**Virginia Tech Football**

**Defensive Coordinator Bud Foster Q&A Highlights**

**Media Conference**

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***On the unexpected bye week allowing the defense to take a step back and reflect on its first two games and focus on getting better:***

“Yeah, obviously we weren’t expecting that but at the end of the day, I thought our kids did a great job of responding. That was kind of how our approach was, it was an opportunity to go get better. I thought our defense, personally, needed some younger guys, backup guys who really played a significant amount in the William & Mary game. That’s when you really can get better from Week 1 to Week 2, and I feel like that happened this last week of practice. Obviously, we got to go put that on display this coming weekend. I saw some guys at my position particularly at linebacker with Dax Hollifield and Rico Kearney played a lot of snaps, and I saw an improved group of guys collectively in my (linebacker) unit.”

***On whether he’s surprised with his young defense playing fast in the first two games:***

“Yes and no. We have a certain expectation and I didn’t know what we were going to do in the first game and I was really pleased with our effort and execution. Were we as sharp as we needed to be in the next game? Probably no but those are some things that we can improve on. As far as our efforts getting to the football, I like that. That’s one of our traits and characteristics of our team, defense and tradition. That’s something when we are going to play good defense, we’re going to have to play fast. There were two plays that we gave up that we need to get fix, and that’s a correlation of continuing to improve on that.”

***On LB Rayshard Ashby’s progress so far:***

“Rook [Rayshard Ashby] is a guy is very serious-minded and football is extremely important to him. He comes to work every day and has a mindset to improve and get better. He reminds me of Andrew Motuapuaka a lot, who he sat in the film room with last year. But that’s who we recruit, too. He has a great football IQ and he is one of those guys who makes the guys around him better, on and off the field. I have been pleased with his progress. Is he anywhere close to his potential? No, but he’s getting closer and I’ve been happy with his play so far.”

***On LB Dax Hollifield being held to a higher standard because of how much time he spent around the program on his own:***

“Probably so and I’ve told him that. My expectations of him are very high, but he’s a freshman. The best teacher is experience and he has been getting some of that. The film reps are great and all of that but on the field is when he’ll truly get better during games. He is playing the backer spot right now because we are putting the best guys on the field. He played 38 snaps last week with 35 of those being at backer and the other three at the Mike. Football is extremely important to him and he wants to please. I do hold him to a higher standard and I’ve been pleased with him or he wouldn’t be playing.”

***On this impromptu bye week being crucial for DL Ricky Walker to get extra reps after being dinged up:***

“The bye week for us came at a good time for us physically, particularly for Ricky [Walker]. Ricky is so important for us, with his plays on Saturdays and his approach during the week. I’ve labeled him the Bell Cow because you know what you’re going to get every day. You know what he’s going to demand from his teammates. It was awesome for him. The first game with him limping off was him being dinged up from playing extremely hard and the other game was him being clipped inside, which is going to happen from time to time. I know he’s excited to play back at home in front of his family and friends, too.”

***On riding the hot hand on the defensive line and sticking to his game plan going in:***“We’re at our best when we can rotate in defensive linemen in there. Obviously, you want to have in four playmakers in there at time. If you don’t, hopefully you have two guys in there that can make some plays and two guys that are going to play for you and not for the opponent. But that part of our defense is still a work in progress for us. With the tempo of offenses and how hard we expect them to rush the passer, even if the ball is moved down the field 30 yards. We demand a lot out of them at that position. The bottom line is they have to be guys that can perform, because if they don’t we will get beat. The more we can get guys that can play, I think that makes our football team better when it’s all said and done.”