

Virginia Tech Football
Offensive Coordinator Brad Cornelsen Q&A Highlights
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On using WR Tre' Turner and TE James Mitchell in the run game:

“Well, a couple things. Number one, those guys are good ball carriers. If you identify some guys that have some skill with the ball in their hand, you trust them, that’s the first thing. The next thing is there’s schematic advantages to using receivers with jet motion. Your tailback becomes a blocker, it happens quickly, sometimes they can’t adjust to it. So, a couple of things. It’s something we’ve always liked to do, a good way to get the ball to the perimeter, creates a little bit of misdirection. As we continue to have more of those type of guys that can carry the ball for us that we trust, it helps. It helps everybody, it helps the offense.”

On if having receivers who can carry the helps the traditional run game:

“Yeah, when you can just hand the ball off to your tailback in normal sets that makes everything easier absolutely. But anytime you can take the pressure off your offensive line and your tailback on your base inside run game by getting the ball to the edges, by throwing the ball on first (down), all those things make it easier, loosen it up for the defense. They all complement each other absolutely.”

On OL Silas Dzansi struggling last week:

“Yeah, he’s fine. He didn’t use technique. Nobody cares or tries harder than Silas and he’s got the talent and the skill to do it. Just a lack of concentration and trusting his technique for whatever reason. He’s fine and he’s got to learn from that, you know, and understand that it can happen at any time against anybody. If you don’t go out there and each and every play you’re not locked in, you can get beat.”

On OL Luke Tenuta working at right tackle and in jumbo formations:

“We’re excited about him. He’s got to continue to come on, he’s got to get better. We’d love to continue to play him and keep him coming on. That’s the best way to develop is to get in there and get that action, so we like him in that [jumbo] set. He’s got to be ready to go in there and play at tackle also, but he’s done a good job. He’s still got a lot of things to improve on, but he’s got to be a guy that continues as the season goes along that we can put in there in a number of different situations.”

On QB Ryan Willis and his high completion percentage in the short passing game last week:

“Well, a lot of times it depends on what you’re getting. We were getting a decent amount of cover two against Furman. They’re playing to keep the ball in front of them. Sometimes those sort of things can dictate where you can throw the ball and how far you can throw it down the field and your opportunities to throw it. Ryan’s as accurate as anybody can be throwing the ball. He’s got that talent and skill to be as accurate as he needs to be. He continues to get better executing. We still got to eliminate - there’s critical errors every game that we’ve got to continue to stomp out. We can’t go play 90 percent of the game really, really good but still commit five or six really critical errors. Sometimes those critical errors are results and negative plays and turnovers, and sometimes they’re not. Sometimes you guys don’t even know they’re critical errors but they are. Sometimes they hurt us and sometimes they don’t. Those are the things with Willis that we just got to continue to work on. There’s improvement coming and he’s got to continue. He’s worked as hard as anybody we’ve ever had preparing for games and it’s important to him. He’s just got to continue to concentrate on every single down and do a better job in some of those critical moments.”

On if he knew Coach Jerry Kill prior to this summer

“Yeah, I’ve known Jerry for a long time. He coached me in eighth grade in a football camp. Taught me how to run the triple option so we go way back. He recruited my uncle’s team in Kansas. I’ve known him for a long, long time. He was in the league that I played in. He coached in the league that I played in. Then I coached against him when we were at Illinois State with Coach Fuente and the guys. Just always had an amazing amount of respect for what he’s been able to do as a coach and the way he’s done it, the way his teams have always played with discipline and toughness. We’re thrilled to death. We got a chance to get him up here for fall camp for a few days. It’s awesome to have guys like that for a few days. It could give you some perspective and then a chance to get him here every day and help us in whatever way that he can. I know he’s excited and we’re thrilled to have him.”

“I assume he’s not here to install the triple option?”

“Not yet.” [laughs]

On what Coach Kill’s role will potentially look like:

“I think that’ll develop as we go once we get him here and see how Coach Fuente is going to use him. But absolutely, offense has been what he’s done the most throughout the years. In particular, his ability in the run game to establish the run. That’ll be the first place that we go to him for ideas and evaluation and ways that he can help us. He understands how it works. It still all has to fit within the system and the players you got. You can’t just go install a new offense in the middle of a week or whatever. There’ll be

plenty of ideas whether it's scheme ideas or technique ideas or little things here or there that he'll be able to help us with that we're excited to have him here for."

On QB Ryan Willis' aggressiveness and whether he needs to do a better job of protecting himself as a runner:

"That's part of the downfall of his competitiveness. It's kind of the way he's wired. When he gets in those situations, he's not looking for a way down to preserve himself. He wants to fight for every yard. Yeah, he's got to be smarter and he knows that. There's times where – if it's third and one to win the game or it's the last play of the game on the goal line, then he knows that he's going to go get it. He's got to be smarter, particularly on early downs or when we have got a first down. Those are the times that it should be easier for him to get down quicker or get out of bounds or throw it away or whatever it should be."

On RB Keshawn King:

"He's a confident kid. He's had a lot of success in high school and what comes along with that is confidence in his abilities. To me that's the thing that stands out. He knows he can get in there and get the job done. He knows that taking care of the ball is important and if you don't, we can't continue to put you in there at some point. He knows the deal, he's been great, he's been working hard, comes to practice the right way. Expect him to continue to get better and better in all phases of playing that position. We know his talent carrying the ball but there's certainly more to the position than just that. That's what he continues to do a good job of every day in practice, getting better with those little things."

On WR Kaleb Smith:

"He's a tough kid and he works. He's worked his tail off in practice and it's carrying over for him. We knew he was a talented kid when he came here and walked on. We knew at some point he was going to develop into a guy for us. I think it happened probably quicker than we thought and to his credit. After what he did in fall camp, I don't know that it's a big surprise to any of us that watch him every day but certainly in the big scheme of things it was a pleasant surprise for him to develop this quickly. He's going to continue to get bigger and stronger and faster. He's got a big, beautiful stride and he uses it. He pushes off the ball and can get down the field and he's tough. He'll block and he'll catch the ball and get vertical and run through tackles. The sky's the limit for him. If he'll just continue on the track he's on and work his tail off and continue to be coachable, he's got a real, real big upside."

On Smith's recruitment prior to him being injured in high school:

“He was a scholarship-type guy coming out and he had opportunities to go other places on scholarship. He came to Virginia Tech because he loves the school and he kind of took a leap of faith to trust that we saw him as that type of guy and that we knew he could become that type of guy at some point. He's just jumped into it with both feet since he's gotten here and it's paid off.”