

Virginia Tech Football
Head Coach Brent Pry Q&A Highlights
Spring Game postgame presser
April 16, 2022

On if he is ready to name a starting QB:

“No, I wouldn't say that. I thought Grant (Wells) played awful well today and did some good things. Obviously, the offensive line struggled a little bit for the white group which made it tough on Jason (Brown). Grant obviously threw some good balls and had a good first half out there. We'll evaluate the film and continue to work through the summer and take that competition into the preseason camp.”

On if he feels comfortable about the quarterbacks:

“Yeah, obviously we have to continue to get better there. I thought that Grant ran the offense pretty well. We feel that with a summer and preseason camp, by September he could look a lot different. I thought the two young kids did some good things with their feet. As a defensive coordinator, I understand that's hard to defend sometimes. I was pleased with what I saw out of those guys.”

On defensive line pressure:

“I thought we put decent pressure on the quarterback. (DE Norell) Pollard was mad at me because he thought he had a couple of sacks that I didn't give him. We were very limited in what we did and it's very challenging for offensive lines when you split them up. The communication is so critical and when they are not lined up next to their guys it makes it more challenging. So generally, the defensive line has a little bit of an advantage. I thought they chased those quarterbacks around pretty good and flushed the pocket a few times.”

On WR Kaleb Smith:

“He's done a nice job. He's one of those guys that was in the conversation for most improved. Each and every outing he did something in practice. He's a big guy with a big catch radius and he's consistently one of our top guys on our GPS speed barometer. It might not look like he's moving fast but he covers a lot of ground. He had a really good spring for us.”

On how the teams were selected for the Spring Game:

“For the most part, I wanted things to be fairly even. There were certain things that we needed to do from an operational standpoint to make sure the game would flow. There were some personnel decisions based on availability of reps and making sure we could distribute reps the right way, particularly at running back.”

On the lack of a running game in the Spring Game:

“I wouldn't say that I was disappointed. From where I was standing, it didn't seem like there was a lot for those backs out there today.”

On the atmosphere in Lane Stadium:

“It was awesome. The fan base did an unbelievable job of coming out today. To be honest, the whole weekend has been great. There was a lot of excitement, energy, and support for Virginia Tech football and everything else going on with softball and baseball. It was just a really good vibe in Blacksburg today.”

On WR Kaleb Smith's work ethic:

“Honestly, he's one of our best workers. When you come to work every day and put your hard hat on like he does you are going to get better. He's got a mature approach and is really consistent. I like what I see from him.”

On DL Norell Pollard's performance:

“I really liked his performance today. It was probably his best outing. He's talented and needs to be a guy that's going to be productive. When you have an inside guy that can pressure the quarterback it's a problem for people. I think he can be that guy for us.”

On the alumni presence:

“It's super important for us to get those lettermen back. It's their program more than mine. They want to return back to winning championships here and having a winning program. I told them that anything from us, we will be there for them. I want them here as often as they can come and to be around our players.”

On the post-spring plan:

“I asked the assistant coaches to meet with all their positions last week. They will be hitting the recruiting trail next week with some starting as early as Monday. Those were evaluation meetings where players and coaches were given evaluation forms and then they would get together and discuss it. That information would get passed on to me and I'll meet with every member of the team in the next two weeks.”

On DB Nyquee Hawkins:

“He plays the game the way you're supposed to play it. He runs by people to get to the ball with a lot of rudeness and quickness. I'm excited about him and he's had a pretty good spring. I thought today was his best performance's.”

On QB Devin Farrell:

“He will continue to play quarterback for us. He learns the offense well and has really good feet and athleticism. There was one throw today where I thought he should have stepped into it more. He's got a strong arm and picks up things well. He will continue to play quarterback for us but he is athletic enough to play other positions.”

On DL Wilfried Pene:

“He's had a good spring as well. He's another guy that was in the conversation for most improved. He picked up the defense well and I love big guys that have good feet. He probably has the best feet out of any of the inside guys. He can really navigate in there and he works his butt off so I'm really excited about him.”

On QB/ATH Conner Blumrick:

“He’s done some good things in practice in certain packages. We didn’t want to show everything we are going to do with him. I was okay with moving him around and doing a little bit. Honestly, I want folks to wonder about what we’re going to do with him. It’s a good problem for others to figure out.”

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DE TyJuan Garbutt Q&A Highlights
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On similarities and differences of new defense to past defenses:

“In similarities, it reminds me of the defense when I originally came here as a freshman, which was Coach Foster’s defense. It’s a lot of the same things, a lot of the same coverages. It’s kind of a newer version. Offense has adapted to change the offensive spreads. It’s way more similar to Coach Foster’s scheme compared to the scheme we were running last year.”

On defensive line getting into the backfield a lot:

“We made it a mission when we went into meetings today that we wanted to show everybody that we control the trenches, either side, the maroon or white side. I think we did a good job. Coach Price always emphasizes playing on their side of the line. We did a lot of good things, I’d say. We’ve still got some things to clean up. A lot of technique and fundamental stuff, but when it comes to just playing hard, playing relentless and playing fast, Coach Price has done a good job of making sure we can play fast without thinking and having to go through the mental gymnastics.”

