

**Virginia Tech Football**  
**Head Coach Justin Fuente Q&A Highlights**  
**Media Conference**  
**April 10, 2019**

***Opening Statement***

“Thank you all for coming. First of all, just a public welcome to [men’s basketball coach] Mike Young and his family to Virginia Tech. Very happy to have him and I got the chance to say hello to him the other day. He’s got a lot going on, but I’m looking forward to watching his teams play and working here together at Virginia Tech. Big day coming up on Saturday with the Spring Game and our kids are getting excited. We have one more practice tomorrow morning before we get to that.

“There’s a lot going on here. It has a chance to be a great day for our fans with our players staying afterwards to sign autographs. Before the game, lacrosse is playing here and [Head coach] John Sung has done a great job with that program. Our softball team is ranked and [Head coach] Pete [D’Amour] has done a great job. They’re having a fantastic season and I think they’re playing Virginia this weekend.

“Obviously, it’ll be a big day for us recruiting wise. We’ll have a tremendous amount of prospects on campus showing off Virginia Tech and our atmosphere in the Spring Game. I will encourage as many people as possible to come and we also have the Run of Remembrance, as well. I like having the Spring Game in the middle of all of these other events. I think it just adds to the celebration, to the atmosphere and having as many people and things going on that day as possible is good for that.

“I haven’t made any final decision to the format of the Spring Game. I’ll tell you what I’m looking into doing. We will make a final decision on Thursday after I see the injury report. That is the sole determining factor of how we do this, but I’m leaning towards maybe creating a situation where we do a little bit more on the field than we have the last couple of years. Maybe not being as tied in to a clock as much as being tied in to getting good repetitions and creating some situational work with the offense and the defense. There will be a little bit of special teams work, but it will mostly be primarily centered around offense and defense. Get some situational work and some good scrimmage and action. I think it will be good for our young team to get in front of people and play a few more snaps than in the past. As I said, not tie it to a clock, but make it more like a traditional scrimmage for us, which I think will be better for everybody since everybody will get more work. With that said, we still have one more practice and we’re getting a little thin at a couple places and I certainly don’t want to put anybody in harm’s way by forcing them to take too many reps because the line is just too short in that spot. That’s what we’re thinking about moving forward, but we’ll make the decision after we practice on Thursday. I think everybody should be excited about the day. They’re telling me the weather should be nice, or has a chance to be nice. It should be a great celebration of Virginia Tech across the board.”

***On having three practices after the Spring Game:***

“My plan going in when I set the schedule this way, first of all you have to be flexible based on your numbers. That’s entirely what we have to depend on. My plan was to do a little bit more on this day because we still have another week. [Saturday] will be the last time we do scrimmage. We will still get good work. Our week next week will be two good practices on Tuesday and Thursday with points of emphasis that we will need to hit on both sides of the ball. A little bit of service for each other and a little bit of a dress rehearsal for the summer time and what we expect and doing some individual work on Friday. [Saturday] will be the last scrimmage, but it won’t be the last practice. My anticipation will be that it will be a little bit longer and little bit larger body of work for us since it’s our last scrimmage and practice 12. Traditionally, we would have a big scrimmage on practice 12 and the spring game would be tapered down a little bit. We won’t have the short abbreviated scrimmage that we have had the past few years.”

***On his approach to using a traditional Spring Game format:***

“I’ve done it a bunch of different ways. One year we took the one’s and put them in 21-point hole and they played against the so our two’s and three’s so our one’s could be on the same sideline. I like that the year that we did it. We didn’t do that here obviously. Basically, I’m always open to looking at what we can and can’t do. I want it to be a competitive event. I want it to be guys on a staging having to perform and as importantly I want our fans to get a taste of our players and our program. I’m just at the mercy of the numbers. It’s just different than it was 20 years ago, we all know that. If we ever get to the point that we can safely divide up and try to do something like that, I’m completely open to it. We re-evaluate it ever single year based on what we got.”

***On whether the quarterbacks be live at any point on Saturday:***

“Well, we’ve had a little bit of an interesting deal. Both Quincy [Patterson] and Hendon [Hooker] have been a little bit limited at times in practice. Ryan [Willis] has not and these are purely health deals. Hooker turned his ankle the other day and he came back for practice the other day and should be good for the spring game. We’ll see how he feels on Thursday, but he missed a little bit of time with that. Patterson had a pretty sizeable cut early in the on his right index finger and it made it pretty difficult for him to throw a football. He couldn’t really get that index finger down on the ball. He was a little limited, but he could still practice, but he couldn’t throw the ball as much as he would have liked to do. I think we’re getting past that. Patterson has gotten out of that and Hooker is coming out of his ankle deal. We did a little bit of live work with Patterson on Saturday and Hooker did not participate because of his ankle. After practice Thursday we will decide and we may do a little bit of that. I can promise you that we won’t do the whole thing with live quarterbacks, but there may be a segment that we that will be live. After Thursday I’ll know, but it’s something we’re talking about for Saturday.”

