

**Virginia Tech Football**  
**Head Coach Justin Fuente Q&A Highlights**  
**Media Conference**  
**October 8, 2018**

***Opening statement***

“Thanks to everyone that came out Saturday night, just a fantastic atmosphere, great fan support. We turn our attention to North Carolina. I thought our kids had a pretty good workout yesterday. They’re off today and then we’ll be back at it tomorrow. North Carolina is coming off of a bye week which adds a little bit of more urgency for us in terms of getting ready to play against these guys. We got to go down there and get ready to play on the road against a team in North Carolina that I feel like keeps improving. They had a game cancelled as well, but scored quite a few points in a win against Pitt and have had another week here to get healthy and rested and get dialed in. We’ll need a great week of preparation.”

***On where the Tar Heels have been improving this season:***

“When they take care of the football, they’re pretty prolific offensively. Seventeen is a fantastic wide receiver, I think Nathan Elliott (quarterback) continues to get better throwing the ball and running the offense. They found some running game too. Defensively, continuing to kind of grow. They’ve always been pretty big and physical up front. This year is no exception. They’ve had some young guys who they’ve played, particularly last year I think you can tell when you watch the film they’ve improved. They are a little bit more seasoned group than a year ago.”

***On assessing the weather and the possibility of another hurricane impacting this game:***

“Well we’ll certainly keep an eye on the weather and try to be prepared as we get on in the week if that looks more likely as we all know those things can be very unpredictable. I guess it’s kind of, as a new person to this part of the country, that’s just this time of year. Where I’m from in the spring you dodge tornados and this time of year you’ve got to be prepared for that sort of stuff.”

***On Devon Hunter’s status after not playing during the Notre Dame game:***

“No, we’ve talked to Devon and really feel like we need to develop Devon. It’s looking more and more like he’s going to redshirt this year so that we can continue to bring him along.”

***On Hunter potentially changing positions in the future***

“No position changes. He wants to play and his heart is on the defensive side of the ball. We want to continue to give him an opportunity to try and have success and come along. Certainly if he goes through this year redshirting we’ll look at everything in the spring and try to evaluate where he needs to be in the secondary, I’m not sure about that. But there has been no other discussion about drastic changes.”

***On the confidence of the team if they could reach 3-0 in the league and also 3-0 on the road in the ACC:***

“Well, I don’t think we need to focus on that. We need to focus on ourselves and our improvement. I heard quite a bit of chatter about ‘we’re 2-0 in the league’ and all that sort of stuff. To me, that’s counterproductive to what we’re trying to get done here. We need to focus on our improvement and finding a way to get better and give ourselves a chance to win regardless of a league game, non league game. Also the whole, ‘We’re still 2-0 in the league’ implies that if we were to lose a game in the league that there is nothing to play for and that’s not true either. We have a young group here who needs to focus on their improvement and we’ve got to do a great job as coaches continuing to demand that from them on a weekly basis. Certainly we’re going on the road, we’re playing a conference game, those things are important but I think for us, can we continue to bring some of these guys as they get experience along so that we can get better at those spots but ultimately better.”

***On how the team reacted from the Notre Dame and his message to them:***

“I felt half and half. I’m talking about me personally, and this is what I shared with them. I’m absolutely sick to my stomach that through our lack of execution, combined with the other team’s talent, I don’t want to take anything away from them. When you play good people they force you into mistakes and get you uncomfortable. We certainly had our opportunities and didn’t advantage of it. On the other hand, I’m incredibly excited that we had some of those chances. I think we can take something from that game in terms of how we played at times with an inexperienced group. Part of me is furious and part of me is really excited about what you guys can be if you continue to stay the course. I think their mindset; they were obviously disappointed but took coaching which is easier said than done sometimes. You’ve got to look at and see some guys that are laying it all down the line and played particularly well. I think there are some guys out there that certainly made some mistakes that hurt us and we’ve all got to share and own that and move forward with it. They certainly weren’t walking around there with smiles on their faces but certainly weren’t in the dumps where we couldn’t get them to do anything. I think they understood it, they took it in and we’re all owning it and moving forward.”

