

Virginia Tech Football
QB Ryan Willis Q&A Highlights
Media Availability
Aug. 22, 2019

On being told to compete again to get the starting QB job and why he embraced that challenge:

“I mean, you should assume that nothing is handed to you. You have to come out and practice every day like you’re trying to earn the spot. And that’s the way you get better, you got to compete, push others around you and they got to push you. We want our quarterback room to be as competitive as possible and that’s the only way we will get better as a team. Nothing is given, nothing has ever been given and it’s only been earned.”

On if he felt like he has played pretty well so far during preseason camp:

“Yeah, but I can still take another step with me not being where I want to be yet. Luckily, we still have nine more days [until game day] to put on some finishing touches. I thought I had a pretty good spring and carried that over into the summer. Now, I just really got to get geared up with turning our attention to BC. We will do everything we can to win that game.”

On having a gunslinger’s mentality but not taking too many chances at the same time and how he’s worked on that:

“With it being my third year in the system, I feel pretty good about that balance. I like the way I’m seeing things and the way I’ve been operating from a coverage recognition, having a pre-snap plan and allowing it to all fall into place. I like where things are headed for this offense in general. I think we have a chance to have a good year offensively and I look forward to it.”

On if he still has the devil on the shoulder even though on his other shoulder Coach Fuente wouldn’t want him to make risky throws:

“No, I think Coach [Brad] Corn [Cornelsen] and Coach [Justin] Fuente have knocked that little devil on my shoulder (laughing). I mean, we like taking chances on occasion when they’re given to us, but we’re never going to put the ball in jeopardy. That’s our No. 1 thing, ball security. You can’t win games when you don’t put points on the board. And to put points on the board, you have to have the ball. So, just taking care of the ball and taking chances on occasion, you just have to have an even balance on that.”

On how he views the receiver group:

“The receivers have really gained a lot of experience. We didn’t really lose anyone besides a transfer. But the guys that have come back have really taken that next step. We are just trying to eliminate the silly mistakes and bring some of the young guys along. At the same time, we have had some young guys that have really stepped up for his. Tayvion Robinson is electric and is going to be a really good player for us. I look forward to seeing him on the field. And then some of these upperclassmen, the guys we got coming back, they have to bring other guys along. There’s always another step we can take, but I do like where the receiver room is right

now.”

On how he found out that he was named the starting quarterback:

“I mean, all the quarterbacks in the room we know where we sit. We practice every day and take the reps and how you perform, things kind of fall into place with how you play on the field. It wasn’t anything too special when they told me. Coach [Brad] Corn [Cornelsen] pulled me into his office and goes, ‘Oh yeah, we’re naming you the starter.’ Then he went on to say what he wants me to improve on. And then he’s been still coaching me and pushing me. Just because I’m the starter doesn’t mean I can stop working. I need to still watch film, keep practicing, bring others along and just get better every day.”

On what it is he wants to improve on before he and the team take on Boston College:

“Probably my defensive end reads, whether its zone read, jet sweep read or power read. I want to gain a better feel with getting a better understanding of the technique that the defensive ends take. It happens so quick that you have to be decisive. There are obvious looks when it’s the wrong arm, you squeeze and you pull the ball. It’s when it’s the grey looks, the in-between looks that I need to improve on. I think I have been putting in a lot of good work in that area, so hopefully it shows on the field.”

On earning the starting job at Kansas and now doing it again at Virginia Tech:

“That feels like a long time ago (laughing). This will be my fourth year of being a starting Division I quarterback, and not many people can say that, which is pretty cool. I’ve gone through a lot of stuff, a lot of ups and downs. But the one thing that has remained constant the whole time is my love for the game. I love football, stepping onto the field and competing. I’m going to do everything I can for this team. I just want to go 1-0 and win one game at a time.”