**Virginia Tech Football**

**Head Coach Justin Fuente Q&A Highlights**

**Media Conference**

**October 1, 2018**

***Opening Statement***

“First of all, thanks again to everyone who made the trip down to Duke. I thought it was a fantastic show of support for our kids. It was much appreciated. Looking at the film, I think it’s important that we understand that while it was a good response and I’m happy for our kids, we have a long, long way to go. From a maturity level and from a discipline level. We’re teaching lessons every day to this group. Some of them it seems like we are learning better than others. We are just continuing to try to bring this group along, give them guidance and help them out as we go through this season. I guess my point is, just because we won the game doesn’t mean we don’t have plenty of work to do to bring these guys along. We made numerous mistakes, but fortunately, we made enough plays to find a way to win the game. The teaching is continuing from all of our coaches as we try to bring these young guys through.

“Also, congratulations on the news that just came out on the monument for Coach [Frank] Beamer. I think it another well-deserved honor for him and is a fantastic tribute to the man who has a set a really high standard here. It should be a fun event that goes along with the game as we turn our attention to Notre Dame. It will be the most complete and talented team that we’ve played to date. They have all things clicking in different areas of the game and have recently made a quarterback change. The last two weeks they’ve been very explosive, averaging 47 points per game I think. Defensively, they’ve played really well the entire year with giving up less than 20 points a game. So, it’s going to be a tremendous challenge for our team. I know we will have a great atmosphere, but we’ve got to do a great job of preparing this young squad heading into this ball game.”

***On backup quarterbacks stepping in the conference:***“The best I can tell you is that all have played pretty well, too. I’m certainly not an expert on everybody else’s quarterback situation, but it’s a really important position, the most important position in this sport. It doesn’t mean that if you have a good one that you’re guaranteed to win, but it can certainly cover up some deficiencies. Having another guy ready to play is paramount. I think getting those guys reps and work throughout the season and the spring and getting them acclimated to the weekly preparation mode is very important. I’ve been in situations where we didn’t have one and it’s a scary endeavor. Nobody wants anybody to get hurt, but you got to plan for it because it’s a real factor.”

***On QB Ryan Willis’ performance against Duke after looking at the film:***“He played pretty well. I thought he was a little amped up early, but really I’m not sure that was correct. After going back and looking at the film, he could’ve just put a little more air on some balls maybe. But he was pretty in control, he felt comfortable with the looks. We had a few mistakes, though. We had a poor exchange that could’ve hurt us on a third-and-long. And we had a couple series in the second half that we didn’t get much going offensively. There were certainly some mistakes in there, but for him to get in there and play against a quality opponent in Duke and play as well as he did, I think it was a nice performance for him. Now the question is can he turn the page and get ready for a completely different defense.”

***On how the WRs have done so far this season:***“I think they’re in the process of getting better. The thing I think we have improved at, everybody always talks about catches and I understand that, is the perimeter, which we have not been good at in the past. And what I mean by that is blocking and playing without the ball. We just have not been a physical presence out there on the perimeter, but we’re showing signs of improvement. It’s been a huge point of emphasis so I do see us taking more pride out there. Certainly, we’ve caught some balls and shared the wealth. But there’s about six guys whose mentality is improving in terms of how they play the game. We keep track of team plays and WR Eric Kumah had a team play on TE Dalton Keene’s touchdown. He blocked two guys on that play, and those types of plays are coming about more frequently.”

***On assessing the offensive line and whether or not it is settling down as the same rotation:***

“Yes, to answer your question, I think that is where it’s settling down. We still have Silas (Dzansi) who should be good to go. Our performance was good at times, I felt that everywhere to be honest with you. We showed glimpses of really doing things well, then at times I’m disappointed. I felt that we let some people off the hook and we could have hurt them with a little bit of execution on some bigger plays. I think that’s the lineup that we’re kind of leaning towards.”

***On what stands out about Notre Dame’s defensive line:***

“The defensive line stands out in terms of a little bit, like, last week, that they’re a movement team and will play a little bit of man coverage in the back end and are pretty darn good at it. They’re good at flying to the football. They’re aggressive and good at making it hard for people to run the football. It all starts with that and finding a way to run the football and people haven’t had much success with that. They have fallen behind the chains and will pin their ears back and get at the quarterback.”

***On the sustainability of a rush-3, drop-8 adjustment by DC Bud Foster and thoughts on how well it worked:***

“Well, I think the short answer to that is I think it’s a little like everything else, a little bit of it is good, too much of it is bad for you. I think we’ll be able to mix that in with what we’re doing combined with some things we’ve traditionally done, so I don’t know if anyone is going to all of a sudden mistake us for just a 50 defense, but I think it will certainly be a part of what we do.

“The first time they handed off the draw and we were in drop-eight, [Rayshard] Ashby knifed through there and made the tackle at the line of scrimmage. I know that is a deflating feeling as an offensive coach and you have a hard time running the ball into that look. So I know that’s the two things that can hurt that, that’s the quarterback standing in the pocket all day and them being able to run the football and when you take those things away in that defense, you’re pretty much in control.”

***On conversations about transfers and redshirts, with the impact of the new redshirt rule:***

“That’s an interesting scenario, you know. I read Coach [Nick] Saban’s comments on it the other day and I think everybody’s intent was to help protect the young players in the game, in terms of playing them and being able to redshirt. The scenario we’ve talked about a million times where you got to put a guy in the end of the season and he hasn’t played all year and he burns his redshirt. I’m not sure we all quite understood the big picture ramifications. That’s why I always take a little bit more cautious path about making big changes because I really would like to try to understand the big picture ramifications. Now it seems like every time I read the paper or read an article it’s involving something along those lines and how it’s all going to work out we just don’t know. I’m not sure anybody knows but something we’ll kind of have to feel our way through as we move forward.”

***On lessons learned from playing in primetime games in the past:***

“I mean, we played in a big primetime game at the first of this year and the first of the year last year, so the stage shouldn’t change the way we prepare and play. We’ve played some really good people on big stages and we’ll be ready for this one. I’ve always steered clear of how the stage defines how we prepare. I think we’ve got to do a great job, we’ve proven that we can’t handle not doing a good job not preparing and if we do a great job, we’ve at least got a chance. We’ll take that same mindset moving forward, regardless of whether the game is on TV or at night or in the morning time or wherever it is, we’ve got to be ready to go.”