

Virginia Tech Football
Head Coach Justin Fuente Q&A Highlights
Media Conference vs. Notre Dame
October 7, 2018

“First of all, congratulations to Notre Dame and Coach (Brian) Kelly. They have a fine football team over there and they are very deserving of their ranking. Thanks to everyone who came out tonight, it was a fantastic atmosphere. My gut reaction is that in one respect, I’m really proud of my kids and another respect, I’m awfully disappointed. We played against a really talented and well-coached football team that is one of the best in America. We certainly had our chances but we didn’t come through on either side of the ball. We were in it with the group of guys that were out there battling. Notre Dame made more plays than we did and took control of the game late.”

On the missed chances in the first half:

“Well, we got behind the chains and we got things moving. We had a couple penalties in there that set us behind and we can’t make those mistakes. We had a poor exchange down there on the goal line and those were the things that held us down.”

On how much the 97-yard touchdown run hurt momentum:

“That was certainly a big play. They were trying to get the edge and Dexter Williams turned back inside and hit air. Williams can scoot. That was one of several plays. That was certainly a big one in the game.”

On the amount of passes Ryan Willis threw and if that was the game plan:

“Well, it’s certainly not the way we would like it to be designed. We don’t ever put a number on it, but we knew we were going to throw the ball a little more this week. Then when you get behind it distorts that number too. We knew we had to be aggressive. Fifty passes is a lot and usually indicative of the situations we found ourselves in. Going in, we knew we would have to throw the ball a little more.”

On the danger of the Hezekiah Grimsley pass with a lineman downfield and how long it takes for the play to develop:

“If what they said happened actually happened then by the rule it’s a good call. The unfortunate part was that he was completely away from the play and that’s unfortunate. It’s unfortunate that we were downfield away from the play kind of just walking downfield and we weren’t blocking downfield. It was another example of a big opportunity that we missed through a small detail.”

On how frustrating it was that Stephen Peoples couldn’t score on the one yard line after his 44-yard run:

“Very. We over-rotated at quarterback. It was actually a pass and he ran into the tailback. It’s

hard to beat Notre Dame when you can't score from the one-yard line. You can't be just happy with getting it to the one-yard line. It doesn't win games."

On how Willis played in his second start:

"The fumble was not good. I felt like he was just doing too much. I just tried to calm him down. You don't have to put a cape on your back and make six guys miss and throw a post all the way across the field for us to have a chance to win the game. Calm down. If you get in trouble throw the ball away and play the next play. I was proud of how he responded with that next drive. He showed flashes of playing really well and then there were a few things that hurt us."

On Damon Hazelton play this season:

"He continues to improve. He needs to continue to work in practice to hone his craft. I think Willis and him have some chemistry. We didn't get nearly as much press coverage as we thought during the game. I think that's partly because of him and his success in those situations."

On how Divine Deablo being out effected the game:

"It certainly did not help. He pulled it practice and could not go. We played a bunch of people today. We ran some guys in and out and we gave them some work. But those guys are getting work and getting better. To me, that's how we continue to improve. Can we stay healthy enough to see the improvement?"

On the losing streak against ranked teams in Lane Stadium:

"This is my third year here. We lost to Notre Dame and Clemson in my time here. The way I see it is, we have yet to knock off a top-five team in Lane Stadium. I don't think the narrative that we don't play well on the big stage is true. I was told the West Virginia game was a big game last year until we won. I was told the Florida State game was a big game until we won. The facts are we haven't beaten one of the cream of the crop teams. We tried very hard to do that today. Through some of their talent, execution and precision and a lack of our execution are the reasons we fell short. There are a lot of things that I'm really proud of. This team is continuing to learn, get better and understand what it takes to play at that level."