

Virginia Tech University Football Media Conference

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Blacksburg, Virginia, USA

Dr. Tim Sands

Whit Babcock

Coach Brent Pry

Press Conference



PETE MORRIS: Good morning, and welcome. I'm Pete Morris and on behalf of Virginia Tech, welcome you all here as we welcome Coach Pry and his family to Hokie Nation. We'll have several speakers on today's agenda and once they conclude their remarks we'll take some photos. We'll also open it up to questions from the media.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce Virginia Tech's president, Dr. Tim Sands.

TIM SANDS: Thank you, Pete. I'm thrilled to have the opportunity on behalf of Virginia Tech and Hokie Nation to welcome Coach Brent Pry to Virginia Tech, and we welcome his family, Amy, and the three children. It's just wonderful to have you back in Blacksburg.

Coach Pry also understands what it means to be a Hokie. We had a chance to get together last night, and we talked a little bit with his family. Of course the question that came up was, what's a Hokie? He knew the answer, but it started a great conversation, not only about the proper response - I am - but what the values of this institution are, what it means to be a Hokie, not just a Hokie on the football field but also in life.

It gives me great pleasure to bring a family in who understands this and to look forward to working with you, not only with football and with athletics, but also as a member of the Hokie community.

Now, of course it's a welcome back to Blacksburg for Coach Pry. He was here as a graduate assistant back in the '90s, and every interaction I've watched him have over the last several hours has been like a reunion.

It's been a while, but everybody knows him, and it's just a real pleasure to watch that dynamic. We're really excited to have him back. He understands what it's like to build a strong program. He's certainly had a long coaching career,

very successful coaching career, and he was here during a period that was really formative for Virginia Tech football, so he understands the foundation of the program that we have now, and it's exciting to have him back.

He has not experienced Enter Sandman, so this is something Laura and I look forward to experiencing with you, cheering on the Hokies, when you first get a chance to jump in Lane Stadium and lead the team in.

I'd like to thank Whit for his leadership. Our athletic director understands also what it means to be a Hokie, and I think you can see that with his choice. I'd like to turn it over to Whit to make a few comments. Thank you.

WHIT BABCOCK: Dr. Sands has a great beard. Coach Pry, Bud, JC, I've got to get my game going.

Hey, welcome to all of you. Welcome to the next chapter of Virginia Tech football. Like all of you watching, I'm excited to see how the story unfolds under Coach Pry's leadership. We feel great about our chances with this new direction and energy, and again, welcome to all.

Before I go much further, I want to also recognize and thank a few people, beginning with our players, our students at Virginia Tech that just happen to be able to play football at an incredibly high level. What they've been through the last couple years, all that athletics teaches them, I was so happy that they could feel victory and enjoyment and unity with that win over UVA.

We talk about creating memorable experiences, and that certainly was one. I look forward to them having another opportunity in the bowl, and just, again, incredibly proud of those young men as if I were their parent.

I'm also incredibly proud and want to thank JC Price, how much he cares, holding us together, still is, leading, and then he came up with the quote, right, this is my school, that's home, that's it.

So we will get some rights off the NIL of JC on that one. He one upped our tag line there.



I also want to thank the coaching staff that's currently here that will coach the bowl game with JC and those coordinators during difficult times, right. They're in uncertain times. Their people, their families behind them, and the professionalism they showed to invest in these young people, I certainly want to tip my cap to them. This staff will coach the bowl.

Coach Pry will get up and running. Our current staff will stay in the building. We'll have Coach Pry and some of his staff here as they come in the stadium, operating separately.

I certainly want to thank Dr. Sands. The direction, alignment, and commitment is a huge reason we're successful and will be so in the future at Virginia Tech, from the board to the president to the athletic department, the deans, so on and so forth. This is a special place to be.

I also want to thank our fans and donors big and small. You've helped us greatly enhance our assistant coaching pool and our recruiting infrastructure, which we will now launch into the very top tier of the ACC. If you're not yet on board, we need you to help us get past our drive for 25. We need you.

Momentum is a powerful thing, and as Coach Beamer used to like to say, we're all in it together, and I dang sure know good things happen when we're all pulling in the same direction.

I want to thank our department and campus staff that worked so hard behind the scenes during these past few weeks. I certainly want to thank Amy, Colby, Madeline, and Catherine Pry for coming.

