

Virginia Tech Football
Defensive Coordinator Bud Foster Q&A Highlights
Rhode Island Week Media Conference
October 8, 2019

On the rotation of defensive tackles after DT Dashawn Crawford got injured:

“It was an opportunity for Norell Pollard who really played well, he had a sack. We did miss a tackle on that long run so that’s good for them to see, obviously it didn’t cost us the game it could have. But I saw us get better, they are going to have to step up. It is going to have to be Norell, Mario [Kendricks], Rob Porcher, those guys are going to have a bigger role. Norell went from playing 13 plays the week before to 44 plays this last week so there is a significant number of plays that he played much more than a week before.

“That is what those guys have to be ready for. Every day they got to continue to work hard in practice and do the little things right. I saw that today, but those guys are going to have to step up. I thought they played solid for us other than that one play they really couldn’t get the running play started we were able to get a little bit of pressure and Norell is a guy who has some really good twists. He is a little undersized but he plays bigger but he has a lot of quickness in there. Rob Porcher has a lot of quickness, I like Norell probably a little better at the point of attack but those guys can give us some good movement inside and that’s what we need to go along with Jared Hewitt. And losing Dashawn, we have to get him back because he has played really well for us the past couple of weeks.”

On the long touchdown run that Miami scored in the fourth quarter:

“We were in a man free defense and we are a gap control defense and the guy flattened out as far as the two shade and just fell off the block. We had a couple guys right there that kind of fell off the back and cut back inside. That’s today’s game, you have to come off the block on defense and make plays. It is nothing special, we just need to finish the play.”

On the play of CB Caleb Farley:

“You see experience but by the same token he gave up two plays (at Miami). He gave up a long touchdown pass at corner and we had the two-point play after that. Both were leverage plays in the cover aspect and one in the run game he just needed to pull his trigger. He has improved tremendously, but he is a guy that also has to continue to work just to be consistent in his concentration, consistency, technique and fundamentals. As far as a guy who has the skills set that you are looking for he has the length, the speed, great ball skills. He is a guy who continues to improve but has to work to improve, you know master his position. When he does it he is really pretty good, don’t get me wrong, but at that position you have to be exact every time. You have to have thick skin because they are going to make some plays here and there. Particularly the way they are playing man coverage and whether you are playing corners or man. You are isolated a lot, put on an island a lot, you have to have thick skin. Those are things that he has gotten better at and it has shown by him making some plays. If he can continue to

improve and his football IQ gets better and his understanding gets better like the way Waller is playing, that gives us a chance to get have a couple good corners.”

On sophomore DB Chamarri Conner and his play at Miami:

“I’d say in his early career, when he turns it loose, you see a guy that has dynamic playmaking ability. He is what you’re looking for, from a standpoint of that nickel, rover, free safety guy, for us almost in that line of Terrell Edmunds. I’m not going to say he’s that guy yet, but when you have a guy that can cover, he’s big, he can cover and run, he can be physical at the point of attack, he’s athletic and can make plays in space. He’s good at coming off the edge and blitzing, he’s good at tackling and finishing and he’s got size. So those are good qualities to have. In the big picture, he’s played five football games as a nickel for us. You see him consistently get better, but also you see his potential to be a dynamic football player and I still think he’s scratching the surface. Like a lot of guys, it’s just your practice habits, those things carry over onto the field.

“Obviously, it was a big game, he’s a Florida guy. It was a big game going down there. He has those abilities and those capabilities to be that kind of player week in and week out for us and that is going to be my expectations of him because that’s a big-time position for us. When we have that guy and that guy is playing as well as you’ve seen over the years for us in that nickel spot, we can be pretty good on defense in some cases if we get some surrounding people around him that are equal talent wise. But he’s got those capabilities to be as good as we’ve had around here.”

