

Virginia Tech Football
Head coach Justin Fuente Q&A Highlights
Media Conference
August 13, 2018

Opening statement:

“Today is practice No. 8 and we’ve got a scrimmage tomorrow and then another recovery day, which is our last full week before we start school. This is the first week we’ve been practicing that we’ve been out of summer school, which has been nice, particularly for the freshmen to get into a flow for a week here of just practicing. I’ve been pleased with our guys, in terms of the way they have gone about their business and their enthusiasm to go get better. They’re still a work in progress and we’re focusing on continuing to try to improve. We’ve been efficient with our time so far and hopefully we can continue to do that.”

On how long it takes him to know if a freshman can contribute early:

“I would say that it’s different for everyone, there are a couple elements there. There’s an occasional guy when you know in two days that he’s picking it up, is going to be fine and will help you somewhere. Then there’s the element of improvement with the guys that can take coaching to the field. I would use TE James Mitchell, he is the first one that comes to my mind in terms of taking coaching and continuing to improve almost right before your eyes. He would be a good example of that. And then there’s the ability to handle the grind every single day, sometimes those guys just hit the wall mentally and emotionally. So, it’s different for everybody and for each kid. We try to be careful, as you all probably know, not to rush to judgment on anyone, good or bad, that’s why we try to be cautious with our evaluations of those guys publicly because every single day is a new day. Those three things usually jump out at you.”

On if OL Lecitus Smith and OL Braxton Pfaff are competing at the same position and how Smith is doing so far through fall camp:

“I think Braxton [Pfaff] is working at right guard, if I’m not mistaken. And Lecitus [Smith] is a guy who came in as a TE and was fighting to stay at 280 pounds. So, finally, we told him to quit fighting it. Like a lot of us, just let yourself go, buddy. Almost overnight he got to his natural weight and started gaining weight. Obviously, he was going to move inside. But that’s a big difference between playing guard and playing tight end. But I’ve been impressed with his talent, he’s a big strong, young kid and is really athletic. Hopefully, he continues to improve and work on his craft every day. He’s really matured in the last year or so.”

On who he has working with OL Braxton Pfaff and what that competition has been like:

“I don’t have the depth chart in front of me, but we shuffle those guys around. We’re working several guys on the inside and several guys on the outside. Pfaff is doing really well, I’ve been really pleased with him.”

On him having a better understanding of the QB pecking order:

“I would say no is the answer to that, but we will continue to filter those reps out and get an

idea. We got a little bit of an idea in the scrimmage the other day. How will it exactly shake out? I'm not sure."

On what safeties coach Tyrone Nix has brought to the table so far:

"Well, he's got a tremendous amount of experience. He's coached in or has about done anything in terms of schematically. He certainly has a presence about him. He's demanding and holds those guys accountable. I think he is exactly what we needed. We are happy to have him on board and he certainly has those kids' ears in the back end. He has instant credibility when he walks in the room, with those guys responding and learning from him."

On if he and Coach Nix had much interaction before Tech hired him this past offseason:

"We coached against each other before and at the end of our series, when I was at Memphis and he was at Middle Tennessee, we visited on the phone the day after the game because we weren't scheduled to play each other anymore. We talked about football, what we had done and what they had done and that sort of stuff. It was an exchange of ideas to help each of us get better. I've known several people who have worked with him that I'm really close to and they think the world of him. Then we had a couple conversations. So, I think between the people that I know in this business and my limited interaction before did it. We had a position open and after we had an opening, I slowly went through what I thought we needed and kind of nosed around a little bit more. I had a couple discussions with Ty and thought he was the perfect fit for us."

On if anything stood out to him following the first scrimmage:

"It was totally controlled in terms of it being all normal down and distance, we didn't drive the ball. We lined up and saw who could go play base offense and base defense. There was very little scheming going on or any of that stuff. So, there was a little bit more of what do our guys know and who could go play. There wasn't a group that stood out more than the others, other than us trying our best to continue to evaluate the plethora of young guys who are going to play for us."

On the upcoming second scrimmage and what he's looking to see from it:

"It will be much less controlled, so we'll go into some red zone situations, drive the ball and get into some special situations. We will have down and distance and move the ball and that sort of stuff. I've always done the very first scrimmage in a controlled manner just to see if they can line up and play. We'll have a good talk about it tonight. There will be some personnel things when we walk off the field, we have to know this, we have to know that. We'll have those discussions and hopefully have them evaluated."