It takes a village, and for them to uproot and come, thank you for having that faith in us, and you have a community here ready to welcome y'all with open arms.

Coach Pry, I certainly want to thank him. He has been incredibly selective on the job front. This was one that interested him. A lot of people know this is a great job, but for him it was because it was this job. This job at Virginia Tech. That certainly stood out.

We also certainly like the circle of Coach Pry of his career. It started here and we certainly hope it will finish here. It's a wonderful story, from our history to now making new history.

When we started in our process, Coach Pry was in our original three. We had three to five. It ebbed and flowed a little bit. We zoomed with him first. Some head coaches

after that, another coordinator, but the bar was set from the get-go.

It's really nice to get into a search and have somebody that does so well. They're the bar that you consider for everyone else, and he certainly stood out. He was very well prepared.

It was his resume and coaching experience certainly, but at the end of the day he just really fit better. He genuinely wanted the job, like I said, because it was Virginia Tech and what it stands for.

He has Virginia roots, and I'm certainly partial to sons and daughters of coaches, too. That defensive edge is our brand, and understanding and appreciation for this special place, this sense of place at Virginia Tech, he fit all of those.

He also fit the 10 traits or characteristics we mentioned in the previous press conference. I won't go through all of those, but when you can find your guy and look down the list and it hits everything you were looking for, you know it's a pretty good day.

So yes, his head coaching experience. 30 years he has been -- he has not had head coaching experience, but 30 years in this profession, and he's been as close as you can be to it. He's been in big games in the SEC and the Big Ten. He's been the right-hand person and confidant for James Franklin, their regional connections, their recruiting approach, and all that he's learned, we have no doubt that he's ready.

The outreach from current and former players, fans, coaches and more speaks volumes. Coach Pry is easy to root for.

Today he met with the band, the core, and he went through the tunnel yesterday, and we're still working on those VT hand gestures. You've just got to draw it up like this. It becomes natural.

Coach Pry has prepared his whole life for this day. I'm so excited for him and proud of him. We've planted the seeds for this, planning for this new era, this next chapter. Today is a big, big step in that direction, renewed and united energy.

Hokie Nation, please welcome your new head coach, Brent Pry.

(Applause.)

BRENT PRY: The worst part is they tweeted those



pictures out of me trying to figure that hand gesture out. That needed to stay in-house.

It's great to be here in Blacksburg. I'm honored and I'm humbled. It's very surreal for me.

I met with the team this morning. I'm looking forward to getting to know them. Obviously that's what this is all about, the experience that those young men have. They recognize how special Virginia Tech is. That's why they came here.

I told them that's why I came here. It was a great meeting, and I'm anxious to get to know each one of them better. I got to meet some of the staff here and will continue to do that, and I'm obviously anxious to meet all the passionate fans of Hokie Nation.

My sincere thanks to President Sands, to Whit, to John Ballein, our board of visitors, our rector, and all of the people who have made this moment possible.

I appreciate your faith in me and your confidence in me, recognizing that I am the fit for Virginia Tech.

Thank you to my wife, Amy. It's not easy being a coach's wife, and I appreciate her so much and being on this journey with me. My children, Colby, Madeline, and Catherine, the roller coaster we've been on the last few days, when you grab your kids and pull them out of school and tell them after eight years we're going to uproot and move is all part of this, as well. So I appreciate y'all's support and faith in your daddy. We're blessed to be on this journey and all of us feel very fortunate.

Thank you to Coach Franklin. James is like a brother to me. 12 years. I wasn't sure I'd ever step out and do my own thing, and it took this place to do it. It took what Coach built and Bud and so many others to be the right place for me, and it was the right time.

I thank James Franklin, and I thank Penn State.

There have been so many other coaches that have influenced me, like all of us in this business, but no one has been bigger than my father, Jim Pry. Journeyman coach, small college, played at Marshall, high school coach in West Virginia, college coach in West Virginia. He's my ultimate mentor, and I'm hoping that this moment is making him very proud. I'm sure it is.

I couldn't be here without him and without his influence.

Of course I want to thank Coach Beamer and Coach Foster. It's surreal to me because I looked up to you guys

so much. The admiration I have for you guys. I appreciate you being here today and supporting me in this venture. Appreciate the chance you took on me in 1995.