On Conner being sharper in the Miami game compared to the Duke game:

“You could say that, I mean, our whole football team was not as sharp. It goes to show you we made some plays, number one. Number two, we responded to a momentum swing or some potential adversity. On the screen-and-go we came back and didn’t hang our heads, we got a pick. After a long punt return, we ended up coming back and having three big plays. They were on the plus-50 and we knocked them back and forced a punt. We didn’t panic then. The biggest one would have been after the last play of the game. It could have been after you were celebrating and made a big time stop and all of a sudden you had to regroup. That was a big difference from the week before and how our attitude was everything. It was totally different, but we talked about that, that we had to embrace those opportunities. There was going to be a lot of momentum swings during a 60-minute contest and the team that can handle that and go to the next play, that’s really all you can control. You can’t worry about that last one, or what happened on offense, or what happened in the kicking game. You go and play that next play to the best of your ability and that was a great example of doing that the other day.”

On ACC LB of the Week Rayshard Ashby taking a step forward:

“That just comes, number one, with experience. You can go back to all of the guys that have played that position, not just at Virginia Tech, but probably across the country. I kind of like going to Andrew Motuapuaka who you guys saw the previous three or four years and how his development came as a young player to his senior year. You talk about a guy who was almost flawless and each year he got better and better and better. Rayshard has great vision, very

instinctive, has a great football IQ, and plays anticipated football. We're coaching him up on little things, technique and fundamentals, but he's not worried about getting lined up and his mind tying his feet up with a call. He is just going out and playing the game now. It's not work ball, it's play ball. That's probably where he's a little bit different than the other guys right there and where he's separating himself and you see that in his play. There's no hesitation, there's no reservation. He's getting great key reads and he's getting after the football."

On LB Alan Tisdale getting sick on the field:

"Believe it or not, I did that one time many years ago back in 1978 or 1979. That's a long time ago. I saw it on Twitter and that was a projectile. I don't know if I'm allowed to put that out there, but that might have been a Guinness Book of World Records on that thing. Our guys tax themselves. There were a lot of exhausted guys. Even after watching the film, there was not one guy that did not strain and give his very best. What we have to do with that is build off of that. We have to play at our standard, our expectations, and we have to build on that victory from how we did it. Obviously, we won it on the field, but our body of work leading up to that like our Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday practice and our focus on Friday. That what our point of emphasis was in our meetings on Sunday and our focus today. There were probably a couple other guys that were like that, we just didn't see that on the field, we just saw it afterwards."

On Foster's experience getting sick during a game as a player for Murray State:

"We were playing Southeast Missouri, first game of the year. That was Gatorade, that was kind of new stuff, it was really good. They only had the green stuff too, they didn't have orange, or blue, or all the different flavors. I remember, it was a hot muggy day. If you've ever been to Cape Girardeau, Missouri, that can be as stifling as Miami was the other day. It was the first game of the year and I was just sweating profusely. I was playing our whip spot and I made a tackle right on their bench. I got up and I just knew it was coming and all I could see was the feet of the coaches. I got back out there and 'Let's go do it again.' That was my experience doing it. It went through the (face) mask kind of like you saw with Alan."

On the defense getting ready to play against Rhode Island's passing game:

"I'm hoping, number one, we play a lot more man free, particularly when the Williams kid was in the game. We weren't worried about him running the football. I was really proud of our kids for how they competed and broke on the ball. There were a few things we needed to clean up in the second half. In the first half, we probably played as sharp as we could play. But hopefully that gives us confidence going into this ball game. I will say this, Rhode Island has, in my opinion - their quarterback throws for about 350 (yards) a game, a little over or a little under 350 a game. He has three or four really talented receivers at this level. I think three guys could play anywhere. Numbers 6, 8, and 11, I don't know their names off the top of my head, but those three guys in particular are really good players. I think Jack Tyler, our quality control guy, looked up 6. He is rated the number one FCS receiver at that level. The other guy is a long, tall, athletic guy. They're both 6'3 and about 205. Number 11, he is their punt and kick returner. He's a 5'11, 185-pound looking guy, but really runs hard and physical. He has great quickness, all three of those guys are extremely competitive, great ball skills."

“We’re going to have to play great football on the back end. That’s today's game. I played I-AA football myself. There’s a fine line particularly at the skill position nowadays and in some places at the level of the skill set, particularly where those guys are seniors and have a lot of experience in that type of thing. So, we’re going to have to play really well but I hope we gained a lot of confidence from our play last week.”