

Virginia Tech Football
Defensive Coordinator Bud Foster Q&A Highlights
UVA Week Press Conference
Nov. 23, 2019

On whether Virginia QB Bryce Perkins remind him of anyone:

“I would say the closest guy that he reminds me of, is Donovan McNabb. Just with his ability, his strength when he runs, his ability to throw on the run, his ability to create plays that aren’t there and being a big time running back. They design quarterback runs like they did with McNabb back in the day. That’s probably who he reminds me the most of. Now that’s not to say that’s what he’s going to be if he has that opportunity to go to that next level. I don’t know, but as a college football player, what he means to his offensive is what reminds me of McNabb.

“They [Syracuse] had some great players too and he [Perkins] is surrounded by great players, but it seems like they want Perkins, he’s a big-big part of their offense. If we can stop him, he’s who we need to stop to win the game. It was kind of the same thing with McNabb. If we could stop him then we could win the football game, so that’s where he kind of reminds me of him [McNabb] in that aspect.”

On how important is it to contain Perkins:

“it’s really big. Everything they have it seems like it has a designed quarterback run with it. We’re going to have to do an awesome job of keeping him leveraged, keeping rush lanes tight, being able to come off blocks and not get run by people. There are quarterback draws and we have to do a great job of restricting the running lane and closing the vertical separation between the [defensive] line and linebackers. It presents tremendous challenges, but that’s critical for us as far as his ability to create whether it’s a run, a pass, or getting outside the pocket. I thought for the most part we did a pretty good job of that last year, particularly early in the second half. They hit us with a couple of big plays, we have to eliminate that. They’re playing really-really well and we’re going to have to go up there and play a heck of a football game, but we have to do a great job of keeping him contained.”

On trying to simulate Perkins in practice with the scout team:

“We’ll pick some times to have QB Braxton [Burmeister] move around. Now Burmeister is extremely athletic himself. You guys will see that in the quarterback battles as they move forward. We’ll pick some times that we’ll want him to scramble. Create a little scramble drill so that we make sure we match up our people that need to be secondary contain. Those players that need to do that will close on the ball and the other guys need to stay in coverage because that’s where he can create some things. He’s very dangerous, playing very confident and is trusting the guys around him. He’s not a one-man show. He runs the show, but he’s not a one-man show.

“The tailback is a really good player, they have multiple receivers, their tight end is physical and they are a little bit better than last year up front. I think they’re a much-improved football team

from the time we played them a year ago and they were pretty good. I feel they're much better and another year older in the offense at some spots. The quarterback is another year older and you just see a guy playing with a lot of confidence, great savvy, instinctiveness and all of those things that you expect at that position."

On how the UVA rivalry has evolved over the years:

"Over the years I'm sure that it has varied. You have some guys that when we cross over, guys that are close friends, rivals, or whatever it may be than there has been, I don't know. I think obviously, this is a big game when you play Virginia. It's always a big game, but now since we've joined the ACC, this game becomes more than just a rivalry game. This is the third occasion that we are playing each other head-to-head to go to the ACC Championship Game and win our division. We've had to win some others for that to happen, but for us to go head-to-head is so important. Really, the focus is on that as much as it is on this rivalry. Obviously, it means a lot as far as bragging rights, recruiting and all of those things factor in, but this game now with what's on the line, I think it's brought into and even bigger light with a championship chance on the line, to go along with bragging rights so I think that makes it really exciting. I think it's a lot different than it was 20 years ago when we were in the Big East and they were in the ACC. It was just strictly a rivalry game, now there is so much more that goes into it besides just being a rivalry game."

On whether VT submitted the play vs. Pitt where CB Chamarri Connor's was flagged for unsportsmanlike conduct even though the opposing player appeared to still be in bounds.

"We did and they felt like it probably should not have been called. We turn things in even if we feel that we made a mistake and they didn't call it. We're doing it to help the referees because the game is moving so fast and are a lot of bang-bang plays and all you are trying to do is expose them to plays that they might not even see and educate them as well. We're all in this together. We're all in for the betterment of the game and the safety of the game in particular in that case. When we do those things, I hope Dennis Hennigan doesn't take that as, I'm sure other teams do it to, but we're not always doing it to complain, we're just doing it to take a look. Let's educate our people as much as we can, so we turn in a lot of things from week to week, but we did get a response back."