Finally, the fans. You matter to me. I want this to be a program that you're always going to be very proud of. I'm going to embrace the fans and embrace this community. I know how important those things are and what makes up Virginia Tech.

My philosophy, I've been asked that a couple times here recently, my vision. I learned this from Coach, just we're going to hire the right people. We're going to recruit the right people that want to be at Virginia Tech. We're not going to twist the truth. We're not going to play games.

We're going to tell them what this place is all about and what's so special about it, and if it's not for them, it's not for them.

We want people that understand what Virginia Tech is all about and can identify with the special qualities of this place.

We're going to hire the right people. We're going to recruit the right people. We're going to manage and develop our roster. Particularly in today's college football that's a big task. It's a daily task. With as fluid as your roster is, it's a daily conversation about where your needs are and what needs to happen to have the best-looking roster and the best group that you can put out there on Saturdays.

We're going to recruit our footprint. We're going to recruit everywhere, but our footprint is going to be the emphasis. There's been a sense of pride on this football team for a lot of years about the guys from the state of Virginia coming here and being successful.

I know what it meant to Coach, and I'll never forget when he said you can -- I want to recruit guys that can drive in here with their families, because it's not going to be easy, and when the tough times come, I want those moms and dads and coaches to be here. This is a journey for these young men together, as coaches, as family members, to help them be successful.

But we're going to recruit our footprint. We're going to dive in with particular emphasis in the state of Virginia, obviously. I know how good this state has been to Virginia Tech. I've had a ton of former players reach out to me in regards to that, and we're going to work our tails off to bring those Virginia kids to Blacksburg.

We've had a little success doing that up in Happy Valley, so I think it ought to be easier to do that here.



We're going to connect to the community, to the fans and to the former players, as I mentioned. I'm going to be approachable. The relationships are very important to me. That's what this place is built on. We're going to treat people right. We're going to have an open-door policy as I told the players this morning, and we're going to be welcoming to these high school coaches. We're going to embrace the fans. We're going to connect with the community.

Relationships is where it's at for me. I seem to have aligned myself in each stop with people that believe in that, that that's where it starts, from Coach Beamer to James Franklin and everybody in between. That's not going to change for me.

That's what's right for Virginia Tech, and that's who this place is.

There was opportunities along the way, but this was the right time and the right place for me and for my family.

This is who we will be, and you have my word we're going to work very hard to accomplish these goals and be the program that everybody knows it can be.

I'm very proud to be the head football coach at Virginia Tech, and I thank you guys.

(Applause.)

Q. Coach, when you heard this job was open, did you hope they called?

BRENT PRY: Absolutely. Absolutely. Yeah. It's an easy one.

Q. I'm curious, you said this is kind of one of the few spots you'd jump to. Have you been thinking about becoming a head coach over the years, and do you have a short list for your staff? Do you have ideas of when it's my program, I want to do it this way, or are you kind of working through it as you go now?

BRENT PRY: Yeah, obviously there were stops along the way that make you think, boy, you'd like to be the head coach here one day if you could and what a special place. As I mentioned, Virginia Tech is one of those places.

It's a dream for me to be the head coach here. As I mentioned, it's surreal. I learned at an early age you just keep your nose to the grindstone and you be the best coach you can where you are, and opportunities, they can come. We've had those opportunities that just weren't

appealing enough, and when you're in a good place with good people, it's hard to leave.

I'm not going to say it was easy to leave Penn State and to leave James, but this was the right opportunity. You have relationships with coaches along the way. You do it for 30 plus years, and you align yourself with the people that are like-minded.

And so I certainly have a list of men that I feel are the right fit for Virginia Tech. I'm going to take my time and do my due diligence, as I said first, to make sure I bring the right people in here. I want people that are going to appreciate this opportunity and represent Virginia Tech the right way.

We'll be working through that staff over the next couple weeks. Thank you.

Q. Coach Pry, you're known for your aggressive mentality on defense, your play calling --

BRENT PRY: I wonder where I got that from, Bud?

Q. In looking for an offensive coordinator and just an offensive staff, will you be looking for a similar aggressive mentality from the offensive side of the ball?

BRENT PRY: I think when you talk about mentality, that's your whole football team. Again, I learned that here at Virginia Tech, how important mentality is.

