

**PATRIOTS TE DALTON KEENE – 2020 DRAFT, PICK 101
CONFERENCE CALL
April 25, 2020**

Q: Wanted to ask you about your versatility at Virginia Tech. Was that something that evolved over your time there or was that something that you hit the ground running with knowing that you could do a lot of different things? How do you think your versatility will translate at the NFL level?

DK: Yeah, I mean the level of versatility at Virginia Tech – I think they tried to do a lot of different things with me. It was awesome that they trusted me to do so many different things and I think it says a lot about how I play and as a football player. That's why I'm so excited that I got picked up by the Patriots because I think they do so many different things with their tight ends and are really creative there. So, I couldn't be happier right now with where I ended up.

Q: What went into the decision to leave Virginia Tech early and declare for the draft?

DK: Well, the biggest thing for me was by going back another year, I felt like it would be really difficult to improve my draft stock a lot. Just because I feel like we wouldn't change a lot on offense and my production probably wouldn't have some crazy increase. So, I want to make a career out of this and if that's the case, I need to come out now and take a run at it. Now I really feel like I made the right decision. I feel like I made the right decision the entire time and I'm just really happy to see it pay off.

Q: Obviously, the Patriots had a really good tight end here for a number of years. Was Rob Gronkowski a player that you looked up to in your young career?

DK: Yeah, he was definitely fun to watch and I believe he's probably the best there is. It was really cool to watch him and it's kind of crazy that now I'm kind of playing for the same team that he once was on. Because I was a little kid and watching him on TV – it's just crazy that I'm in his shoes right now. I'm privileged.

Q: Growing up, which players did you look up to and who have you tried to model your game after?

DK: Well, I used to be a quarterback actually growing up all the way through Little League and high school. So, I was a huge Peyton Manning fan actually. I had a Peyton Manning Fathead on my wall from when he was with the Colts. He's probably my No. 1. I was following him for forever. [Inaudible] I'm a huge fan of his. He's probably my No. 1.

Q: Are there any tight ends that you watch on film to try to take things from them to add to your game?

DK: Yeah, I think probably the best for me is George Kittle. I think he's a super versatile tight end and they do a lot of different things there. That's what I pride myself on doing, being a versatile tight end and being able to do a lot of different things – playing from the slot, or playing fullback or to play traditional tight end. [Inaudible] I think he does that all really well.

Q: There are all types of teams in the NFL – winning teams, losing teams, teams with a championship pedigree. The Patriots of course have a winning tradition. Is the fact that you were drafted by a team that has a championship pedigree and is a winning organization instead of being drafted by a team that's not so successful change how you approach what's ahead?

DK: I'll start off with the Patriot Way, one that I have in the back of my mind just because I love the culture so much. The winning culture and just taking it day by day and working hard. I think that really reflects me as a player. My coach just texted me today, Coach [Justin] Fuente, and he said basically that "I have the uncanny ability to go to work every single day." I thought that's something that really reflects on this program as well.

Q: How much contact did you have with the Patriots during the pre-draft process and were you surprised at all to be drafted by the Patriots considering they had taken a tight end with their previous pick?

DK: I had a pretty good amount of contact. I mean, we first officially met at the Combine and we had a handful of calls afterwards just to talk a little bit of football. I talked to Coach [Nick] Caley a handful of times. We really started to build a relationship there. I don't necessarily think it's a surprise that they took two tight ends back-to-back because going into yesterday, I was really looking at the Patriots because I saw they had a handful of third-round picks. You know, I was hopeful. After they picked [Devin] Asiasi – it is a surprise, I wasn't sure what was going to happen the rest of the draft and I was really happy for him and then I got that call and I couldn't be more excited right now.

Q: How do you feel you and Asiasi can complement each other's games or are you viewing it as competition for time? How are you looking at coming in with a tight end drafted in the same round?

DK: I'm actually really excited about that because I think we'll complement each other really well. I was actually roommates with him at the Combine so I got a chance to get to know him and he's an awesome guy. I'm really excited for him. I think he's going to do a lot of things really well, especially in the passing game. I couldn't be more excited to start to develop our relationship, and I think we're going to do a lot of really good things.

Q: How did that happen where you and Asiasi got hooked up together at the Combine and how much time did you get to spend with him?

DK: We got to spend a good amount of time together because, like I said, we were roommates. We got to talk and it was a really good experience for me just because of the stress and everything going on at the Combine, we had that shared experience. I think it was really good to start to build that relationship. I think that's going to help us out a lot moving forward because we've already broken the ice and we already know each other. I'm really looking forward to play with him.

Q: Did I read correctly that your teammates nicknamed you 'Rambo?'

DK: That was my nickname at Virginia Tech. I didn't come up with it.

Q: Do you like it?

DK: Yeah. Yeah, it's kind of cool. Honestly, it's a pretty cool nickname. I mean, like I said, I didn't come up with it, but it could be a lot worse.

Transcripts are provided by the Patriots media relations department as a courtesy to the media and are edited for readability. All press conferences are posted and archived in their entirety at patriots.com.

MEDIA RESOURCE

[Schedule](#) | [Roster](#) | [Videos](#) | [Photos](#) | [Audio](#) | [Media Website](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#)

Social: @Patriots | #PatriotsNation

MEDIA RELATIONS CONTACTS

Media Relations Staff	508-384-4203	PatriotsPR@Patriots.com
Stacey James , Vice President of Media Relations	508-326-6868	staceyj@patriots.com
Aaron Salkin , Director of Media Relations	508-326-6870	aarons@patriots.com
Michael Jurovaty , Assistant Director of Media Relations	508-326-6187	mjurovaty@patriots.com
Anne Noland , Communications Strategist	508-431-7773	annen@patriots.com

#PATRIOTS

New England Patriots | One Patriot Place | Foxborough, Mass. 02035