On what stood out to him about Rayshard Ashby when he first saw him:

The closest guy that he reminded me of was Vince Hall. He just had an extremely great nose for the ball, extremely instinctive, and didn't waste a lot of steps. If it was a running play he was right in the middle of it and if it was a passing play he would be in the middle of that, too. When I saw him, kind of like Hall, he wasn't the biggest, the tallest, or the longest guy I have seen, but he was definitely big enough. I just loved his demeanor, the way he played the game, the passion he played with and how hard he played. You guys see that he's a physical player, I saw that. He has just continued to grow, develop and work at it and that's where taking that next step as a big-time college football player. I liken him to a coach on the field. He makes so many, just communication. He doesn't always have to make the checks he's just communicating and letting everyone know what's going on and that's the one thing. He doesn't worry about getting lined up, he just goes play ball and doesn't work ball. He works for his teammates in terms of

communicating, but then he goes play some ball. He knows what he's looking for in his key reads, he knows how to get lined up, he knows what little things to do to not stress himself in run game or pass game. He can make some call that will protect himself a little bit and that's just where he has elevated his game mentally from a football IQ standpoint."

On whether he considered how he might have felt if the team did not make a turnaround in his final season:

"It never did to be honest with you because it's just how I have been doing it all my life. Coaching is just moving on to the next game because that's all you can control. I mean obviously, when I picture this, this is the way I would want it, yeah. It would be really perfect if we got a shut out this crew that we are getting ready to play. That would make it really good. And then if we go on and shut out Clemson, that would be like kissing Cinderella (laughs).

"More than anything I'm just really happy for our guys because they have put in so much effort into this thing. It will be rewarding for me to see them have the success that they've put in to this thing, because that's what it's all about. I am proud of them and will look back fondly, particularly on this last stretch and hopefully we can finish up strong. We're going to have to play really really well like we have these last several weeks. Just how these guys have responded, reacted and found that self confidence it takes. I talked about that the other day, but they have finally found that and are now playing that way and that's the part that is gratifying as a coach. I didn't think about anything negative or positive, I was just thinking let's go to that next one [game] and be the best we can be and everything else will take care of itself. They're seeing that result right now."

On whether this team has exceeded his expectations:

"I don't know if they have exceeded. Maybe by our totals and what we have done the past two weeks by shutting out people at this level which is hard to do. I felt like we could play at a hard level. Early on it was a combination of things. We turned the ball over, we had some injuries and other stuff like that. We had a quarterback change. There are a variety of things that go in to this whole process. The kids really hung in there and now they're starting to play like I thought they could play. It goes back to the consistency and their execution. Like I said, it can be good or bad. You can be consistently bad and we went through a stretch there for a couple of games and we made it a point to look at plays and things of that nature to see that it's not the scheme, it comes down to people, the personnel, how you play and doing the little things right. That's where they took a lot of pride in making sure that they did their job and did it for their brother."

On has this been one of the biggest mid-season turn arounds that he has ever experienced:

"I would have to go back, I haven't really thought about it. We've had some years when we've won this league at 5-3. Like I said, I'm focusing on now. I'll set back one time and realize that there were a lot of really special years. This year right now is really special and I'm just proud of how our kids are working. Locker rooms are different when you're winning, having fun, believing in each other and trusting each other. There is a different kind of chatter, enthusiasm and we're hearing that right now. I've told them several times that we can't be satisfied. As

good as we have played and we have played statistically outstanding, but we're still scratching the surface completely as a two-deep in our defense to be the best we can be and reach our potential and that still what's exciting. We're counting on some young guys to play and they are making plays for us, but they are still scratching the surface of how good they can be. That's where I think we can continue to get better, grow and improve. That's encouraging, it really is. This Saturday is another new opportunity. We can never be satisfied. What's in the past is in the past. We can celebrate for a short moment and we were back at work yesterday at 8 a.m. It was a short night and a short celebration and we knew coming in to this week that we we're going to need great week of practice. Our biggest thing this week is making sure that our kids understand that they've got to focus on today, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday so they can be ready for Friday. They want to get straight to Friday but we need to have a great week of practice before we get to that point. I think we've gotten better as a football team and as a defense."

On the uniqueness of LB Dax Hollifield:

"He is a unique from the standpoint that what you see is what you get. His energy, I don't know if he ever has a bad day or a bad moment. I told him now he has this cut on his nose, he ended up getting five stitches, I told him that he finally looks like a big-time linebacker now. He. Has blood coming all down his face and he eats that stuff up knowing him. Like so many guys they are all very similar. Hollifield is just more outgoing, but the same way as far as their demeanor when it comes to their approach to this football team. They are contagious. They rub off on their teammates in how they work. That's what's pretty cool about him and makes him unique. What you see is what you get."