But as far as offensive coordinator and play caller, we want to have an efficient offense. I want one that's going to be able to score some points but be efficient and be explosive at times and be a problem for defensive coordinators. And trust me, I know what those offenses look like.

I'm excited about the guys that have reached out and the men I know in this profession that want to be here and want to run the offense. I've got some good options on the table.

Q. You talked a little bit about your recruiting philosophy previously. I'm curious what you learned from James Franklin in particular at Penn State to help kind of mold that philosophy over the years.

BRENT PRY: Details, details, details. When it comes to recruiting, he is relentless in the details. Following through and being thorough and building those relationships with the high school coach, with the trainer, with the parents, with the uncle, with the barber that cuts hair. I mean, it doesn't matter.

I think over 12 years with James, just his relentless effort on the recruiting front and being actively involved as a head coach is very important to me. I don't see that being any different.

Q. Brent, you described your dad as a "journeyman coach." Part of that journey was in Lexington at VMI where you went to high school. During that time did you attend games at Lane Stadium, and what was your impression of Virginia Tech football back then?

BRENT PRY: Oh, believe me, it was my dream to play here, and I did come to camp here. I know Coach Beamer won't remember, but I did. I just was never the player to be at Virginia Tech.

It was always just such a presence for me in my life. My dad's coaching at VMI, a 1-AA school, and here's this vaunted Virginia Tech down the road. It certainly was a special place to me.

Bryan Stinespring was a high school coach of mine in Lexington and helped get me here to Blacksburg, and I'll be forever indebted to him for that. But certainly special.

Q. Do you plan on calling the plays for the defense? And what goes into kind of deciding whether or not to do that as a head coach now, kind of the pros and cons to you? How did you approach that decision?

BRENT PRY: It's going to be hard to let go of calling those plays. I love calling the defense. But I'm going to hire the right person and the right group of guys. I'm going to be very involved early, and when it feels like it's the right time, then those play calling duties will be turned over. Whether that's after spring or after year one, we'll see what it looks like.

Q. Coach Pry, you mentioned the coaches that impacted you, Coach Beamer, Coach Foster, even your father. Could you tell us one piece of advice or one big thing you learned from each of those three gentlemen?

BRENT PRY: Yeah, treat people right. That stands out to me. It doesn't matter who it is in this facility or who it is out in town, we're going to treat people right, and we're going to do things the right way.

I know that sounds cliché, but I know that's still very important to Coach, I would imagine, and very important to my father and to Bud. That's how you do things. That's where it starts to me.

Q. Can you describe your fondest memory of

Blacksburg during your time here, and what came to mind when Whit called?

BRENT PRY: Yeah, my fondest memory came just roaring back to me yesterday when I walked out on the 50-yard line in the stadium. I remembered 1995, my first season. We were 0-2 and had a loss to Boston College and Cincinnati, and we had the vaunted Hurricanes coming to town.

They had all the accolades and the shiny uniforms and the orange cleats, and we proceeded to whip that tail 13-7, if I remember right. We played great defense and ran the ball and turned the season around and won 10 straight, including a Sugar Bowl on New Year's Eve.

Yeah, for me that '95 Miami game is my fondest memory.

Maybe the experience after the Sugar Bowl with Wes Worsham and JC Price on Bourbon Street. Come on, JC. (Laughter.)

We were on Wes Worsham's tab, so we were good.

Q. I'm curious, you were already asked about being aggressive as a coach, but how would you describe your coaching style? You mentioned you kind of got a little bit from Bud right here. What do you think you learned so much from coaching under Bud here at Virginia Tech in the '90s?

BRENT PRY: Yeah, I think the word "mentality" stands out to me. So many coaches it's always about the scheme and even fundamentals and technique and Xs and Os, but I know I learned from Bud that you've got to coach mentality as much as you coach anything else.

I believe now the more maturity we put on that football field, the better team we'll be. We're going to recruit talented guys to Virginia Tech. It's developing them on and off the field.

I told the team this morning: We can't be afraid of hard conversations. Everybody in here has weaknesses, including myself, and it's about staring those head on and addressing them, and let's work through them and strengthen them.

It's my job if they'll work their tails off to have them reach all of their potential and then some, and to do that, it goes back to the mentality.

