

**Virginia Tech Football**  
**Head Coach Justin Fuente Q&A Highlights**  
**Media Conference**  
**April 1, 2019**

**Opening Statement**

“We are seven practices in had a really good workout yesterday, it will be a challenge for us on Thursday. In our short time, our Thursday workouts in my opinion haven’t been as good as our Tuesdays or Saturdays. We had a good scrimmage last Saturday, hopefully we can keep that momentum going. I really enjoyed getting those older guys back here for pro day, getting to spend time with Greg [Stroman], Tim [Settle], Isiah [Ford], Terrell [Edmunds], Andrew [Motuapuaka], and Sam [Rogers] – such great guys it’s good fun to cheer them on in their success. And have get them around our players too, I think that’s important. They are such great examples for Virginia Tech and our young players. I am looking forward to a good day tomorrow.”

***On how the offense looked during Saturday’s scrimmage:***

“It was pretty restricted on both sides, there was a lot of work to be done everywhere. The offense focused on just a few running plays, and the defense focused on a few calls lined up and tried to go compete. We’ve got a lot of work to do everywhere but I am excited about the direction, enthusiasm, and the competitiveness of this group.”

***On Sam Rogers returning to participate in Pro Day:***

“I think it’s an important message for everyone, I’m not preaching to everyone with this comment I’m just talking about our players it’s an important message. I think sometimes people get so concerned with failing that they don’t try their best. They are concerned about how they look, what people might say or how it may be perceived. As opposed to just focusing on their best and giving it everything that they have. Sam [Rogers] in his short professional career or timeline has been through many ups and downs already but he’s not too proud to continue to admit that he still wants to play at that level still believes he can play at that level. I believe he can play at that level. And is willing to do whatever it takes to get those opportunities. Sometimes that fear or hesitation about how we may look or what other people may say or how it may actually go prevents us all from doing the best we can do and that is certainly not the case with Sam and I think it’s an important lesson for everyone.”

***On how TE James Mitchell has looked so far:***

“He’s had a really good spring, he’s had a really good off-season, he will need to have a great summer. For him it’s centered around his upper-body strength continuing to develop that. He can run he’s got a good lower body, he’s really intelligent so he picks it up really quickly. I think the experience he got and the confidence he got from playing last year has carried over into the spring, we see a more confident player on the line of scrimmage in terms of blocking assignments and in the passing game. He’s been everything we could have hoped for.”

***On finding ways to get the ball into WR Tre Turner's hands:***

"I think that will be a direction we will probably continue to go, as long as he continues to improve. He's certainly got areas in his game that he needs to work on he knows this and he works diligently in weight room to continue to improve his strength. But he is a guy who was effective running the football so I'd imagine that will be something we continue to try to do with him. I don't know that that is an overriding source of emphasis through the spring time I'm not as concerned about that part of it. It is continuing the nuances of playing wide out and technique and getting acclimated to his new coach those sorts of things. I anticipate that he will continue to progress at a high rate he's a really sharp young man with quite a bit of talent."

***On Turner potentially returning punts:***

"would say he and a long list of other people may return punts. Its short of taking out an advertisement in the school paper and asking for frat guys to show up and catch punts, we are having open tryouts."

***On WR Damon Hazelton getting healthy:***

"It's nice to get him out there full speed, he's full go right now he played a little bit in the scrimmage still getting back into that level of practice on a consistent basis, that is what we are trying to push him for so he can continue to improve. It's good to have him back, he didn't have hardly any summer time preparing for our fall camp because of off-season surgery last year. He's missed quite a bit of it this year. Having a great spring and in turn having a great summer is going to be incredibly important for him and in his development."

***On the improvements that LB Dax Hollifield has made in the spring:***

"I would say he certainly has a better handle on trying to guide that missile, at times he has been somewhat of an unguided missile out there and I mean that as a compliment, that's the way you want them. It's a lot better to try to teach them to say 'woah' then to teach them to say 'go.' He continues to get more comfortable with what we are asking him to do which can allow him to play faster, maybe even faster than he actually is. I've seen him take large strides in that direction through the spring."

