

Virginia Tech Football

Head Coach Justin Fuente Q&A Highlights

Media Conference

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"It was good to get on the field yesterday. Young guys, old guys, and guys, we were anxious to get back on the field. Kids had a good workout, and we have another one today. We will go through our morning walk through and our practices in the afternoon. We've got a nice chunk of about six practices before our next break. We are off to a good start."

On the guys who have made good strides:

"I do think physically; we've got guys that have another year of nutrition and another year of lifting that look better. They all have different things that they are trying to accomplish. Some are weight gain guys, and some are weight loss guys. Some of our guys still have a ways to go but when you think about what Hezekiah Grimsley first looked like versus now and Dax Hollifield how he has made a concerted effort to lose weight and slim down a little bit. Alan Tisdale just continues to develop and improve his body. Armani Chatman is another one on the defensive side of the ball who continues to develop and grow. It's fun to see those guys through their hard work have a chance to be players."

On the where the freshman offensive lineman are lining up to begin practice:

"Will Pritchard has been starting out at center, Doug Nester has been at guard, Bryan Hudson has been at tackle, and Jesse Hanson has been at guard. Nester and Hudson have been on the right side, and Hanson has been on the left side. Pritchard is probably more of a centers body that was kind of our vision for him. We will see with the other guys I don't really know how it will all shape out. We are just trying to get them point in the right direction right now."

On if there is a time when he needs to hear news on OL Brock Hoffman:

"Sooner rather than later would be good. I haven't projected forward my own thoughts toward a date. We are all anxious to hear some good news. We'll continue to manage it, certainly get him reps but also try to play both sides of the coin for us. It's early right now, so it's not a huge issue, but I'm optimistic. I'm optimistic that eventually, we will hear something."

On if everything has gone back to normal after the Bud Foster news:

"Yeah, I haven't heard a word about it since then. I don't mean that in any negative way towards Bud, but Bud made it clear that's the way he wants it. Our kids have been great; they have been energized and focused on ourselves and getting better. That's also kind of per the directive from Foster so once we got through all of that stuff and got it all out on the table the guys have been full steam ahead."

On where he feels DB Jeremy Webb is right now:

"I just know it was great to have him out there. We brought him up at the end of practice for over a year now, and it was his first practice. We'll continue to monitor him. He is the perfect

example of our GPS and helping us with the return to play people. We have specific goals and things that we want to reach with him. We still hold him out of stuff, trying to take it slowly, and we will evaluate where he is at. It's just good to have him out there."

On the four freshman wide receivers:

"I think they are all unique. They are all kind of at different levels of development. I walked off the field yesterday feeling really good about all four their futures here. It's hard for me to rate how soon they will be able to contribute, but I really was impressed by all of them. Two of them haven't really ever played wide receiver. Jaden Payoute and Tayvion Robinson both played quarterback. So there a little bit of a transition there. I've been pleased and impressed by what they can be after watching them for just one day. Elijah Bowick is a big kid; he is just a different type of body. He has some real quickness for a big kid. He is still learning how to play fast. We have to keep him healthy and keep him practicing because he's got a lot to learn about the nuances of playing the position."

On if he feels WR Tre, Turner needs to add more weight going forward:

"Yes, now he won't ever be just a huge person, but he has made a concerted effort. He came a semester early, and his shoulder had some issues, so he was very limited on what he could do during his first semester in terms of lifting; it was about getting healthy. He has dealt with bumps and bruises along the way. This summer was a really good long block for him of training. You can see it in his body; he has improved his body. I told him that he did look a lot better. We still have a long way to go with that, but it's a part of his focus. He knows that he had large strides to make with playing basketball, which I think it's all good I'm not banging on playing other sports but he was a pretty serious basketball player. He wasn't in the weight room as much as some other guys. Guys either run from that or hide from that or they embrace it and try to get better. Turner has embraced that and tried to get better."

On some details he will look regarding the progress of the young players:

"It goes quickly. You've got guys getting installation on special teams on their side of the ball. Can retain all that information and still play hard? That's hard, especially for new guys to do that when they are thinking to play quickly. How can we retain the information going forward trying to evaluate the specific skillsets? It's been one day, so I didn't sit down and say 'everybody gives me a report on all the new guys after one day.' We will continue to get a body of work here, and we will do our best to narrow it down and see who's got a chance to help us going forward."

