

Virginia Tech Football
Head Coach Justin Fuente Q&A Highlights
Media Conference
October 29, 2018

Opening statement

“We got back on the field yesterday for a little bit more extended work because of the weekend. On Boston College, we have a tremendous challenge ahead of us. Boston College is coming off of a fantastic performance against Miami. They played really well in all three phases of the game. They’re a veteran football team, very physical and do a very good job in the return game. Offensively, they have running back A.J. Dillon, who has, obviously, been a pretty prolific player his first couple years of collegiate play, mixed in with the quarterback playing at a high level. They have a physical defense that is tough at the line of scrimmage and is pretty darn good at the back end as well. It will be a tremendous challenge for us. We got about a half-a-days work in yesterday, in terms of practice time on the field. The kids are off today and will be back at it.”

On from a defensive standpoint, what he gets from Georgia Tech film that translates to the next week:

“Not much to be honest with you. You can watch technique, the effort, execution and those sorts of things, but to put it in perspective, I don’t know of any offense in the league when they are playing any other ACC team breaks down Georgia Tech film because it’s just so different. The defenses line up just so different, so there’s no correlation because the defenses are just so different schematically. It’s a one-time game that you’ve got to get lined up and go play in a different manner. So now, we’ll get back to playing a normal style this week.”

On the three muffed punts this year and what he is seeing in the punt return game:

“Well, we keep shuffling guys back there because we’ve not been good. There’s no reason to sugarcoat it. We haven’t been comfortable with whoever has been back there has handled it. Losing CJ [Carroll] hurts us, obviously, but there’s nothing we can do about that. We need to continue to find somebody back there that can be consistent enough to field the football. That’s what we talked about at the start of the year, can we communicate to the other people on the field that are blocking for us and can we take care of the football. We’ve been fortunate up until last week that it hadn’t hurt us, and then it finally did. We will continue to move guys through that spot.”

After looking at the film, what he learned about why the offense wasn’t executing as well after the first three possessions against Georgia Tech:

“Sure, you can go back and pinpoint the plays. The one thing that I said after the game and I think it’s still true is I don’t think it’s just one position group. We’re not talented enough to overcome those types of execution errors. You look at a dropped pass, a missed block, a dropped snap, a poor conversion on third down and the next thing you know the game’s over. You look at the first three possessions and those things did not happen. It’s got to be a huge

point of emphasis for us to continue to maintain that discipline and focus to give ourselves a chance to execute time in and time out. And the other team is going to make plays, it's not like they're not being coached or don't have athletes too, you got to do everything you can to put yourself in a position to execute more consistently."

On if there are any injury updates on LB Dylan Rivers and DL Jerrod Hewitt:

"I think it will all be day-by-day with those two guys. I don't have any real update, we'll have a meeting today at 5 o'clock to get the latest on those guys. If I was filling out a report, I would say it's day-to-day right now."

On history of being part of teams with ups and downs throughout season:

"I've certainly been on teams or a part of teams that were very, very good, that won all their games and I've been part of teams that have struggled. This team is unique, as they all are. Certainly, you can draw from experiences of when you have been a part of squads that haven't been as productive as you want them to be, or maybe are being as productive as they can be. You know, what the ceiling is for any individual team is really hard to figure out, but it's up to us, as coaches, to continue to get the guys in positions to have success and encourage them to continue to move forward. That's happening and I'm happy about that. I guess in short, you can always draw back on past experiences with each team being fairly unique. Handling the ups and downs, when you struggle with a young group, you try to get them to pop back up and be ready to go the next week. There's still a lot of football to be played and we've got some tremendous challenges in front of us."

On reflecting on the result of the game from a preparation standpoint:

"Well, I think it's an ongoing process of learning how to prepare. I mean, we certainly weren't lifeless at practice, I just think it's an ongoing lesson, you know. It's easy to say we didn't practice well if you lose, but that's disingenuous and the players understand that too, they can see through that. The key is immediate feedback as you're going through the week to give yourself an opportunity to have success. It does not mean you're going to have success, we do all of this without the guarantee of success. We try to put all this work in, to me that's what a true competitor will do. A true competitor will spend the time and have the discipline to prepare to give themselves the best chance and knowing that it doesn't guarantee it. If we don't do those things then we have no chance. I mean we're not giving ourselves an opportunity. Over the last year, I've seen this team make huge strides. I'm talking about when we came back from winter break and it was (laughing), we had a long way to go, and we still do but I think staying the course and continuing to understand and try to get those points across is what we have to do."

On utilizing homefield advantage to its highest potential:

"Well, I hope that the location of the game does not affect our performance. We have at times at least this year played on the road, maybe have been more productive at times. It has been something we've talked about. I can tell you that much, it's not a factor that we haven't acknowledged. Maybe there are a few more distractions playing at home, with family and tickets and all those sorts of things. I know this, our kids do desperately want to play well here

and they do want to perform well at home and we do understand how unique and how honored we are to play at a such a cool venue. It's something that we have, in the last couple of years, played well at home and it's something we want to get back to. I think I answered that with a, 'Yes, a maybe and a no,' all in one answer, but it's something we've talked about a little bit. Trying to get that back and handle it and play a little bit better."

On competitiveness of the ACC this year compared to previous years:

"I would say it's similarly competitive as it's been in my short time here. The names may have changed, maybe some other teams are having better seasons than they have had the last couple years and maybe there's a couple teams that are not having as good of years as they have had the last couple of years. It's going to be competitive every single year. There's probably, I think everyone one would agree, one team that is probably head and shoulders above everyone in the league. Everybody else is fighting, scratching and clawing to squeeze out a win every week. There are fantastic athletes in this league, there are great coaches. There's been a commitment to football over the last several years, before I got here, in the ACC, in my opinion, to elevate the level of play. That commitment by administrators and coaching staffs."