

Virginia Tech Football
Offensive Coordinator/Quarterbacks Coach Brad Cornelsen
Spring Football Kickoff – Media Conference
March 20, 2017

Opening Statement:

“I am looking forward to the spring. We had a good off-season. Let me tell you, coach [Ben] Hilgart and his staff have put an amazing plan together down in the weight room. Our kids have really bought into it. You can see the changes every day. Not just from a physical standpoint either, but the team building and the chemistry that goes along with it this time of year. You see guys that have redshirted or haven’t played much starting to grow up. It’s fun to see those guys this time of year improve physically and build into what we are getting ready to do, which is getting back on the field. I am looking forward to it.”

On what he learned from the QB competition last year and if he would alter from last year to this year:

“That wasn’t the first competition we ever had. We handled it like we’ve always done it. It always plays out a little bit different. Looking back on it, I am not sure that we would’ve done anything different. It’s a similar situation this year. We have some young guys that are unproven. They haven’t had their chance yet on the field. Just like we talked about last year, it will be day-to-day. It’s every drill, every throw, every read and every meeting. Everything is evaluated, and everything goes into it. It will be an on-going process every single day.”

On if he has ever been in a situation where his most experienced quarterback is a redshirt freshman, and if so, does it change his approach:

“Yeah, we’ve been through it once before. The process won’t change. When you get through fall camp and move closer to the season, you try to figure out what they can do and what they can handle, whoever it may be. What can they execute? What are they good at? What are they not comfortable with? We are trying to get that guy to play well and figure out what kind of weapons we have around him and what our offensive line can handle. That’s the challenge of it all, putting all that together.”

On if anyone stands out from this year’s early enrollees:

“For the guys that are already here, Kalil Pimpleton at slot. I think he is a kid that is going to come in and pick it up quickly. He has some explosion and has some things in that slot position that we are looking forward to seeing him out on the field and seeing what he can do with it. Obviously, Hendon [Hooker] being an early grad out of high school. He has a lot on his plate right now just stepping into college and learning a new offense. Physically, the improvements that he has made since he arrived has been fun to see. We are excited to see what he can do. There are a number of other guys obviously, whether it is a transfer or early grad. We are certainly excited to see those guys in practice this week. They’ve done a great job so far since they’ve been here, and I am looking forward to seeing that translate onto the field. Then absolutely there are still a handful guys that will be here, but not for spring practice. You never know how quickly those guys are going to pick it up come summer and fall camp. There are always a couple of guys that kind of surprise you and pick it up and make that transition quickly. Hopefully, a couple of those guys can do that for us this year.”

On former WR Divine Deablo moving to defensive back:

“[Divine] Deablo is a great kid. He is going to be a great player over there on defense. He’s a big, athletic kid. He’s smart. He’s everything you want in a team type guy. We are excited about our depth. If it was

critical for him to stay over there on offense, that's probably where he would be. We are looking forward to the new guys that we have over there to step in and get those opportunities."

On how the process works between he and Bud Foster on switching players from offense to defense:

"Usually it's arm wrestling (laughs). It's ultimately the head coach's decision. He has to look at what's best for the team. There are guys that we fight for on offense that we would love to see stay, and the same thing goes on defense. At the end of the day, we know he is going to make a decision that is best for the team, and we are all behind it."

On his role in recruiting QB A.J. Bush and what he liked about him:

"It was a quick turnaround between the last game and Jerod [Evans] letting us know (he was declaring for the NFL Draft). We knew we wanted to try and get somebody here. We took a look at a number of other guys that we knew were available. We tried to find out about as much as we could about those guys. We watched a lot of film. Talking to his former coaches was critical for us. Making sure we brought in the right kind of guy to add to that room was one of the most important things for us. It was a combination of what we saw on film and then talking to his former coaches about his upside, abilities, physical tools and what kind of kid he was. It made a lot of sense. He was excited about Virginia Tech from the very beginning, and it worked out pretty good."

On how does the team go about replacing Sam Rogers:

"Our tight end position has to continue to develop. [TE] Chris Cunningham is a year older now, and he has some good quality reps for that. He has to continue to step up. [TE] Dalton Keene is another one of those early grad kids that has really excited us up until this point. He has to really step in and play a big role for us. Developing that position along with the tailback position is crucial. Sam [Rogers] basically played both of those spots and gave us a guy that we could really trust to do the right thing. He played hard, and he was always there. We are just going to have a number of different guys in those two different spots that have to continue to develop."

On Caleb Farley's involvement on the offensive side of the ball:

"He can really run. That's the first thing that stands out when you watch his film or you see him out here running. He can really run. We are anxious to see what he can do with the ball in his hand. That's the first thing that comes to mind when you think of a player like that. He is probably going to be playing both ways. You have to keep the package small to begin with. You have to find ways when he is in there to give him the ball. You have to utilize that speed and athleticism. He can maybe give you something that no one else on offense can, so you just have to find the best way to get that done. An easy way to give him the ball without having the right coverage or too much execution going on."

On what guys have stepped up on the offensive line heading into spring practice:

"I think [OL] Tyrell Smith is a guy that we certainly trust. He has played basically every position up front. He had some snaps last year. To me, he is the one that can definitely step in at the right tackle slot and win that job this spring. He has the ability and the tools. He has seen some action and knows what to do. He is getting older and it is time for a guy like him to step in there. There are going to be some young guys. It is wide open, and they know that. They are excited. It should be a fun spring to see those guys compete for those jobs."

On the status of the running back position:

"Same thing. We have to develop. We have [RB] Travon McMillian coming back. He's seen a lot of action. He has to continue to develop. He has had some big plays, some big runs. He has made some big plays in

big games, but he certainly has some things that he wants to improve on. [FB Steven] Peoples is going to be kind of a full-time tailback now. He was trying to be that hybrid guy like Sam [Rogers] last year because we needed him too. That's a lot. That puts a lot on a guy's plate to do that. For him just to be able to focus solely on that tailback position is going to help him a lot. I am excited to see him develop a little bit this spring. [RB Deshawn] McCleese is back off an injury. The little bit that he did get to play last year, he was productive and looked good. We are anxious to get him back. Then there are some young guys. [RB] D.J. Reid continues to look really good. He continues to develop, and he is past that stage of being just a young guy. It is time for him to grow up. [RB] Terius Wheatley just got in, and he has looked really good. I am anxious to see what he can really do. Another spot that is wide open, and we need more than one or two guys. There is depth there that we have to develop."