

Virginia Tech Football
Running Backs Coach – Zohn Burden Q&A Highlights
Fall Camp – Media Conference
August 16, 2018

On Cole Beck's performance and overall role on the team:

“Well, Beck is doing exactly what we thought he would do. Beck is showing a lot of speed out there. That’s the first thing you notice when the ball is in his hands. He has also shown an ability to be physical which he didn’t have to be as much in high school. We are excited about him and the future is bright.”

On how the running backs can generate more big plays and make guys miss:

“You try to simulate exactly what is going to happen in the game as best as possible. Putting those guys in positions during practice. We have those live segments where we are buttoning up the ball carrier. We just try to create as many live situations as we can to simulate game situations.”

On RB Jalen Holston's development and his next step of improvement:

“Being more explosive and breaking more tackles. Getting into the second and third level while making those defenders miss. Holston keeps getting bigger, stronger and faster. Holston is a sophomore now and he just keeps improving.”

On Holston's natural instincts:

“There are some things you can drill but you can’t coach. You are kind of just born with those instincts and he has them. He is a natural running back and he is improving day in and day out.”

On who has the biggest personality out of the running backs:

“It’s a very quiet room. I would have to say Deshawn McCleave.”

On what it's like to have RB Steven Peoples back and healthy:

“Peoples doesn’t say a lot of words but his play speaks for himself out there in practice. He is one of those guys that the defense doesn’t want to tackle. He is a bowling ball in there just for our room and the younger guys watching him practice. The way he goes about his day and working hard work every day. You kind of always have to slow him down in practice which is a good thing. So he has a very positive impact on our room and it’s good for those younger guys to see his work ethic so it will carry over into their careers.”

On the rotation of the running backs and the game plan for that rotation:

“All of our guys know it’s up to them when they have their opportunity to take advantage of it. They all different strengths and weaknesses but they also have different skill sets. We just try to

put those guys in the best position possible to succeed with their talents and strengths. We don't want to put guys in a position to not be successful. That's just what we try to do and if that happens to be 20 to 25 carries then that's what it will be. If it happens to be 10 or 15 carries that's what it will be. We just want to put our guys in the best position possible with their skillset."

On how to carry the momentum of the running back play from the last three games last season into this season:

"We are trying to build off of that. I tell those guys they are only as good as their last game. We were pretty solid in the run game against Oklahoma State so we want to carry that momentum over. We ended the season with some confidence. We ended the spring with some confidence and we want to carry that over into the season."

On what he took away from the Bill Walsh Minority Coaching Fellowship with the Chargers:

"First, I want to thank Coach Fuente for allowing me for the second time to do that. Then I want to thank Coach Anthony Lynn for what I learned from his staff. Coach Lynn was a running backs coach for about 20 years. He has coached a lot of good running backs so just being able to be around him and his staff. Just learning small details of being a running back. A guy with 20 years of experience can help me see things that I might skim over or may not see. Being able to bring that back to our players and our offense is monumental. It was a great experience."

On using last season to improve the production and efficiency of the run game:

"We were more downhill in the Oklahoma State game. In the pistol and a halfback in front of us a lot. Peoples presence in that game and being able to hit it downhill and punch those guys in the mouth. McCleese being able to bounce it outside and Holston being able to bring some tackles outside. It's kind of like a one, two, three punch. We are going to continue to carry that over."