Q. I'm just curious if you could speak to the balancing act of honoring the past traditions and successes of the past, the people of the past, while also at the same

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time wanting to put your own kind of stamp on the program.

BRENT PRY: Yeah, obviously the experience at Penn State has helped prepare me for that, going into that challenging situation. James and I talk a lot about people saying how tough it was to go to Vanderbilt who had been to four bowl games in their history, and we went to three straight. The challenge at Penn State was greater.

But the ability to embrace the past and the difficulties that Penn State went through, the challenge there and move forward, particularly with a forward-thinking head coach that from a recruiting standpoint wanted some glitz and some glamour and the things that these guys are looking for.

But there's always tradition, and for me that's the type of coach I am. It's going to go back to that. We're never going to lose that. That's why I'm here today. I love the tradition here at Virginia Tech, and I think it means something. It's special, and it separates -- that's one of the things that separate Tech from other places.

Q. Billy Hite says you called him 100 times trying to get that GA job. Why was that job --

BRENT PRY: It wasn't 100.

Q. I'm sure it was an exaggeration --

BRENT PRY: 50.

Q. Why was it so important to you? What did you see in that position that kind of --

BRENT PRY: Well, as I mentioned, just going to high school in Lexington, this place was like the mecca for me. You know, with connections there, with Coach Stinespring and an opportunity -- what he left out was it took three years to get that GA job here, and when I finally showed up at the doorstep, he pulled his bottom desk drawer out -- this is all seriousness -- and there was about 30 resumes from me and 30 letters, and he just said, Can I finally throw all this crap out? I said, Sure, man.

You know, it was obviously -- I look back and say it was the break in my career in this profession that has really helped me the most, getting around these guys and being at a place like this.

As I mentioned, my dad was kind of a journeyman coach at the time, and it was paycheck to paycheck doing this thing. I never dreamt I'd make the kind of money I've made coaching football. You don't get into it to make money, you

get into it because you love the relationships and the competitiveness.

For a lot of years there, I just saw myself doing it just like my dad did. Eight, ten-hour bus rides for the love of the game.

An opportunity to come to Virginia Tech was obviously a dream come true back then and it was a dream come true today.

Q. The Reach for Excellence campaign is a massive fundraising initiative here at Virginia Tech. How much was that mentioned in the interview process, and what do you envision your fully built-out staff to look like here at Virginia Tech down the road?

BRENT PRY: Yeah, I'll answer the second part of that first. Obviously the staff structure is going to be very important, and we've had a lot of discussions about it from my first conversation with Whit, what that would look like.

At Penn State we had an army in that facility. There wasn't enough office space for everybody. I'm not saying that's right for Virginia Tech, but you want to have the right resources and support for this football team, and you want to have the right resources and support to recruit the right way.

You want to have the right resources and support to hire the right people to do this job. We've got a good plan in place that it's an ongoing process, but Whit has been outstanding and very supportive, and I think we're going to be able to get things the way we need to get them.

I'm sorry, what was the first part of your question?

Q. How much was the fundraising initiative and the work Virginia Tech is trying to do in that department talked about during the interview process?

BRENT PRY: I'm going to pass that question to Whit.

WHIT BABCOCK: We certainly talked about it. We didn't talk about it as the Reach For Excellence campaign, so I would imagine that caught Coach off guard. We certainly talked about that we had been preparing for this day and planted the seeds through our capital campaign, and actually a lot of the donor involvement has enabled us to do this, to expand this recruiting staff to double down in that area and hire the right people.

He didn't know the name of the campaign, but he'll learn it quickly, yes.

BRENT PRY: I know it now. I've made a mental note.

WHIT BABCOCK: It's in the tunnel. Reach for Excellence, yes.

Q. Whit, along those same lines, when you bring in a defensive coordinator there is sort of a clamoring from the fans of what are you going to do with the offense. Are you guys prepared to commit more money to the coaching staff pool, and what are your thoughts in terms of what you can do on the offensive coordinator front?

WHIT BABCOCK: Yes, we're prepared to commit more resources there. Again, that's what we've been working on in addition to the facility push. Certainly that's an easy question. It's probably the first one -- you ask any coach you're talking to about their staff, and we've covered some names, some strategies, some thoughts, so he certainly knows how important it is.