On moving Jaylen Griffin from linebacker to defensive end:

"I felt Jaylen had been fighting his own growth. He is a big person, and it's almost like he was working so hard to stay at linebacker weight and mobility that it was almost hurting him. Bud talked to him, Charley Wiles talked to him, and I talked to him about the possibility. He has embraced it, and I think he feels a lot better. He immediately went up to 260-265 (pounds) without even trying, and I think it's a more comfortable spot for him. He is obviously learning what to do with technique and all that stuff. From a physical standpoint, I think it was a natural move for him."

On if he's happy with how healthy the team is going into fall camp:

"There are several guys who played beat up throughout the entire season, and as a result, they missed spring ball. Khalil Ladler, Dalton Keene and Christian Darrisaw are the first that come to mind that really toughed it out through the season and we didn't have them in the spring. We knew that we were going to get them back and it's been good to see them healthy and feeling good and out there practicing."

On if the game of college football is headed in a positive or negative direction:

"There is so much good in this game. It does so much good for so many people. Are there risks in it? Absolutely. But it has changed people's lives; it has taught people lessons, it has made some young men better people. My opinion is that it is the greatest team sport ever invented. Do we have our challenges in front of us? Absolutely, on a lot of fronts. We have to continue to investigate with an educated and open mind the safety of the people playing the game. There is an element of college football and business and that whole paradigm with what it looks like and how it's regulated that is completely imperfect. In my opinion, in need of intense scrutiny on how it's organized. I tell our coaches all the time to not just tell me the problems. Anybody can tell you the problems, but we need guys who can help find solutions to the problems. I'm certainly not going to give you the answers; I don't have them. I do think when we just ignore the issues or just go with the flow that's when we get ourselves into problems. I do think we need to have really intelligent conversations about the future of college football and how it's going to be structured and what we are going to do with it."

On what are some of those issues in college football and the solutions:

"Well, there is certainly amateurism and the whole financial aspect. Football coaches, through some of our own poor decisions lost some credibility, which I think is a shame. You combine poor decisions with the amount of money that's being made right now, and I think that's eroded away a little bit of the credibility of our profession which you hate to see. The business model, I don't think we should just ignore what's going on. There is a tremendous amount of good that comes through what we are all doing. It's too hard to just ignore. I don't have the correct answers, but I think we would be wise to take a good hard look at it."

On if he has seen a change in the culture of the team so far this season:

"I've noticed a lot. I don't always share it all, but I do feel like this group has a feeling for each other that's unique and special. They care about each other and enjoy each other's company. That doesn't mean all 110 of them are best friends, but I do think there is a level of unique chemistry going on right now that has a chance to be pretty special."

On whether WR Damon Hazelton has improved his speed:

"I don't know if he is noticeably quicker. You want him to be comfortable. He is a little bit leaner than a year ago. We will see as we go through it how he handles it through the camp when pads are on. It looks good; I don't think it a negative by any means."

On how he is running practice with the freshman:

"For right now we rotate those guys through. We have a couple of guys take reps with the ones, and a couple of guys take reps with the twos. Right now, we are still giving reps the third

huddle. There is no secret recipe or great math formula. We try to rotate those guys through to give them opportunities so we can evaluate them."

On his impressions of transfer QB Braxton Burmeister:

"I thought he was very impressive. We knew he was a good athlete. He is a studious person, a smart person. You really don't know until you see someone go through some hard workouts and hard times. He rose to the occasion and did a really good job this summer."

On when he times find to work out:

"I appreciate the compliment. I go down and try to get some type of exercise every day. If I have to get up and get out of whatever is going on than I'm going to try my best to find time to go do that. Whether it's going for a jog or getting into the weight room. I've probably been in the weight room a little more. Part of that is because it gives me a chance to be around the players a little more. I slide in there with them sometimes when we are doing extra workouts. I'm not in there every day with them, and I'm not in there to do anything but just slide in there. But I'll go in there if we have extra stuff after practice I'll slide-in there with them and go just to be around them some more."

On if a lot of players are enthusiastic about returning punts:

"There are a lot of guys who come up and tell me that they want to return punts. It's early, but Grimsley has done a really good job, and Tayvion Robinson seems pretty natural. That doesn't mean those guys are going to be the ones, that doesn't mean anything has been decided. You all know how I am about that, I'm usually pretty tight-lipped. I'm just telling you after one day those two looked pretty comfortable and natural back there."