***On the 52 pass attempts Saturday night and if that was the right call after watching the film when the running game was going well for the Hokies***

“I didn’t feel in retrospect, I thought it was kind of warranted in the game quite honestly.”

***On missing Divine Deablo’s presence in the secondary and the team going 0-2 without him:***

“Well I will say this, I was really proud of Tyree Rodgers and how he played for his first real action against a team like Notre Dame. Certainly it wasn’t perfect but he was competitive in there and I was proud of him. Yeah, Divine has experience and age and size and speed and intelligence and toughness and all those things that you want in any player in any position. It certainly plays a role in it, it does. We’re trying everything we can to keep him healthy and keep him ready to go. He wants to go; he is a tough kid. I feel for him because he has done everything we’ve ever asked him to do essentially every day since he’s been here and I want

him to have success so badly and this team wants him to have success. He's well liked, a popular member of our squad so he certainly plays a big role."

***On QB Ryan Willis and other players' margin between being competitive and trying too hard:***

"Absolutely and that position (QB) it's highlighted even more so. There are so many more decisions that go into that position. There are so many more opportunities to alter the game positively or negatively. It's a fine line between making plays, because he can make some plays that are pretty special with his arm and he made some plays like that and he made some plays with his legs. It's the old know when to hold them and know when to fold them. It's not always clear. Finding that through some experience and composure is important at that position."

***On UNC wide receiver Dazz Newsome:***

"Sure, he's a quick explosive player who seems to have savvy out there. He's going to have a really good career at North Carolina. He played I believe last year as a true freshman, this year as a true sophomore and you can see, he's one of the guys I kind of referred to when I started about them playing young people and you being able to see the difference in a year ago because of the experience."

***On the three Hokies – Terius Whatley, Kyle Chung and Robert Porcher – whose fathers all played in the NFL and if they have any different traits:***

"Well I think the first thing I would say is they really do enjoy the game. Terius and Kyle and Robert has come a long way in a short period of time. There's a sense that they've been around it a little bit. They value or understand the value of practice, they understand some fundamental principles of the game. They're not all like that and it's probably not a great blanket statement to make but for the three that we do have, I think it's pretty evident that they enjoy playing the game."

***On Wheatley, Chung and Porcher being constantly reminded of their father's accomplishments:***

"Yeah I imagine it probably crosses their mind sometimes. I haven't seen it become an issue but they all handle it a little bit differently I think. Terius is a very quiet kid, almost unassuming but I don't know. I'm sure that somewhere along their career bringing that up has probably gotten under their skin a little bit before but they seem to be handling that and adjusting to it."

***On the defense feeling the ups and downs on the sideline and whether the offense feels that way as well:***

"Well what Bud [Foster] is talking about it true for the squad in general in terms of, kind of what we talked about that very first game. Handling those emotions back and forth, it takes a person with some real self confidence to handle those things. The best way to handle them is to have handled them before from experience. It's something that we talk about constantly as a team. I don't know one side of the ball or another, in general terms the offensive kids have a little bit more experience and have maybe been through a little bit more of that. I would say big picture wise that's something that we're working through as a squad."

***On the difference of QB Josh Jackson having some experience handling emotions of a game and now QB Ryan Willis trying to do so for the first time at Virginia Tech:***

“Josh for a sophomore is a seasoned veteran and had some of those natural qualities. Ryan is doing a really good job of that. Certainly don’t want to make it sound like the first thing that goes bad is because Josh isn’t on the sidelines, people are hanging their heads, that’s certainly not at all what it is. There’s a little growth there to go through, a maturation process and Ryan’s done a good job with it. You need some other guys too when you lose your starter in any position, your other guys continue to step up and that’s not just in their play but in their leadership roles and their communication.”