

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

***Opening statement***

“Our kids have been busy obviously with our off-season program. Coach (Ben) Hilgart has done a fine job. Maybe you all saw our first hard hat program which recognizes guys that do fantastic job in our offseason program. But our guys are ready to practice now. I’ve said this before and I’ll say it again it’s one neat parts about our profession and playing college football you get about tired about one thing something else comes around. So the kids are about done with the winter program and they’re excited to go practice and so are the coaches.

“We’ve got a huge challenge. We’ve got a bunch of guys coming back, obviously we have a bunch of holes we’ll have to concentrate on filling. I’m not sure if you’ll fill those in the spring but hopefully we’ll be able to take steps towards that and we’ll have some key points of emphasis as we break down spring practice in the first five days. We’ll focus on implementing our schemes. Not so much in situational work in the next couple of days. After those five we’ll work on some more situation type stuff and just playing ball. At the end is when we lean towards the spring game. We’ll do a little experimentation there that last week, kind of service each other offensively and defensively. All while putting in our schemes for special teams and evaluating our young or new players with some players in different spots than they were last year.

“It’s an exciting time, I’ve said this before, it’s my favorite time of the year. I love spring practice. It’s all about teaching and development, there’s no game for us to worry about, it’s all about good versus good and player development. That being said I’m happy to not tell you who the quarterback is going to be.”

***On the status of the receiving corps with the move of Divine Deablo to defense***

“Well if you look at it, Divine [Deablo] is going to go over and work at defensive back. I think that’s a natural fit for him. I think he’s got a chance to be a very good player over there. There’s one of the young guys moving over to the defensive backfield. We’re still not deep enough at either spot in the defensive backfield or wide receiver. It’s going to take us a little time to accumulate depth at both of those spots. I’ve been happy with Phil Patterson’s development; he’s got a chance. I think him and Eric Kumah are the two that jump out at you. Eric played a little last year, Phil redshirted. We certainly need those guys. I think they have made strides. I think redshirting was good for Phil, I think playing a little bit last year was good for Eric. There were times where we had discussions about playing Phil last year and we never did it. I’ve liked the way those kids have worked and they’ve made some strides but as we sit right now they’re not where we need them to be but I’m hoping they’ll be.”

***On whether the QB competition structure will be similar to last year***

“Yes, talking to Brad (Cornelsen) that was kind of the general way that we’ll go. Those three guys will get the lion’s share of the work. I can’t remember how we did it exactly starting out, we might have had five guys last year on the very first day. We’ll probably center it around those three guys getting the lion’s share of it, not that the other guys won’t get any. I think it’ll be pretty evenly distributed. As those guys earn those reps then we’ll kind of shape and mold it as we feel necessary. It’s obviously completely open. There’s no experience whatsoever.”

***On DeShawn McCleese and the running back situation***

“I’ll say it’s an open competition everywhere. We’ve got to find a way to get more production out of that spot. DeShawn continues to work hard, I’m pleased with the way he’s worked. He won’t be full on for the spring but he’s going to get to practice. Just looking at the offense and guys who haven’t played as much, DJ (Reid) is the guy that’s a little more of the unknown. We’re encouraging him to continue to get better and come along. Hopefully he does it.”

***On making production out of the rushing game a point of emphasis***

“I don’t know if that’s a point of emphasis. Running the football is. For me it’s finding dependable players. From the big perspective, points of emphasis you look statistically at things, which I’m not a huge fan of, I do think you can claim some things and use them to highlight a point. But we’ve got to take care of the football better. We’ve got to a better job of taking it away as well. That’s going to be a huge point of emphasis. Fumbles forced and fumbles given away, we ranked 54th and 127th, which is almost the worst. In terms of interceptions, defensively we were 14th in the country with 16 and offensively we were 21st in the country with eight.

“So to me, taking care of the ball and taking the ball away needs to be a point of emphasis for us. In our 10 victories we were +8 in turnover margin and in our four losses we were -9. So those are the things that we’ll do drill wise, technique wise, emphasis wise to try and improve upon that.

“I think we still need to do a great job of emphasizing with how we practice. I’m still not pleased or satisfied with most of our coaching perspective and player’s perspective in terms how we’re going to practice. We still have to refine that. It’s the most important thing we do in terms of preparation, we’re going to treat it that way and do a great job of that. The last thing for us will be finishing. Finishing every drill, every rep. So production from one position or another I’m not really concerned about that in terms of the spring. Player development, player evaluation, scheme development, scheme evaluation and overall picture.”

***On the status of the secondary***

“We play five DBs and they all have to cover. We’ll move some guys around to try and find our best five guys. I don’t know how it’s going to shake out. When you come into the fall and introduce a couple of guys and see it how it goes. We’ll continue to maneuver that around and find our best five guys to play DB, what position and kind of individual skill set. There’s a couple of them that won’t be going through the spring so we won’t have them. You’d like to think a couple of those guys are going to be top five but things always change. So we’ll continue to massage it around and see how it turns out.”

***On other position moves going into the spring***

“[Emmanuel] Belmar will play defensive end, Jimmie Taylor and [Darius] Fullwood will play defensive tackle. We’re going to start Caleb Farley out at defensive back. There’s several reasons for that that I don’t want to get into now but he will get some work during the spring on the other side of the ball. We’re still kind of in evaluation mode, he has a unique skill set, but I’m excited about him. That’s where we’re going to start him out and then we’ll kind of see how it goes.”

***On what the focus will be heading into the spring***

“I use spring as a way to go back to the start. Regardless of whether you have guys returning or not. Defensively we’ll have more guys coming back than on offense. But we’ll go back to square one and work our way out now that the groups that tend to have more experience tend to accelerate a little quicker than the ones that don’t. As far as a general plan of what we’re doing, I don’t want to change it too much.

If there's an underlying need or point of emphasis, we try to get that from year-to-year. Kind of the general structure of it all stays pretty much the same."