On how his spring went:

“I wanted to target getting better as a leader. I feel like I always say that and it’s harder than what you think. As a guy who was around a lot of leaders when I got here around the defensive line. Ricky Walker, for example, and even Jarrod Hewitt, just a recent example. It’s up to me, you know, a guy who’s been here and around those guys and sees the standard they set and the attitude they had around practice. I feel like I improved on my leadership.”

Virginia Tech Football
WR Kaleb Smith Q&A Highlights
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On if long balls have been an emphasis in his relationship with QB Grant Wells:

“It’s something that we targeted this spring, trying to throw the ball down field a little bit to open up the field.”

On if his speed is overlooked:

“If they overlook it, they overlook it. I show it just about every time I’m on the field. As a bigger guy, being able to move well is one of my biggest traits.”

On what sets Grant Wells apart from other quarterbacks he’s played with:

“He’s very mature and always composed. He’s not afraid to get on a receiver and I like that leadership from a quarterback position from the quarterbacks that I’ve played with.”

On what makes a quarterback good at throwing the ball deep:

“As a receiver, once you get separation, you want to keep it. Obviously, having the ball getting thrown in front of you, you can catch it in stride. That’s what we want, and he does a really good job at it.”

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QB Jason Brown Q&A Highlights
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On if offensive line struggles affected his play:

“That could throw it off and what not, but I still have to make the throw at the end of the day, so I’m not going to put too much blame on them. At the end of the day, I get the ball, I drop, then I’ve got to make a play with the football.”

On what felt right about the day:

“Just being out there. I’ve been dreaming of this day since I was young. Y’all have heard this story before. I’ve tried to come here three times. The first time was as a linebacker and I don’t want to tackle anybody, so I didn’t do that. So, third time’s a charm. Just being out there in front of everybody and all the fans, just being able to play the game for Virginia Tech, that was the highlight of my day.”

On things to work on headed into the summer:

“Just not getting too deep on my drops. People in the stands are going to say the (offensive) line isn’t giving me enough time, but part of that is on me, as well. If I’m dropping too deep, then they’re expecting me to be at a certain depth, so if I get too deep, I mess with their thinking. It goes two ways and I’ll take the blame for it.”

On working with QB Grant Wells:

“It’s been good. He’s a great football player and y’all saw that today. He makes plays when he has the football in his hands. Just knowing that we’ve come from two different schools, just comparing the stuff that we have now to what we did previously and how we can join forces in a way. We take the knowledge he knows from his old coaches and take the knowledge I know from my old coaches and take the knowledge we know from the coaches now that we’re getting. Just being able to implement that into our game together, I think we’re going to be a good group.”

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QB Grant Wells Q&A Highlights
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On whether he and QB Jason Brown are on pace to be ready to lead the team:

“Yeah I think so. Obviously, that’s the coach’s decision on that one but I know that both Jason and I push each other each and every day and I think that’s not going to stop.”

On his relationship with WR Kaleb Smith and their completed passes in the game and his penalty for excessive celebration:

“I don’t know about that one, we’ll have to look at film on that one, I don’t agree with that one but yeah Kaleb is one of those guys that I knew that I could advantage of and I think we did that.”

On what he plans to work on in the summer:

“That whole competition is really out of my hands right now, I’m going to continue working and just gain chemistry in the summer, that’s what summer is all about is getting in shape and tying routes down with these guys. Now we know what to run so trying to get with the guys on that.”

On whether WR Kaleb Smith catches people off guard with his speed considering his size:

“I think so. He’s very versatile he can really play any role on the field.”

On how he feels as a runner on the field:

“I think in today’s college football you have to be. There are very few quarterbacks who can succeed in this league and not be able to run the ball so that was one thing that (Offensive Coordinator Tyler Bowen) and I got together and I was perfectly fine with that. I can definitely get better at that.”

On whether the scrimmages felt the way the Spring Game did as far as the game plan:

“I know Coach Pry has tried to make each scrimmage as much game-like as possible but you know when you get fans within Lane and you start running out, nothing can really prepare you for that. In that sense, it was nothing like practice but the structure and everything was very similar.”

On whether NIL opportunities can help programs keep backup quarterbacks instead of seeing them transfer away which is the trend in college football right now:

“That’s a good question, I think everything has a price when you talk about where you want to play football and everything. Some guys, to each his own and if some guys really need the money, they might look at staying for the money or something like that but most guys want to play, that’s why they became college athletes and I think it’s just going to be personal to each situation.”

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DL Norell Pollard Q&A Highlights
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On if he got to Grant Wells before he threw the touchdown pass:

“I know I got there. Yeah, I know I got there.”

On his conversation with Coach Pry following the touchdown pass:

“I was a little upset because he was emphasizing competition, (that play) was really competitive, and I wanted to win being on the white team. They got the touchdown on that play, so I was like, ‘Come on man.’ I wanted my sack counted. Coach came over and told me if I got another one he was going to make sure that it was counted.”

On where he’s made the most growth from winter to spring:

“Leadership. The leadership aspect of it. And also knowing when to take chances, getting the pre-reads before the snap so it allows me to play faster.”