

**Virginia Tech Football
Safeties Coach Justin Hamilton Q&A Highlights
North Carolina Week Media Session
October 15, 2019**

On the development of DB Devon Hunter:

“Devon has been the same guy every day. The biggest thing I’ve seen in his development is that he’s prepared like a starter. He never complained about not being a starter. He comes to work, wants to go do his job, wants to be coached, wants to get better in every way. Probably my favorite thing about Devon is that he’s excited about getting an opportunity, but hates the circumstances that they came in, because he would never want it to be at the expense of a teammate.”

On Hunter deciding to redshirt last season and develop before he could get on the field:

“I don’t want to put words in his mouth, but in my dealings with him, he was a guy who was trying to figure out exactly what he wanted and exactly how to get it. There were some times where it was probably challenging for him, because he’s had a lot of people tell him what he should be doing or what’s best for him or how he should be performing. And he was sorting out what is role and his job was, and he did a phenomenal job in that he came back here, stayed here for all the right reasons, and he’s ready to go.”

On whether Hunter ever expressed any frustration playing the nickel spot:

“He never expressed that to me. Here’s a guy who, having just talked to him yesterday, got his first offer as an eighth grader. Ever since then, all anyone’s told him is what should be done or how he should have it go. I can’t imagine being 14 years old and having that be me. Ultimately, he got an opportunity and it was at a position where—whether he was ready or not for that spot, I don’t know—but I know that he never said that. And it was difficult because that’s a tough position. But he’s never once complained about anything. He never complains, never says he wants to play this or play that. He says, ‘Whatever you guys ask me to do, I’ll try to do it to the best of my abilities.’ I think he is in the right spot for him but if we asked him to go to nickel, or go to D-tackle, or go to O-line, he’d try do it.”

On his relationship with Hunter and whether Hamilton’s own experience playing several positions before finding the right spot resonated with Hunter:

“I hope so. The thing I tried to express to [Devon] last year was if my experience helps him, then my experience was worth it. If it helps these guys and they can relate to it, and helps them to understand what they’re going through and gives them encouragement, then it was worth it for me. Speaking on it first-hand always helps people understand, or relate, or have motivation going forward in their own circumstances. I felt the same way for [Devon] that I felt when I was in his shoes, where you just need to continue working to figure it out. There’s some dark times in your own mind. But if you continue to do that, you will break through that wall, and he has done that.”

On the targeting call on S Reggie Floyd ejected, and how the coaching staff teaches players to avoid targeting:

“I’m all for player safety. So, if it’s about keeping players safe, then it was the right call. The difficult thing is, if you watch film of that play, there’s nothing Reggie could have done. Once the guy had the ball, there was nowhere else to (tackle) that guy. I was just talking to our guys on the practice field—the only area where we can aim nowadays is between the middle and the bottom of the numbers and the belt buckle. Maybe the upper thigh pad area. What’s difficult is when you’re aiming for that, you and I can sit here and paint it on the wall and go, ‘Hit it.’ But when it’s an elite athlete on scholarship in a Power Five conference, it’s tough. You coach it as best you can to give them a strike zone. But even the guys in Cooperstown (Baseball HOF) miss the strike zone even though they aim at it with the best intentions.”