

Virginia Tech Softball
Head Coach Pete D'Amour
Introductory Press Conference
June 7, 2018

Opening Statement

"Right now is just an opportunity to thank a bunch of people that have been influential in my life. First, Whit [Babcock] and Chris [Helms]. They ran a first-class search. They made me feel welcomed from the initial contact, and that was important to me to have an administrator that wanted me.

"The softball alumni have reached out to me and I just want to thank all of them. It's a proud tight-knit group and I didn't know how many coaches that I knew that graduated from Tech until they reached out to me. It's a small community in softball and, I thank all of them for reaching out to me, and I look forward to building upon what they accomplished here. The coaches, I think I heard from every head coach at Virginia Tech and they've been really helpful. I even got a call from coach [Frank] Beamer, and I was like man I have arrived. Thank you for calling I appreciate it.

"Coach [Scot] Thomas and I had a good talk. I talked to him last week after I was announced. I've heard about the job Coach Thomas has been doing for a long time. He made the regionals, World Series and has had a really successful program. I told him I respect the history of this program and I don't look to reinvent history, but we're just going to build upon what he has built here.

"As far as Kennesaw State goes, I just want to thank my administrator Scott Whitlock for being a pretty good mentor for me and friend. My assistant coaches were really, really good at Kennesaw. They made me look better than what I am. And then my team, my kids were great there. They had 100 percent buy in from the beginning. They trusted me when I told them we can win a conference championship and go to regionals, and we did in two years. They bought in and that was all them. They never really gave me issues and their hard work allowed me to hit closer to home.

"Missouri, I spent 10 years there. Ehren Earlywine hired me and was the best X's and O's coach I have ever been around. A lot of my on the field coaching philosophies are based upon what Ehren taught me. Phil Bradley, he was a mentor to me and still is to this day. All of my former players from Missouri, I've heard from a lot of them so I want to thank them for taking the time to just reach out to me. My high school coach Dave Rebar, I still talk to him a bunch. I have some fast pitch coaches and mentors that I looked up to as I was growing up, Doc DeBenedictis and Skip Duval. Really good fast pitch guys. My parents, they've done a lot for me and thank you for coming.

“And then, you may or may not know, but I got engaged last week so add on some more stress to me. Anna, she’s working today but she’s really made my transition to being a head coach a lot easier. She knows when to let off the gas and when to press me. She’s going to make my job easier.

“As Whit was saying, Virginia Tech has been on my mind for a long time. I remember going into his office when he was at Mizzou, and I knew he was from Harrisonburg and said, man Virginia Tech would be a good one. I told Chris on the search committee when he asked if I was interested, the kids were coming into my office at Kennesaw and asking how long I was staying. I said I don’t know, but I would leave for Virginia Tech. It’s not something I sold just to get the job. The area is awesome. I’m a rural guy. The conference, facilities, administration and the team that’s coming back were just all positives, I couldn’t find one negative when I was looking at this job. I thank you all for coming and Go Hokies.”

Could you talk about the pitching and hitting philosophy you plan to bring to Virginia Tech?

“Hitting wise I’m all about exit speed and bat speed. There’s a five-part piece to hitting. It’s mechanics, pitch selection, pitch recognition, timing and approach. You could be a really good hitter if you have two of those, and can be a great hitter if you have three, but you just can’t have one. I really hammer home in my batting practices hitting all five of those aspects. We’ll try to hit on those every day. Pitching wise, I like strike throwers, kids that battle. I’m big on moving the ball up and down, and the change up. When I played men’s fast pitch guys threw highs, changeup and the drop. There’s six pitches and if you can be really good at three of them you have a chance, if you’re good at two of them you have a chance, but you can’t just have one.”

How important was your relation with Whit in making you comfortable to take the job?

“It was really important. We didn’t have much interaction at Mizzou, but the time that I did, he was upfront, honest and he was just someone I could work for. It was a big decision for me and Whit made it easier.”

Where do you see the program in it’s current state?

“Right away you see good pitching and good defense, and those two things win a lot of games for you right off the bat. I was just telling somebody that I don’t see this as a major rebuild. I think the team hit .240 last year and if the bare minimum we could hit .280, that could be an extra 10 wins. I don’t see it as we’re in the cellar. There are some good players here.”

Have you thought about who you plan to bring on to your coaching staff?

“I’m kicking it around, I don’t know yet. I’m certainly open to talking to the current staff and seeing where they’re at. We’ll see, but you guys will know first thing.”

What gives the confidence to believe you can be a head coach in a power five conference?

“The first thing is I did 95 percent of the recruiting at Missouri, nobody knows that. I was pretty much the face of the program since I was the recruiting coordinator. I was the associate head coach at Missouri. We lost to Auburn 2-1 last year, neck-and-neck in the regionals this year. I’ve

seen both sides of the spectrum. I've been in the SEC and I've been in the ASUN. How big the stage is doesn't really bother me. When you get on the field it's softball. I'll prepare the ACC kids like I did the Kennesaw kids. I'm not too worried about it."