



Virginia Tech

Head Coach Justin Fuente Quotes

September 29, 2018

HEAD COACH JUSTIN FUENTE

Opening statement:

"First of all, thank you to our fans that made the trip down. They definitely played a role in the game. It's awesome to see the support after such a disappointing week a week ago. Obviously proud of our players, our coaching staff. I don't want to make too much of it, but it was pretty rough. They responded in the right way and beat a very, very good Duke football team. Played well in all phases of the game - certainly the game wasn't perfect. I think we learned a lot about ourselves and I'm proud of those guys."

On the composure of quarterback Ryan Willis:

"It certainly wasn't perfect but I thought he played pretty well. Off the cuff without grading it and evaluating it, I felt comfortable with him in there. We've been watching him practice for going on two years now so we see him every day and know he has some talent. He's a competitor. He has some toughness and likes the game. He was really having fun out there. It certainly wasn't too big for him. In turn, all that said, he made plays for us. He gave our guys some opportunities to make plays. We knew we were going to see a bunch of man coverage, tight coverage. The guys on the outside made enough plays and Ryan did a good job. We didn't have operational issues or things like that. I was pleased with his performance and his ability to step up in the moment."

On the way the defense rebounded:

"They did a great job. We played some drop-eight in the game and were still able to get some pressure and keep the ball in front of us. They tried to hit us deep early in the game and didn't complete it and we were staying on top of it after that. Played pretty well up front. In order to drop eight, you've got to play pretty well up front to handle that. We did a good job. Again, the defensive staff put together a plan and the kids went out and executed it and played with passion and heart and intelligence. I think it's a pretty big response."

On Willis' decision making:

"He went the right place with the ball. There's one or two plays I can remember off the top of my head that I thought we were in the wrong place or should have made a different decision. But by and large, he did do a good job of putting the ball where we had a chance to catch it or certainly nothing bad is going to happen. That's important. That's something that Ryan is learning because he does have a live arm and he does have some talent and he can make some plays that are pretty special. But balancing that is the quandary for all quarterbacks. He did a good job with that. I thought [Offensive Coordinator and Quarterbacks Coach] Brad [Cornelsen] did a good job with the game plan and putting him in a situation to succeed and he executed."

On how the team responded after last week:

"Sunday night was a tough night for us. We go and work out on Sundays. They did a good job but the air was definitely out of their balloon - that's the best way I can think of it. They had taken a gut punch, to say the least. Seeing the kids around a little bit Monday on their day off, just coming through and then when we hit the practice field Tuesday, we hit it running like a hungry football team. The challenge - and it's really a big challenge for young football teams - is to try to maintain that level of intensity and attention to detail week in and week out. What I think makes it special is they did all of that without the guarantee of winning. We're playing a really good football team. We could play well and not win the game. To me, that says a lot. It's not a one-for-one trade - you work hard and you win. It doesn't work like that. For them to hit it running and work like they worked throughout the week, it's a pretty special feather in their cap."

On Dalton Keene's touchdown:

"I didn't know he was going to make three guys miss on his way to the end zone. That was just a little screen that we've had for a little while. It's one of those plays that you hope if you execute it well you get 10 or 12 yards. He's pretty special. He was just running hard and stiff arming guys and got a big block there at the end. He kind of had flashbacks to his tailback days back in high school."