

**Virginia Tech Football**  
**Head Coach Justin Fuente Q&A Highlights**  
**Open Week Press Conference**  
**Sep 16, 2019**

***Opening Statement***

“Coach [Jerry] Kill, I’ve known for some time, coached in FCS football against him and then I moved on to TCU. Me, him, and Coach Patterson are very close friends, so we continued our relationship through that time. I reached out to him this summer just to see if he wouldn’t mind coming to watch practice for a few days. [He] stayed over here in my house, watched fall camp, and gave some good feedback and input on everything we were doing – program wide. Over those couple days, we began to have some discussions – I didn’t think there was any way this would actually work, meaning that he would be interested in it, but he was.

“It’s been something we’ve been working on for some time, so I’m excited to welcome him into Virginia Tech. He’s going to be a fantastic resource for myself and for all of our coaches. This is certainly not – I don’t know how much anybody reads into the release – but this doesn’t have anything to do with Coach Foster’s situation or anything like that. This is an opportunity for Coach Kill to come in and continue to give us good feedback and to be involved in virtually every aspect of our program. We’ll be drawing on his years of experience and knowledge. I’m excited to have that resource for our coaches and myself. I look forward to getting him here and putting in the work. So that’s a good part of it, we’ve obviously got the bye week with a very talented Duke team on the horizon. We will practice Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. We will not practice Friday or Saturday. We’ll be back on it on Sunday, focusing on ourselves. For [next] Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday [we’ll focus on] Duke and ourselves.”

***On what Jerry Kill can help with:***

“I expect him to be a resource for all of us to use in terms of planning, management, -- and this is certainly not anything to do with (former football ops senior director) Danielle [Bartlestein’s] role. Matt Transue is in that role for right now handling the logistics for our team – this is not that. Just with the departure of Danielle, it did leave us an opening and some flexibility to work with. He’s a guy that can help us as we plan – both game plan, practice plan, and evaluation of everything we’re doing here.”

***On whether Kill can work with players:***

“That’s correct, [he cannot work with players]. He’s not an on-the-field coach. We have coaches that are off the field that travel with us and fulfill their legal responsibilities of what they’re allowed to do. We’ll fill that all out as we move forward.”

***On Jerry Kill staying at Fuente’s house during his camp visit:***

“It was really good. I told him I wanted to just talk about everything from the minute details that he noticed. I’ve done this before with other coaches, people that you know you can bring in that are going to tell you the truth. You don’t really want somebody to come in and say ‘yep,

everything looks good' and leave. You want somebody that has the courage and the knowledge base to give you good feedback, but also understands that some of it we can take and implement. We can't implement all of it and everything looks different, situations are different. Everything from how practice was organized, to personnel, to scheme and assignments."

***On the obstacles in getting Coach Kill to leave his job as AD at Southern Illinois to come to VT:***

"Well I thought that the biggest thing was Southern [Illinois] and what Southern means to Coach Kill – what he did for that place as a coach, what he was now doing for it as an administrator, the relationships, the friends that he has in that community; I thought that it was going to be really difficult, and I believe that it was really difficult. I had some discussions with his family, he's now a grandfather. There are all those sorts of things that have nothing to do with football that he was trying to figure out – I talked to his lovely wife Rebecca on the phone. I wasn't trying to convince anybody to do anything that they didn't want to do, but I did feel like there was a genuine opportunity, genuine interest from both parties. As we kind of made our way through discussing 'could it happen, and if so, how would it happen.'"

***On any memories that stand out from competing against Coach Kill when Fuente was at Illinois State:***

"I was not the head coach, so I didn't really know Coach Kill on a personal level, I wasn't at the conference meetings and that sort of stuff, but I did see first-hand what he did with that program. I'll probably get the numbers wrong, but I believe they won one game maybe his first year all the way to – they used to call it the Gateway Conference – multiple Gateway Conference Championships. My last couple years [at Illinois State], we were pretty good too, so we had some pretty good games, some pretty good battles. It was really remarkable because his teams were always hardnose, tough, disciplined."

***On Kill's health issues impacting his football coaching career:***

"I think that I'm safe in saying that he does not want to be very far from football. That is in his blood, that is who he is. Obviously, he has had some health issues to deal with, some difficulties, along with way with his health. I hope I'm not stepping out of line here by saying in his heart and soul, he's a football man. That was probably part of his reasoning [to join us]."

***On OL Silas Dzansi's struggles in last week's game:***

"I don't know that I can put my finger on it right now. I know what he's capable of, I believe in him, I see how hard he works every day. He knows that he can and will play better. That's part of our focus this week. We've got to have [improvement] – as a group – this is certainly not singling out Silas, but we've got to get Silas feeling good and playing better."