

Virginia Tech Football
Head Coach Justin Fuente Q&A Highlights
Media Conference vs. Miami
November 17, 2018

Opening Statement

“Thanks to everyone who came out and congratulations to Miami. It was a tough night but I am proud of the competitiveness our kids showed and the way they prepared for the game in all three phases. Miami has some pretty explosive players on offense and some pretty dominate guys defensively. Our guys laid it all on the line and competed. I wish we would have found a way to get it done but we didn’t.”

On what he thinks slowed them down offensively in the second half:

“Well, in the second half we drove down and missed a field goal. The second drive we drove down and fumbled. The third drive we got a little something going but got a holding penalty and ended up with a third and long which is pretty tough. By then the game was pretty out of hand.”

On if he thinks QB Ryan Willis has lost confidence with some of his accuracy:

“Well, I don’t think it’s a confidence thing. I do think we were a little off target. There were some curls early on that he has been more accurate with. Part of that is Miami is an aggressive defensive and they get the QB to move off his spot a little bit. I thought he was competitive and battled in there until the very end.”

On what happened on the punt return TD:

“There certainly was a moment of relaxation there and you could see it on the field. We have not been great in coverage. The last two years we were fantastic and a lot of those players who made those plays are not here. We are bringing some people along in that area. I just felt like when the ball hit the ground there was a little bit of relaxation there. He is so fast and you saw what happened.”

On what he saw with the late hit on QB Ryan Willis late in the game on the INT:

“I mean that’s why they flagged it. It’s personal foul. Hit the guy away from the ball when we are supposed to protect the QB.”

On the toughness Willis showed tonight:

“He is a competitive kid and he loves playing. He is absolutely tough and brave. He is out there playing as hard and as good as he can play.”

On if Virginia Tech was prepared for Miami to run on them a lot:

“We certainly felt like that would be part of it. They essentially got the ball on the perimeter in zone coverage and were hard to handle out there. Then they got us in man coverage and ran the ball inside the box with the zone read. It wasn’t very complicated but they executed well.”

On if he has ever experienced trying to bring the team together week after week in his career:

“Well this is the youngest team I have ever coached. Have I ever coached on teams that have struggled before? Absolutely. That’s part of coaching and I love how our kids are coming to work and preparing. Our practices are energetic and focused. I told the guys that I still believe in them and they are still continuing to improve, work hard and have good leadership. They are battling and they understand what they are saying. It’s a lot easier said than done. To be able to be effective against good teams is difficult. If you play against people like Miami with that kind of talent they are going to score and prevent you from scoring. It’s all the other times that you have to be disciplined and execute on a consistent level that we are trying to get to.”

On what LB Dax Hollifield showed tonight and his potential:

“The interesting thing about Hollifield is he is one of the rare people in life that whatever endeavor they take on they throw their mind, body, and soul into it. Whether it’s his grades or football he is just able to throw everything into whatever endeavor he chooses. That’s the way he approaches this team and he is studious in trying to improve. He has some great leadership qualities for the future and also continues to try to improve as a player. He is fun to be around every single day and I’m proud of the strides he has taken.”

On what prevents him from making changes in personnel and play calling:

“There is no more personnel to put in. We dressed out eight receivers today and there is no one else to put in. All our tight ends played and we had Deshawn McCleave but he was for emergency purposes because he has been out for a couple weeks. The guys out there are the guys that are playing. Our job is to put them in a position to have success. We have to take advantage of our opportunities. We can’t re-invent the wheel on four days of preparation.”

On what went wrong in the third quarter:

“We missed a field goal, we fumbled and had a holding penalty on offense. On defense, they hurt us on the perimeter. We also gave up a punt return.”

On the frustration of struggling at home in front of the fans:

“No I’m not frustrated but I understand where you are getting at. We want to do well for our fans. I want the kids to have success. It’s what drives us every day to push the kids to succeed in every aspect of life. An element of that is performing for the people who appreciate the work our kids put in. I’m sure they are upset but they aren’t more upset than I am. We are working every single day to continue to improve. I’ve never been more confident in the future of this football program than I am right at this moment. We want to do well and continue the tradition

of playing great football here and rewarding the passionate people who spend their hard earned money to support our kids.”

On how hard it is to keep his team motivated especially going into the second half:

“It hasn’t been hard to keep them motivated. You are a little limited with the adjustments you can make when there is inexperience. It’s easier to make an adjustment with a guy like Isaiah Ford who has played a whole lot of games. I don’t think that’s been a huge issue for us.”