

**Virginia Tech Football**  
**Head Coach Justin Fuente Q&A Highlights**  
**VT Media Day**  
**August 26, 2018**

***Opening statement:***

“First of all just thank to all of our fans that came out for Fan Day. It’s a very enjoyable experience for our players and our staff. It’s very fun to work and live in a place that you know appreciates and values all of the work our kids put in and appreciates our program. It’s always a fun part of the year when we get to do that.”

“This morning we had our mock game or we just finished up mock weekend which I think is pretty important for us this year. It’s important every year but given the number of newcomers that will probably play early in the season it was a good exercise for us to go through our meetings and pregame rituals and really work game operation in that mock scrimmage and the kids handled it well. They did a great job, stayed focused and they will be off tomorrow and we’ll be back at it Tuesday getting ready for the game.”

***On preparation for an opponent with a new coaching staff in FSU:***

“Well it just takes a little more leg work. You know you have to piece things together. For instance, you watch Florida State film for personnel and then you watch where the coordinators have been from or what they’ve historically done for a scheme and then you try to match those two together. The good news is when it’s the first game you got time to comb through all of that. The bad news is you haven’t seen those two things together on film because they obviously haven’t played a game this year. It just takes a little more leg work there.”

***On thoughts Florida State’s defense combined with new coaching staff:***

“Well from what I’ve read and what I’ve seen I think they’re going to be pretty deep & athletic. I mean they’ve got a pretty accomplished secondary and defensive line. Maybe a little less experienced but that doesn’t mean they’re any less talented but a little bit less experienced at linebacker. They play a lot of tight coverage. I think there’s going to be a lot of gimmes out there. Just historically from Florida state in the past and with their new coordinator and the scheme we anticipate I think guys in the secondary are going to be down there tight.”

***On his thoughts about opening up with the first game as a conference game and the possibility for it to happen again due to the ACC Network:***

“Well I would say this: it would not be my first choice quite honestly but I’m not going to talk about it. I understand the things that we’ll need to do to continue to build up the network. I understand some of the requirements that come with it. No, if I was picking I would probably not choose that but I also kind of get it and kind of understand why there may be in the future some more early season conference games.”

***On seeing improvement in the running game:***

“I think the biggest thing for me is our overall efficiency. When you’re running the ball on first and ten, in order for that to be an efficient play even if it’s four yards or more, that’s starting on the chains. That’s on pace to make first downs and move the ball on the field. Obviously on third and two it doesn’t require four yards for it to be efficient according to our statistics or our computation. For me, it’s can we be more efficient? Can we create some bigger plays? You know that something we’ve talked about. Can we get the ball to the edge and the end and make that person miss? Can we run the ball to the inside and get the ball to the end and make that person miss? And then do we finish forward? I think quite honestly we have not finished forward. Those extra two or three yards from finishing forward are important in terms of staying on the chain and being able to be efficient running the football.”

***On chemistry of the offense:***

“I feel pretty good about it. I think it’s a group that’s hungry for improvement I feel like there’s a good mix of a couple older offensive lineman with some young guys and there’s some younger players that have played. That have been through it. They may be a little more seasoned than their age would suggest so I feel good about that part of it. Those guys and their communication ability and Josh’s ability to handle the moment and get things communicated to our guys and their kind of give and take on that side.”

***On what kind of year it will be for wide receivers after a year of experience:***

“Well the first thing is, when you’re talking about going from being a true freshman to a sophomore, it’s different than a junior to a senior. Some of the gains you can make physically can really help you be a much better player are really important from freshman to sophomore year. We’ve talked about this but we’ve put some guys out there that were really, really green and they’ve got a whole year of lifting and training that I hope helps them in the long run just from a physical standpoint. You hope to that the longer they’re in the system, the more versatile they become. You like to have guys that you can continue to move around to different spots because of their knowledge base in the system. They’re not just worried about their one piece of the puzzle, they have a bigger overall perspective and understanding of everything. There’s a physical aspect of it. There’s a mental aspect of it. There’s a level of confidence playing at that level that I think is important that sometimes can come with some experience.”

***On FB Steven Peoples:***

“First of all, as a person, everything he does he does as hard as he possibly can. There’s just no cruise control. He’s just all out. As a football player, he understands his identity. He is a strong, tough runner that the first crease he sees he takes. He doesn’t wait on it for the next best opportunity to come out. If there’s a glimmer in there, he’s punching a hole in it. He runs with great pad level and he is just strong as a bull. I really believe he has the chance to be really productive. He never says a word either which is nice. He’s just quiet. Occasionally we like some of those quiet players.”

***On if and how the young defense will handle playing a team where you don't know what to expect:***

“Well the first game of the year you never know what you’re going to get anyway but in short the answer to your question is yes. More people with the more experience you have, the easier it is to make adjustments and handle the unknown. The less experience and the less knowledge you have the harder to handle the unknown in real time. That’s true whether it’s at safety or quarterback or wide receiver or really at any position where you have unexperienced players. There’s just handling the unknown and seeing them handle the adjustments because their knowledge level may not be up to par with Terrell and Tremaine Edmunds and that’s just kind of part of it.”

***On LB Rayshard Ashby and how the linebacker group as a whole takes coaching:***

“Rayshard is an exceptional learner and can apply those things really really well and they’re all at a different level but I would say Rayshard is exceptional.”

***On what concerns him and what gives him confidence about the offense heading into Game One:***

“Well I’m not sure I know how to answer that question. I feel good about a lot of things. I feel good that they’re in the process of preparing and hopefully we can push the ball down the field. Hopefully we can change tempos in the game. Hopefully we can run and protect the quarterback. I’m optimistic we’ll be able to do those things and we’ll see as the season plays out.”

***On The ACC discontinuing injury reports:***

“We want it to all be the same. In terms from league to league, from coach to coach, from across the country, we just wanted it to be the same. That was the underlying theme. I don’t think it was a vote of protest as much as it was hey we think this should all be the same. Whatever everybody else is doing is what we want to do and if we all need to make a change then we’ll all make a change. I think it was more along those lines.”

***On the health of the team due to fewer camp practices:***

“I feel pretty good. I don’t know if it’s because we practice four less times but we still have plenty of practices left so I don’t want to jinx it but I feel pretty good so far.”

***On goals and improvement of the running game:***

“Well I’ve been pleased with Deshawn’s [McClease’s] off-season. He came on and played pretty well towards the end of the year last year. He’s added some more weight. He’s looked good through camp. Steven [Peoples] we didn’t have for a portion of the year at least. I felt like maybe more than a portion but I’ve been pleased with him. [Jalen] Holston and [Terius] Wheatley have been battling it out for that next spot and Terius has made some improvements. He brings some things in terms of his overall speed. In terms of his running ability, Jalen’s a little different body than Terius so it’s really not fair to compare those two together. They’re two different guys. I’ve been please with their development. I need them to continue to get better.

They've all taken the challenge through the off season and into fall camp to improve and be productive players for us."