

Virginia Tech Football

Head Coach Justin Fuente Q&A Highlights

Media Conference

November 12, 2018

Opening Statement:

“In honor of Veteran’s Day, I would like to just take a minute before we begin to thank the men and women in uniform who serve our country. On behalf of myself, our staff and our players, we certainly appreciate and value the sacrifices they make. We’re looking forward to saluting them on Military Appreciation Day on Saturday.

“We’ve got a huge challenge this week with Miami coming to town. We’ve got to continue to obviously work in all three areas of the game, try and get better. Our kids came out, obviously, they were disappointed about last week, but they’re resilient, they care. I anticipate we’ll have a very good week this week.

“Just confirming, House [Houshun Gaines] is out for the year with a knee injury. You know, House plays extremely hard and will be missed, but he’ll be very quickly on the road to recovery. We’re looking forward to having him back out next year.”

On state of the defensive line at this point of the season, following attrition and injuries:

“I hope that we can get Emmanuel [Belmar] back. We didn’t have him last week and at defensive end, you have three redshirt freshman and Emmanuel. We have a couple true freshmen ends that haven’t played much. Eli [Adams] has played a little bit on special teams, I think two games, I think that’s where he’s at. We can look at that if we need to. Nathan Proctor, Zion [Debose], TyJuan [Garbutt] and Emmanuel have all played in games and at times played well. On the inside, we hope to get Jarrod [Hewitt] back this week. We’ll see, ultimately. Between Jarrod [Hewitt], Vinny [Mihota] and Ricky [Walker], Robert Porcher IV filling in a little there, we still have some depth, you know. I think the key to that is getting Emmanuel and Hewitt back.”

On whether or not the injuries have been more prevalent this year than in the past:

“I do think that it is a good example of the toll that can be enacted on your team. When you think about offenses that go as fast as they can every snap, the strain that it puts on your defense. Or when you’re not as good defensively as you have been, the number of snaps that they have to play can lead to a couple situations like that. Certainly, we have had our fair share. You always hate when you have an injury before you even get started, talking about [Jeremy] Webb going down in warm-ups (in workouts over the summer). We’ve lost a few guys, I don’t know if it’s more or less than a normal year, but it’s something all teams have to deal with and battle through. It’s when you combine that with some of the other things we’ve had to deal with, it puts a pretty big strain on you.”

On similarities between Virginia Tech and Miami on offense:

“They’ve been shuffling the quarterback situation back and forth, trying to find comfort, is what I see. I think both of those guys have proven to be capable, as they work to be more consistent. They’ve got really big, dangerous skill players at running back and wide receiver. They’ve got a little bit of youth out there, as well. I think they’re searching for a little bit more consistency, which I would say is similar to what we’re working for.”

On interest in potentially adding a 12th game on Dec. 1:

“We’ve got interest in all of the scenarios. As you all know, there is a lot that goes into all of that. Whit [Babcock] has done a great job at keeping me up to date in all that’s going on. We’re continuing to work our way through it. Do we have interest? Sure, we have interest in all the potential scenarios of what could happen and all the moving pieces that could come about that don’t have anything to do with the football team but have everything to do with everybody on the outside. That’s a pretty vague answer, but yes is the answer. We have interest but we’re trying to work it all out.”

On if any tackling techniques were related to defensive struggles after reviewing the game:

“The super long run, I don’t remember much on that. We didn’t get the guy on the ground, there’s no question about that. There’s some examples of where we could do a better job of tackling in space. It’s kind of two-fold. One, you’d like to do a better job restricting that space. I know this is an obvious statement, but the more area you have to cover, to one-on-one tackle in, the more difficult it is. Defensive football is restricting that area and that space. We certainly could do a better job getting those guys down, getting those guys on the ground, tackling in open space, and also restricting that area, so it’s a little easier on the person making that tackle.”

On the message to the team to try to rally to play this week:

“Certainly, it was not what we want to see. They prepared their tails off, they’re kind of looking at me like, ‘Coach, we prepared like you’ve been harping on us too and it didn’t work.’ Through the older players we do have, showing great leadership, and the younger players and their exuberance and excitement to go play and improve, they had a good mindset. It’s a balance, you want the kids to be disappointed that it didn’t go well, you want it to mean something to them, but you also want to respond. I didn’t see too much of either one. I didn’t see the point where they were responding so quickly it was because they weren’t all in. I also didn’t see the situation where you can’t get them out of the tank. They showed some resiliency, showed some good leadership from the older guys. They’re anxious to prove, as the whole team is, that they can play better football.”

On the status of RB Deshawn McCleese who did not play last week due to injury:

“As of right this moment, no. It could change as the week goes on. That’s the best I can give you. If we played right now, no. Hopefully, as we get closer to game time, we’ll have a chance, but I don’t know for certain.”

On takeaways from QB Quincy Patterson's time on the field:

“A long way to go, you know. He’s got to continue to work to improve. What there aren’t issues with is operationally, or flow or communication. Continuing to execute at a high rate of speed, in practice at a high rate of speed, is what I think he’s got to continue to do. He’s done some good things and there’s plenty for him to work on.”