

**Virginia Tech Football**  
**Head Coach Justin Fuente Q&A Highlights**  
**Media Conference**  
**December 15, 2018**

***Opening Statement***

“It’s good to be back in town with our kids. We’ve got practice today and tomorrow. We had two practices last weekend. Just kind of an update on what we’ve been doing: obviously we’ve been on the road recruiting. Recruiting goes dead after this weekend, so we’ll be back and get a chance to really focus on our opponent. I was honored to be part of Coach Beamer’s induction to the College Football Hall of Fame. Thankful to be included. It was a pretty neat event and fun to be a part of.

“And we’re obviously honored to be selected to go to the Military Bowl. It’s a great location for our fans. I hope on the 31st we have a bunch of people who turn out to support our kids. We have a tremendous challenge in front of us with Cincinnati. They are good in all three phases of the game. We have not gone full bore into preparation with them yet. Obviously we’ve been on the road. We’ve been a little bit into the maintenance phase of our bowl prep. When you play on the 31st, I think you can break it down into really three phases. One is just maintaining your conditioning, getting your kids back feeling well. Then you kind of get into sharpening your skillset all the while getting some good work for the young players, and then you get into game prep. So our kids have done a good job finishing up finals and getting our bodies feeling better and getting ready for some work this weekend.

***On whether he’s been able to rest the veteran players:***

“Last week, that’s essentially what we did. We kept the older guys out there for about an hour getting some good full-speed work, not a lot of crossover. Let those guys go and then kept the young guys out there, or the guys that haven’t played a lot, and got some good work in for the second half of the practice. Today, we’ll still get those young guys some work but get our older guys back into the flow a little bit more in terms of having some crossover and kind of sharpening our toolset a little bit more, trying to get back into game mode before we hit preparation mode.

***On whether he anticipates Ricky Walker getting invited to an all-star game:***

“We’ll see how it all shakes out. There’s a lot of time left for all those things, in terms of guys accepting invites or declining invites. I wouldn’t be surprised if he didn’t end up in one of them. There’s obviously several of them now. I think he’s definitely deserving of it. He’s put on film some really good production and play. I feel like when it all shakes out, it’s going to work out. I think he’s got a shot at one of those games and go play and do really well, and whoever takes him in, invites him in, is going to be happy they did.”

***On whether Walker played two of his better games this season against UVA and Marshall:***

“Well, I’m not sure. I think he played well when we needed him the most, absolutely. I don’t know how it ranks in his other games, but certainly stepped up when his team needed him, as

he's done all along. Along with some young guys. Really kind of stopped being freshmen and kind of embraced their opportunity and the last few weeks have been really productive.:

***On building relationships with in-state coaches on the recruiting trail:***

"I think you're always continuing to build trust in the region. And it helps over time. Kids come here and have a good experience. They tell other kids that it's a good place to go. And I think we're going to end up when it's all said and done being very productive in this state this year and we'll hopefully continue that in the future."

***On the reception the staff has received in the Richmond area and the importance of players from that region:***

"It's been great everywhere. We haven't gotten a bad response anywhere we've been. Certainly Richmond is incredibly important to this program and has been a long time. And will continue to be for the unforeseeable future. And making sure we're evaluating the right kids and targeting the right kids I think is important for us. And ultimately showing them what Virginia Tech can do for them and their families for the next 40 years is a pretty powerful message."

***On whether UVA is more of a factor in the recruiting process than previously:***

"They do what they do and we do what we do. I'm not getting into whether they're a factor or not a factor. They evaluate and recruit players and we do the same thing."