You leave it up to the head coach to hire the staff. I'm excited about the early names I've heard, but I know he will vet them really well, and he certainly understands the importance of that. All of our jobs, right, the people you have around you. Offensive coordinator will be just fine.

Q. There's been a lot of emotion around the football program for the last couple of weeks. How much did bringing somebody in with a history here, a passion for this place that maybe doesn't exist with everyone, with somebody that's not been here, how much did that weigh into -- become a priority for you?

WHIT BABCOCK: Yeah, it certainly helped. I didn't know that in this history. John Ballein mentioned that to me. It certainly plays a role, because again, you want somebody to run to the job that again, it's not just a great job, it's I want to be there because it's Virginia Tech, so that answers that.

I'm sorry, the second part?

Q. How much of a priority it became to find somebody with that connection.

WHIT BABCOCK: Oh, yes. What I was going to say to that is when you do a search you're kind of in a vacuum or bubble. We picked Coach Pry because we thought he was the best, and then I didn't expect it to be negative, but the overwhelming positivity from former players, his current players, NFL guys, people at Penn State reaching out to him, you're like, Man, that was a nice start.

It is nice to see this place reunited. We're not any good

when we're divided. Hopefully this is a step in the right direction, yes, sir.

Q. In terms of support staff you've made progress incrementally the last two years. You've been talking about this since 2019. You've set goals of five, six, a half dozen. Have you put mechanisms in place to speed up the hiring process to get people in place? You've had multiple openings for about six months now on the staff. If you want to add a dozen people, is there now new systems in place to make that possible?

WHIT BABCOCK: Yeah, not new systems. We certainly operate in the state and the university system, but I would say the increase in fundraising has allowed us to move in bigger numbers, and that way -- again, it's not just numbers of people, but think about how much it's changed from a video standpoint, from a transfer portal standpoint, and on and on, and there's only so many hours in the day.

Really our fundraising has enabled us to do that, and we'll be able to take bigger leaps and bounds, and that's really what we've been working on.

Again, this support group should be in the very top tier of the ACC.

Q. You chose to retain JC, and I know you guys go way back. You mentioned those celebrations. Did you watch any of the UVA game? Did you see the celebrations? Your relationship, why did you think keeping him and his family in Blacksburg is going to be so valuable to you?

BRENT PRY: JC embodies Virginia Tech. That's easy to see. He did when he was here as a player, and he's doing it now as a coach, and I'm proud to have him on the staff.

Q. Brent and Whit, you had mentioned that Brent was the first candidate with whom you Zoomed and then you vetted some others. How early was that connection? And then how did the process evolve from there?

WHIT BABCOCK: Sure. I don't know that I have the exact date right, but it was an off day after they played Monday off day. I think the last week of the season was the first contact we made, and then a few more times after that.

But the first time I guess was the last week of the season. Coach Franklin knew about it and it was an off day. We didn't want to interrupt from their big game that week.

Q. Were there subsequent in-person interviews?

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WHIT BABCOCK: No, the Zoom thing is a pretty amazing invention, and when you have somebody that's actually been to your campus, you know, you think about it so many times how bizarre it is when you hire a head coach and the first time they've ever been there.

So we covered it enough. And he certainly said, Man, I'll hop in the car any time, but we had a comfort level, and then certainly once he landed got together.

Q. Whit, your history has been to hire coaches with head coaching experience. What was it about your conversations with Brent that alleviated any concerns you might have had that he didn't have that experience before?

WHIT BABCOCK: Yeah, certainly the track record, and again, working beside one of the best, if you're in the room every day. And we felt like although he did not have head coaching experience, it was about as close as you could get to it.

And again, that major conference feel, the recruiting of this region, it just wasn't much of a barrier to get over.

We've hired Tony Robie as an assistant coach here, moving up Mike Brizendine and a few others. No, it's not something we typically do, but we felt like he was more than capable to make the jump, and there's a lot of people here to help him. So that's our plan.

Q. Obviously we're 13 days from early signing day. I think the number is about 80 percent of all recruits that sign at the Power Five level sign here. I know Tech is a top-25 class in the country. What are your plans to try to keep this class together over the next two weeks and try to get as many to sign on December 15th?