***On how the defensive back have looked so far:***

"It's been fun to get those guys out there and also to really look at you've got [Bryce] Watts you've got Caleb [Farley] and you've got Jovonn [Quillen] and you've got [JR] Waller who is coming along who has a great skill set and you've got Armani [Chatman] in there that showed up for us on special teams during the season but we wanted to keep him under the five games, at four games. It has been fun to see all those guys out there and go work. I'm really pleased by them and excited about the competition we will have for playing time. I think those guys have the chance to really push to really create some competition there in the back end. That's kind of the neat part about what we do, I think when you play with five guys in the secondary you can start to enter change people around a bit there is really only one position that is a little different is the boundary the safety position is usually a bigger person but it's kind of cool and you've got Nadir Thompson and Jeremy Webb that are out that we are looking forward to getting into that mix, we will how it all shakes out. I guess in short they've done well, getting all

our guys out there competing on both sides of the ball is important for the corner position that Damon Hazelton practice that they go against Hazelton that they go against Tre [Turner] that they go against Phil Patterson, it's important for us to continue to facilitate that through the next eight or nine practices so we can continue to evaluate and see how much better we can get."

***On CB Jeremy Webb's health:***

"He hasn't practiced yet we are just getting Jeremy healthy he's doing well. He carries a certain weight with those guys, I don't know if I've ever seen a guy that's never played carry as much weight with the younger players as I have with Jeremy [Webb]. It's kind of a neat thing to see. I know everybody on our team is anxious to get him back, and how it all works out we will worry about, right now let's just get him healthy. Him and Dalton Keene were at practice the other day he and Keene were walking around doing their rehab and conditioning or whatever they are allowed to do during practice and I just hollered out to them to make sure they knew that those two guys, they are a huge part of the 2019 Virginia Tech Hokies and they both kind of smiled. You can't wait to get guys like that and Christian Darrisaw and the rest of the guys back on the field to see what it all looks like."

***On the importance of having the NFL guys back for Pro Day:***

"It's great for our kids to know they are supported. Many of our young players did not play with those guys, they don't know them on a personal level it's great to see them and have them be around our younger players knowing they are cheering them on. Selfishly for myself it was great to spend time with them we got several hours to hangout and go out to eat and just kind of relax and fellowship a little bit, probably more importantly to see our players get a chance to see those guys and talk to them and use them as a resource though their own career."

***On how have the receivers and quarterbacks looked so far:***

"I hope so we get them all out there together we have a chance to build a little chemistry and a little confidence. Being able to throw the ball when guys aren't just wide open and to me that is the next step you can take. Throwing the football and confidence is understanding anticipation and understanding where the ball needs to be for certain guys to make plays when they aren't just wide open. That is certainly a work in progress for us right now, we've got Hazelton out there we've got Elijah Bowick out there full speed now and that has been really pleasant and nice to try and get all those guys together is going to be big for us down the road."

***On how has DL TyJuan Garbutt looked this spring:***

"He's in the process of having a very good spring. He has a unique ability to twist and contort his body to get his pad level down, slide through places and make plays. I think he has a lot of talent and he's a tough player. He may be the most grateful kid that we have in our program. He is just really appreciative of everything that he has at Virginia Tech from academics support to coaching and the training staff. It is just a pleasure to be around and I think he has a bright future. He has continued to get better, but he has to continue to concentrate on his diet and his calorie intake so that he can maximize his training throughout the summer and leading into the season. I've been really encouraged by him."

***On whether he's surprised DT Ricky Walker didn't get invited to the Senior Bowl or the NFL Combine:***

"Am I surprised, yes. Do I know all that goes into that? No. I just know how I feel due to what I have seen from him every single day since I have been with him. What I have seen is a guy with a great motor, a great work ethic and a high discipline level. I'm sure there maybe be some metrics that he does or does not fit for the next level, but given the opportunity, I know people would be glad that they took a chance on him. I think he performed well in his pro day and the ball will be in his court to make the most of it."