

Virginia Tech Football
Head Coach Justin Fuente Q&A Highlights
Fall Camp – Media Conference
Aug. 16, 2018

Opening statement:

“Thanks to everybody that’s here. We got some good work in the scrimmage, off day yesterday to get ready for our next block of a few practices here, then our final scrimmage. Camp is going quickly. Twenty-five practices as opposed to 29, it’s going to be on us really quickly. Plenty for us to work on, we’re kind of entering the part of camp where it gets harder and the newness has worn off and soreness has set in and all those sorts of things. It’s important that we have great focus over the next several days to finish this clock up and get ready for our final scrimmage.”

On the kicker situation and who might be ahead at this point in time:

“Oh, I like both of those youngsters, Brian (Johnson) and Jordan (Stout). Brian got to play a little bit last year when Joey (Slye) was suffering from leg fatigue if you will and we’ll continue to evaluate that and go back and forth. Jordan is really beneficial to the team right now because he also does some punting work and some field goal stuff. Brian has continued to get stronger in the weight room. I think you can really tell with the ball coming off of his foot that he’s put some hard work in and had a really good off-season. I wouldn’t go so far as to say we’re ready to establish a pecking order. We’ve kicked quite a bit. We’ll continue to kick for the next week or so, in front of the team or in team situations to continue to try and evaluate those guys.”

On having one kicker or using one player for certain situations and another player at different times:

“I know in my times as an assistant we’ve had two before. I think at Memphis we had Jake (Elliott) who was pretty good, could handle both of them. I don’t know that my time as a head coach off the top of my head I’ve had a long and short guy so to speak. We’ll just figure it out and see how it goes. I know that certainly its happened before and could certainly happen again.”

On QB Quincy Patterson’s reps in practice and how he has played so far:

“I’ve been pleased with all four of our quarterbacks quite honestly. Josh (Jackson) barring any unforeseen circumstances, he’s the starter. Figuring out the other order of things has been interesting in a good way. Ryan (Willis) has a bit of experience and he’s continuing to take reps and Hendon (Hooker) is much improved from the spring. You can tell that he put quite a bit of work in this summer and he’s reaping some of those benefits. Quincy is still deserving of some reps. We’re pretty meticulous about how we’re planning all of those out both getting Josh ready to play and continuing to sort through those other three guys and figure out if we’re going to limit a package for one of them or two of them and then have the third one be responsible for all of it. We’re still figuring that sort of stuff out.”

On the new redshirt rule and how do you evaluate position-by-position who might get some snaps in a game this season

“I really like the rule, it’s created a lot more discussion. We kind of put guys in three categories as we move through camp and move through the season. One being, they’re not ready to play, two being they’re on the bubble and three being ‘Play them and let’s go.’ It has created more conversation for those bubble guys in terms of how we’re going to handle that. Hopefully we’ll gain some more redshirts on some of those guys – we’ll see in the long run but it certainly could affect Quincy in his situation as it could across the board. We’re going to probably, I’m not going to put any numbers on them because I don’t know them, we’ll probably play quite a few young guys this year. For us in particular I think it will be an ongoing discussion throughout the year. Maybe if you had a little more veteran team it would be a little more settled but I think its going to be a continuous thing in regards to special teams and position by position.”

On the freshman who might see some game time in 2018:

“Oh I think it’s a little too early for that, you know its kind of hard for me in my mind because the kids that come in last semester are in there with the guys that just showed up in the summertime and they’re usually a little bit farther along. They’ve been through 15 spring practices and an off-season and all that kind of stuff. There are several guys that have done well, there’s a whole slew of young defensive backs that we’re still filtering our way through. I think Dax (Hollifield) is going to play. I’ve been wrong before, but I see him continuing to improve and playing for us in some capacity. The guy that we’re still trying to figure out is James Mitchell. You think about him coming from southwest Virginia playing quarterback and wide receiver and free safety, then to go put your hand in the dirt and try to play tight end, his improvement on almost a daily basis has been noticeable. Really figuring out if he’s going to continue to improve is going to be important for us.”

On Blacksburg native RB Cole Beck, his speed and if he may wind up on special teams:

“Oh that’s certainly a possibility. He has pretty elite speed but it’s still an adjustment for all of these guys, not just the speed of the game but the volume of responsibility that they have. We’re looking at all of those guys on special teams and on both sides of the ball and we’ll see how it all shakes out but its certainly something that we’re paying attention to.”

On RB Coleman Fox also working at the slot WR position:

“Well I think that Coleman gives us a chance to have some depth in both spots. We felt comfortable that he knew what he was doing at running back and wanted to get him some work in the slot but in the spring he ended up back at running back for numbers and that sort of stuff. He certainly provides some versatility there with a guy that can handle it mentally and has a chance to be able to do either for us.”

On whether QB Josh Jackson was going to be the starter all along or would it have taken something spectacular for someone else to be named the starter:

“I don’t know if it would’ve had to have been spectacular, I don’t know what they would’ve had to have done. We divided reps and gave everyone an opportunity and we still feel like Josh is

the best one for us and Josh has never batted an eye when we handled it like that. He hasn't changed the way he's gone about things. He's earned that opportunity and he'll be the guy."