BRENT PRY: Yeah, JC and Pearson have been out there working it right now and trying to hold that class together and grinding it out. I've gotten on the phone with a bunch of those guys, and just for them to see the vision and understand you didn't just commit to a coach, you committed to Virginia Tech.

We're going to work our butts off to keep the class together and evaluate what else is out there for us.

Q. Whit, when you're going through this process, how does the initial conversation happen? Do you reach out to Coach Pry? Do you reach out to Coach Franklin? How do you start that process to get this ball rolling?

WHIT BABCOCK: Yeah, it's unique with each one. You can be a little more flexible, I guess, when it's an assistant coach or an associate head coach when you're doing the search.

John Ballein was somebody we both knew, and then I happened to know Coach's agent because he represents our baseball coach, as well, so that was a pretty easy conversation.

The agent stuff is good so you can kind of get a feel for what everybody is looking for before you go face to face, but I talked with Sandy Barbour and I knew Coach Pry, I talked to James Franklin, and then as we got towards the end, I spoke to James again.

Everyone is different, but usually there's a middle person, and then we just didn't want to interrupt his coaching schedule at Penn State, and he got on the Zoom.

Q. Whit, with nearly two dozen openings and some of the biggest jobs out there continually popping up now, how did that impact kind of the search? Did it create a different kind of sense of urgency this team out than it did previously when there was an opening? How did that end up factoring into things?

WHIT BABCOCK: I wouldn't say it factored in a tremendous amount. You obviously know it was there, but I don't think anybody could have predicted the turnover we've seen recently with the changes at some of these other schools. It was nice to get the hay in the barn so to speak, but no, you go vet as much as you can, move as quickly as you can, and then to try to take away some of the questions for our team, what was going to go next, and then to try to have a little running head start on signing day were more of it.

But I'm glad that we're not in it. I think this coaching cycle will swirling a lot and with assistant coaches and commitments and things like that, so we're really pleased to be at the finish line, or the starting line in this case.

Q. Brent, you talked about how important James Franklin was to you. What was the conversation like when -- you've turned down jobs in the past. I don't know if he had an inkling this was the one that was going to get you. What was that conversation like to tell him that you were leaving and was that extremely emotional for you?

BRENT PRY: James has always known how I felt about Virginia Tech. We've been friends since 1993. He was a quarterback for my father at East Stroudsburg University and I was a first-time coach.

He's always known my passion for this place. We were buddies when I came to Virginia Tech as a GA. I'm sure when this thing opened, it crossed his mind like it did mine.

But he was very supportive and wanted to help in any way he could. It was a good conversation.

Q. I'm sure you have other mentors on top of James who can help you with this, but what do you anticipate the most challenging aspect of going from coordinator to head coach being, just all the responsibilities that come with that? I'm sure people have given you advice, but do you -- I know you've thought about it a lot over the years. What do you think is the biggest difference that you're going to experience here?

BRENT PRY: Well, instead of a staff of 10 we'll have a staff of 30 or 40 that I'm responsible for. Instead of 40 or 50 guys there's going to be 120. I think the responsibility for the coaches and their families and for everybody involved that we're successful and that we do things the right way.

I'm excited about the opportunity to lead an organization like Virginia Tech, this football team, but as Whit mentioned, 12 years with James, and I spent time with Jeff Monken, who I consider a great leader, along with James and other guys we've mentioned today. First time head coach Ricky Bussell way back when, went with Ricky.

So I've been around it a lot, grew up in it. I'm not saying that there's not things that I'm going to have to work at. But I think in today's college football world with the transfer portal and fluid rosters and all those things, it's NIL, there's a lot of challenges, but there's going to be great support. I'm not afraid to walk up the steps and seek advice and counsel on things. We'll work through what comes. There's going to be plenty of challenges.

Q. If you could pinpoint during your time here, I know you said you learned from Coach Beamer to treat people right. Was there a learning experience that you had during your time at Tech that you've applied through your career?

BRENT PRY: Yeah, as I mentioned, I think you just -- you're like a sponge. I consider myself still -- I'm learning something all the time. I learned some stuff this year along the way that is going to stick with me.

You're like a sponge at that age especially. You're learning every day, and the experience was a great one. It helped shape me. I cut my teeth under Coach and under Bud, and it shaped who I am today.

To say just one or two things would be awful tough. It was every day you're walking away with something.

Yeah, that's what I'd say.

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