

Virginia Tech Football
Defensive Coordinator Q&A Highlights
Miami Week Media Conference
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On defending teams on a short field in sudden-change situations:

“Those are hard opportunities to practice. We do that in practice, when we create a turnover. I’ll get that unit off the field to reward them. But that next unit to go in, we treat that like a sudden change situation. Our mentality needs to be to go out there and get that next stop, and get that momentum back to our side. At the least, snub their momentum. That’s hard to practice and we’ve got to be better in that situation. You’ve got to embrace those challenges. That defines who you are and the make-up of our team and our character when those situations arise. Those situations are things we need to look at as an opportunity, rather than the end of the world. We’ve got to be mentally tougher than that. There is a lot of football left. We can’t let one play effect several and that’s what I think we did [against Duke]. We’ve got to be mentally tougher, that’s the bottom line. There’s going to be momentum swings, there’s going to be adversity, there’s going to be a variety of things in the course of an athletic contest that you’re going to have to respond to. That comes back to mental toughness in my mind.”

On how to evaluate and develop mental toughness:

“That doesn’t mean you don’t have to go out and execute. There might be one call that I would like to have back. They ran a good play, it wasn’t a great play. We should defend it every time. It was a bubble and go. We see it in practice three or four times a day from our offense. It comes down to guys doing their job and executing. On the throwback, we had a guy on the back. He doesn’t take the back. Do we practice that play? No. Do we practice that back leaking out into the backfield? All the time, just not that particular look. That has nothing to do with leaders. What is a leader going to do, other than challenge a kid to go do it the right way? That’s what our guys have got to understand. They’re accountable every play. We have a bunch of young guys and that excuse is no more. There is a fine line in winning and losing at this level, particularly with teams with spread offenses. It comes down to guys doing their job and executing, bottom line. We’ve won two and lost two. The two that we’ve lost, it was because of execution. It was because of a guy ripping his gap, poor technique, not taking his proper man. When we win, it’s guys performing and executing, creating plays, not giving up. That’s the bottom line.”

On making adjustments during the game:

“You’re going to see things every week. We’ve exposed our guys to every possible situation they can see. It comes back down to technique and fundamentals. It comes back to playing with your eyes and playing with what you’ve been taught about making your reads and your responsibilities. It’s that simple. That’s the disappointing thing from a coaching standpoint - the frustrating thing from a coaching standpoint. You can ask the kids, they’re seeing it and they’re doing it. We have to be more consistent in our execution. I don’t care if it’s this year, next year,

20 years ago or 20 years from now - that's what it takes. Not just at Virginia Tech, but anywhere else."

On facing former players like Miami DE Trevon Hill:

"We saw it at ODU with Kumah [Eric] and Chris [Cunningham]. This is the era of free-agency, so to speak. I'm not worried about Tre [Hill]. I wish him the best in whatever he decides to do with his life. Our focus is to get ready to play Miami and he's on the other side of the ball so we're going to control what we can control. I've got a job to do. Maybe we'll hug after the game, but not necessarily (before)."

On the increasing role of LB Alan Tisdale:

"Yeah, you watch him play and it was my fault for not getting him into the game the previous two games. We kind of got tight. We didn't play as many offensive or defensive plays in those two wins. I just didn't substitute those guys right away. It got late and they were kind of cold. You just get into the flow of things a little bit. I did it early last week and you saw outstanding production. The guy can run, he plays with good vision. He's got to be locked in and focused like everybody else, but he's got a good skill set. He's got good quickness, he's got good playmaking skills. He's good in coverage. We play him in our '30' package and some of our passing down situations, just from an athletic standpoint. By his body of work, he's earned an opportunity to be on the field. Hopefully, he's going to continue in that role a little bit. I'm not disappointed in anybody else, I'm just excited about him and the playmaking abilities he brings to the table."

On the response of the team following a big loss:

"Everybody wants to win. You want a group of guys that hate to lose, though. They put so much into this thing, so much strain, so much work, so much effort, so much preparation, that if you do get beat, it should hurt. We're going to make sure that we have enough of those kind of guys. I was hoping we had guys that were hurting and were disappointed. If they're not, then we have the wrong kind of guys in the program. We'll find out a little bit more as we go on. We're 2-2, Miami is 2-2. There's a lot of football left. You kind of define your character and who you are when you've had a setback, had some disappointment and adversity. Are you going to listen to the outsiders in today's age of modern social media? If you win, you didn't win big enough. If you lose, you're not very good. The only guys they need to please are the guys in that locker room right now. They came back Sunday and really rolled their sleeves up and went back to work. We had really good work on Sunday. Obviously, it was our off day yesterday and came back and had a really good practice today. We have to go put it together, day after day after day. If I'm being honest, we can't be good today, average tomorrow and good on Thursday. Then we'll be good in the first quarter, average in the second quarter, good in the third quarter and average in the fourth quarter. We can't do that at this level. That's where our guys have to strain and sell out every day and develop those habits that it takes to win. To be successful, you know that it takes work. You have to do it every day at a high level to achieve what you want to achieve. That's what these guys have to buy in. That's where the leaders need to step up. Challenge those guys that seem like they're going through the motions. When you have that peer pressure from within, you have a good situation."

On the status of DE Tyjuan Garbutt who returned to the lineup vs. Duke:

“I’m sure he felt like he played his first game of the year. He’ll look to get better from last week to this week. I’m sure that thing is a little sore and there’s movement in there with that joint and he can move that. I’m excited about him and taking that next step. Like I said, it’s like he played his first game last week and we need to get him back practicing and playing.”

On the Voice of the Hokies, Jon Laaser:

“You guys know Laze [Jon Laaser] is not here, he lost his father. I just want everyone to know and let his family know, our thoughts and prayers are with him and his family through this difficult time. I know you guys will seek him out and let him know we’re all thinking about him.”