***On his philosophy of when to announce a starting QB:***

“With that position, when you know, you know. You make the decision and move forward and that’s what we’ve always done. It just so happens that in our short time here, we’ve found ourselves with competition each time. Those guys know that even if they’re the starter, if they

don't go out there and work and they don't continue to improve that we have someone else and we're going to play them and that's at every position. Naming a starter carries weight in some respects, but in other respect there is the caveat that if you're not carrying your weight, doing your job or if somebody else is doing it better, then it's our obligation to go with some that person. I've never really believed in delaying a decision or delaying that position for other reasons. When we know, we put it out there. It's just since we've been here we've had competition in the spring and in the fall when we've known we've put it out there and moved forward."

***On whether there is anything specifically in the Spring Game that he wants to see:***

"I don't know if there is anything specific. I haven't really thought about what I want to see on Saturday. I know what I want to see tomorrow. What we want to see in practice and some of our situational work, but as a whole I want those guys to go out there and compete on a stage. I want them to play with emotion, discipline and execute. Ultimately as a head coach, you want to see a play called, see 22 guys do their job and at the end of the play, whether we made the play or didn't make the play, everyone did what they were supposed to do and are in the right position. As many of those reps that we can see, the happier I will be."

***On how has QB Hendon Hooker handled this spring with entering and leaving the transfer portal:***

"You would never know that anything has happened. He's been great. I told him it's not something that I will ever hold over your head. It's a situation we worked through and moved forward. I haven't noticed any difference in Hendon at all."

***On whether people read in to whoever starts at QB on Saturday:***

"No. I wouldn't read too much into anything. We'll be shuffling people around and trying to shuffle the squad. James Mitchell has had a great spring. I've talked about him a bunch times and he has a broken finger and he had surgery on it. I don't know how much he's going to play. He has a big cast on. He wants to play. As much as we can put him out there safely we will. We'll see on Thursday how he does. The quarterbacks are like the other positions, I wouldn't read who's a starter, who's not a starter and where we're going. We're still trying to formulate all of this stuff, but we're having some good competition at places."

***On whether anyone will be out for the spring game who wasn't announced earlier in the spring***

"Yes, I'm sure there are. I don't have them in front of me. I'm sure there will be guys that weren't on the original list. Some of them are day-to-day as you can imagine."

***On whether this year's team ahead of where last year's team was at this point:***

"That's an interesting way to think about it. I would have to say just by pure guys coming back, I feel a little bit better about where we're at mentally. I feel pretty darn good about where we're at emotionally. We're still young and finding our way. We need to continue gaining confidence the right way on a consistent basis. You can't help but feel a little bit better do have guys that have game experience out there practicing."

***On how has QB Quincy Patterson handled the attention that comes with being a top recruit:***

“I think he’s done a really good job with all of it quite honestly. He seems to be a very level-headed young man. Very humble and hard working. I would say the same thing about Hendon [Hooker], but that’s part of it. These kids deal with expectations, labels or whatever you want to give them when they come out of high school. Everybody develops on their own time and everybody has different experiences through their high school and pop warner careers that bring them into college at a certain level. Some guys are ahead mentally, but far behind physically and some guys are flip-flopped. They’re very developed physically, but are learning to catch up to the speed of the game and the intricacies of playing ball. On a whole, I think he’s done a tremendous job of not getting impatient, but also having an urgent to improve. To me, that is the balance. Guys want to get better, they have an urgency to be good right now, but also, they’re not impatient in terms of understanding that there is a process that goes along with this. He’s done a good job of that.”

***On whether coming back from injury give Bryce Watt some respect in the locker room and has he taken on that leadership role:***

“I think it’s huge. It speaks to how much he cares about his teammates and how much he wants to play and contribute for Virginia Tech and this program. We have a lot of guys that did things like that. Maybe they didn’t have surgery on their arm, but many of the guys that aren’t participating in spring ball are doing so because they battled through things the entire season and didn’t complain or whine. They just continued to try to get out there and help this football team and this football program. That is contagious. Guys continuing to not just work hard, but sacrifice and try and push through things to help this football program. Those are good things and those should be applauded, recognized and they certainly do carry weight throughout the locker room.”