

Virginia Tech vs. Notre Dame
Nov. 2, 2019
Postgame news conference
Virginia Tech head coach Justin Fuente quotes

(Opening statement)

“I’m just proud of our guys. We had so many guys go down, from Oscar [Bradburn] pulling his groin before practice on Thursday to trying to get Hendon [Hooker] ready to play and guys in the secondary. We just continued to battle, fight, scratch and claw. It’s a rough locker room in there. It’s a group of guys that played hard, prepared well for a very good football team on the road in a hostile environment – almost pulled it off. It doesn’t count for much other than I’m awfully proud of our football team. I’ll tell you that much.”

(On his evaluation of Quincy Patterson)

“I don’t know. I’ll go luck at the film before I jump out there and evaluated anybody. I thought he handled the environment well. Overall, offensively, they were definitely not going to let us run the ball. They were stacked in there. I’m a little disappointed. I’m going to have to look at it, but we didn’t make a lot of plays in the passing game, and we didn’t create a lot of separation out there either. That’s what I felt like on the field, but we tried to hang in there and give ourselves a chance. We tried to get it down to the last five minutes and find a way to win it.”

(On why he didn’t start Hendon Hooker, who had been recovering from an injury)

“That was a tough one. The bottom line was I couldn’t pull the trigger on putting him in. I just couldn’t. I’ve gone back and forth with it. He practiced all week. He didn’t take all the reps he usually takes, but he did practice all week and looked better and better every day. I just couldn’t come to grips with putting a kid out there that’s played in two and a half games without the full complement of preparation time. If he had been playing for 2.5 years, I probably would have felt differently. I felt, in the end, it was in his best interests for his growth and against an opponent like that, and as we got closer and closer to game time, I felt it was best for him and everybody else.”

(On whether that decision was tough on the team)

“I don’t know. I think our team supports those guys and loves those guys. I’m certainly not going to use that as an excuse, I can tell you that much. I wasn’t going to come out early in the week and tell everybody who was going to play, but I also wasn’t trying to mislead everybody. That’s what I truly believed was going to happen, and as we got closer to it, I just couldn’t do it.”

(On how confident he was in his defense getting a stop on Notre Dame’s fourth-quarter TD drive)

“I felt good about us all day. The problem was I kept looking up and we had different people in the game. People were dropping like flies. That’s not the problem, but that causes you some consternation a little bit when the game’s on the line. We were one play away in all phases of the game. It wasn’t just the last drive. We had a chance to end the game with the ball in our

hands on offense and couldn't do that. That's why you play sports. You keep putting yourself out there long and long enough in competitive environments and we're junkies for that – and sometimes it doesn't go your way. You fall up short, and it hurts.”

(On how he feels about where his team is)

“I feel great about our character, work ethic, togetherness. I feel awesome about our chemistry. We've got four games to go here. We're going to have to patch it together health-wise to give ourselves a chance. Some guys that haven't played much are going to have to step up. If we get guys back, I feel good. If we don't, then we've got to find a way to get the other ones ready to go.”

(On being disappointed with just a field goal after Tré Turner's long reception)

“Yes. We've been really good down there all year, I think. I feel like. They played two high safeties on third down, and you feel like you have a better chance to run the ball when they're like that. They played basically no high safeties on the first two downs, and we couldn't complete a pass into it. We certainly wanted points there. You hate kicking that field goal to go up six ... The other thought is you can kick and you may get the ball back with some time if the other team does score and you can kick a field goal to win the game as opposed to scoring a touchdown. I think it ended up being something like fourth-and-5, if I'm not mistaken, so we ended up kicking it.”