look better and better.”

On how the tight ends can more involved in the passing game:

“I’m always pulling for it (laughing). I think we are getting more and more. I think this spring they have gotten the ball more than they have ever have. A guy like Drake [Deluliis], who has really great height and can kind of use his big, tall body, has great ball skills. We usually try to sneak them out in play action and stuff like that. Usually they can create some big plays. We hope to spread it out as much as we can and let them go make plays.”