

Virginia Tech Football
Head Coach Justin Fuente Q&A
North Carolina Post-Game
Oct. 19, 2019

Opening statement:

“Thank you to our fans for coming out and playing a huge part in the game. I sincerely thank them for supporting our players. I thought they played incredibly hard and came together. You can see by watching us play, we’re not a perfect team, but it is certainly hard to question our kids’ grit and toughness. It was fun to watch them celebrate and find a way to win the game.”

On preparation for the new OT format:

“To be honest with you, I lost track of which number overtime we were on. I knew we were approaching having to go for two and then they came over and slowed it down during the change to the fifth one or whatever and explained it to us. We have done two-point play work, ‘good vs. good’, situational play stuff during fall camp. We cover the new rules in fall camp and talk about them. We spent a lot more time on blindside blocks and the two-man wedge on kick-off return than we did on that. Obviously, it came into play today.”

On difficulty of coaching in OT:

“You just call the played form a closer place. To me, there is a lot more stories about this game than the new rule.”

On putting Quincy Patterson in and judging his performance:

“I thought he did a good job. He ran hard and physical. He made plays in the passing game. When you get down to your third guy - Quincy hasn’t taken as many reps in the past couple of weeks as the top two guys - but we made the decision there pretty quickly to move along and bring Quincy in. Obviously, it changed what we looked like a little bit. To me, he did a great job of running hard, taking care of the ball, and he made a few good plays in the passing game.”

On response to deficit during the first half:

“I’m awfully proud. We go back to that meeting we had right after the Duke game and kind of laid it out for them. There is a lot of pride in this room with these players, and with Virginia Tech. I know we were behind, but I didn’t feel bad. I felt like we would move the ball. We had a possession where Hendon fumbled the ball and two drops in a possession, but I felt okay about what we were doing. We just needed to settle down a little bit. I did sense that we were a little nervous, as the game started. I tried to relax the guys a little bit. It is also a good sign that they’re a little nervous. They care a lot.”

On advantages of having Patterson II:

“Part of it is his threat of running the football, it can give you some advantageous looks to throw the ball. I would say it was a Day One installation type play. Nice protection. I only saw the ball go up, I didn’t see him catch it. Back to rudimentary football.”

On the playbook Patterson II has to deal with:

“It has nothing to do with understanding, it’s about execution. We have a third team quarterback in the game, it’s going to be scaled down. It was definitely scaled down, but in the same respect - at no point did I think we were going to put him back there and run it every snap. They’re too big to run it up front. We were going to have to make a couple plays in the passing game.”

On the defense making big plays late:

“I think it was a microcosm of the group. We weren’t moving the ball at points offensively and we weren’t exactly stonewall defensively. We kept battling through, taking adjustments, taking tweaks, and continuing great effort to battle through the adversity. We knew it was going to be a hard game and there was some ‘give and take.’ I’m just proud of those kids. It goes back to a couple of weeks ago and we had to look ourselves in the mirror and talk about how we would handle tough situations. We were certainly in our fair share of them tonight. If they had made one more field goal or whatever, I would still feel the same way about our team. If it had gone another way, I still would’ve been up here talking about how proud I am of our guys ability to battle.”

On Khalil Ladler stepping up in OT:

“Speaking specifically of Khalil, he had a great Thursday practice and he stepped up for us on special teams, and stepped up and made two big plays. Armani Chatman stepped into the game and performs at a high level. Quincy Patterson gets thrown into the game and performs at a high level. Austin Cannon played all or most of the game. That’s what football teams do. That’s what they have to do. They have to have guys that are in those roles that can step up and play to the best of their abilities, when called upon, for our team to have success.”

On Dalton Keene stepping into a role running the ball:

“I thought he was great. I didn’t like the turnover. He gives us an added dimension back there. He is so smart, he can play anywhere. He really handles a lot of the physical load. We were searching for some size back there. I thought Deshawn (McCleave) played great. Dalton is so versatile. He was back there more than we planned, but that was because of Quincy. That was something we had planned on doing, but it became a large part of what we were doing with Quincy in.”

On injuries to Farley and Hooker:

“I’m not sure what it was. [Farley] is fine. He was on the sidelines. I thought he was going to play the second half. He just couldn’t. He told me he was going to play, so I don’t think it’s a long-term issue. That’s what I think right now. We’re not going to put him out there if he can’t do the things he can do.”