***On whether he's had to reassure any prospects on the program based on this season's record:***

"No. Our kids have been fantastic through this deal. I think they all understood where we're at. And we tell them that. Where we're at or where we're going. I think we talked about this maybe our first year, but it seems like I recall us talking about the North Carolina game, and us recruiting in North Carolina and playing in North Carolina and beating them and the effect that has on recruiting, and yeah, certainly winning doesn't hurt. It helps. But this college selection should be more about a game, a win or a loss. It should be about a fit, a culture, a school that you want to be a part of. Identifying with other people that you're going to school with. So all that being said, winning helps. But I think our guys understand that it's a much bigger thing than a win-loss record or the way the game turned out. And I think we do a good job of educating our guys in recruiting of where we're at and where we're going as a program."

***On CB Jeremy Webb:***

"Jeremy was one day away from returning to football a couple weeks ago and he had another injury to his other Achilles. I will say this about Jeremy, if there's a kid that can handle that and come back from that it's him. Obviously, it was disappointing. It was really another, everybody searches for a reason why it happened and there really is none. Stop short of saying a freak occurrence, but it was just an odd thing that happened. Very unlucky. Very unfortunate. Jeremy is going to make it back. It won't be in the spring, but he'll be back in the summer and ready to go. It's not unprecedented that people have come back from two of these. Obviously, it's not something that happens everyday, but there have been guys that have gone on to have good athletic careers that have had two. Our entire team has been with Jeremy through this. It's been a tough deal. He's responded in a great manner. He has an unbelievable outlook on life. We look

forward to him coming back.”

***On whether there’s a mental hurdle now with Webb rehabbing:***

“I think it’s the fact he’s about done coming back from it and literally starts it over again. You can imagine that’s quite a mental and emotional hurdle to overcome. If it was anyone other than Jeremy, I’d be less positive about the outcome. You see this kid, and I know y’all haven’t seen much of him because he hasn’t played, but we are around him everyday. We announced for one of our games, I announced to the team we are going to put Jeremy — we don’t usually keep our injured guys on the sidelines — we were going to put him on the sidelines in a team meeting and the whole team went bananas. That’s the type of following he has. He’s got really a mature of way of going about himself. In that young DB room, he’s really looked up to. He’s got a great presence about him.”

***On whether he’ll address winning record streak with the team:***

“We will. We haven’t talked about much yet. We haven’t been in that scenario. We don’t play until the 31st, there’s no sense of getting them worked up yet. We are in maintenance mode then will enter true preparation. It’s something I’m sure our guys are already aware of. It will be something we hit on and talk about. I’m sure it will be part of the reason why our kid will prepare and get ready to play.”

***On how this year’s bowl prep is different compared to previous years:***

“Biggest thing is the date of the game. We’ll have this week, this coming week, to really get into good work. Then we will give the kids a few days off for Christmas. It’s not something I’ve done before. We’ve always been travelling or not had enough time to give those guys a couple days off. We’ll give those guys a couple days off for Christmas break and they will get started back on the 26th. I think the kids are appreciative of it. They need a little reset button. I felt strongly that if the opportunity presented itself to let them go home for Christmas and it did. It’s not something I’ve been a part of before, but it’s something the kids are excited about.”

***How do you think Ryan Willis handled being thrust into the starting role:***

“I’ve been really proud of him. I think he’s continued to work hard. It’s easy to work hard when you are the starter. It’s hard to work hard when you are the backup, but you never know. You are one play away from going into a contested game. For Ryan to continue to battle, continue to get better and be prepared, you know the game that he came into he was productive. I think it speaks volumes about him. I’m proud of how he’s handled it and he has improved as the season has gone along. He continues to do what we ask him to do.”

***On whether he ever saw Vinny Mihota get down at all with all the injuries:***

“I have not seen that from Vinny. I haven’t seen it since he’s been here. The 2016 season, the kid played with all kinds of issues and just continued to battle away. I haven’t seen anything other than a desire to help this football team. To play as hard and as good as he can. I’m sure there’s a part of him that wishes he could have been a little bit healthier. We all wish that. We want those kids to have success. There’s a lot for him to be proud of. The example he set. What he allowed this football team to do. What he helped do over the last couple weeks of the season is pretty

special, personally. He has every right to be proud about that.”