

**Virginia Tech Football  
Head Coach Justin Fuente Q&A Highlights  
Wake Forest Post-Game Press Conference  
Nov. 9, 2019**

***Opening statement:***

“Thanks to everybody that came out. It was great to see Lane Stadium like that. It was pretty special. It was just like last time we played at home. Obviously, you couldn’t write a script any better, in terms of honoring Coach (Bud) Foster and his contributions to Virginia Tech and this program. The kids on both sides of the ball played their hearts out. [We’re] happy to get a victory over a very talented and explosive Wake Forest team. It was fun to be part of. I’m really proud of our kids. They continue to battle, block out the noise, work hard and stick together. It’s fun to see them get to reap some benefits.”

***On focus on offense while preparing for the game:***

“It was a part of a concerted effort on offense. It felt like the bowl game against Oklahoma State. In order to do this, it’s going to take all of us. We’d have to make plays in special teams, win the field position battle and offense needs to play a little bit of keep away. That doesn’t mean you just run the ball into the line of scrimmage every play, but it is really important to convert on third downs, keep drives going, maybe go for it on fourth down a few times to keep possession of the ball. It’s harder for them to score if they don’t have the ball, obviously. I was a little concerned in the first half. We were executing the plan but not scoring the points. The very first drive of the game — I couldn’t have scripted it any better, in terms of trying to take away the entire first quarter. To only get three points there, after the dropped snapped, was a little bit disappointing. We kind of found a rhythm there and found a way to pull away there.”

***On Hendon Hooker’s preparedness for game:***

“He looked great from the start of the week. That’s why it was hard last week. It wasn’t like a deal where Wednesday we were trying to figure it out. On Sunday, I felt good about it. That’s indicative of how close it was the week before.

“I was disappointed when we had a couple easy completions that we chunked in the dirt there. One was early, one was later. Him settling down a little bit, being more effective, was important to our success. There were a couple plays throughout the game that we’d like to have back.”

***On Tayvion Robinson’s move to punt returner:***

“It was huge. I’ve been proud of both of those guys. Honestly, if in some of our earlier games we had a bigger lead, we would have slid him in there. We were not afforded that against a couple of those other teams. I wasn’t able to get him in there for a warm-up rep, so to speak. Starting in the second half, I wasn’t upset with Hezzy [Grimsley]. I just felt like Tayvion has been there every day and felt comfortable putting him back there. He earned that opportunity, Hezzy didn’t lose it.”

***On defensive pressure caused in the second half:***

“Getting the ball turned over was obviously huge. It’s 10 points there. Especially since we had already turned the ball over twice, while we were moving the ball, too. One was a big play and the other was Hendon down there in the red-zone. In terms of evening that out against a very good team is great.”

***On impact of run game:***

“We made some big plays on the perimeter. Tre Turner continues to be a big weapon. He had the one really long run on the far side lines. Deshaun McCleese continues to be effective. I can think of one off the top of my head where the end block did not make the tackle, which is something I’ve talked with y’all about several times. Having Keshawn King back healthy was big too. It was kind of a group effort. Having Hendon [Hooker] there to carry the ball a little bit too helps add dimension to the rushing attack.”

***On the way the improved run game opens up the offense:***

“It makes it easier to throw the ball and get better looks. It’s why two weeks ago I was bummed because I thought in those looks we would throw the ball better against Notre Dame. It also helps the defense — running the football. The clock running, taking less snaps defensively, finding a way to take some pressure off the quarterback. It’s very difficult throwing the ball 50 times a game and not turn it over. I think a good running game helps everybody. It helps field position, running the ball, and it helps your quarterback play and receivers. It’s been crucial and one of a couple things that has helped us. Obviously, having Hendon in there is other one.”

***On performance of secondary:***

“I was really happy. No. 2 for them is really electric in the slot. He is so good, quick and explosive. The key was that they couldn’t run the ball. Then, for us to handle the RPO game and the dropback game the way that we did, you can’t be anything but pleased. We were close and protective towards the receivers. They made some plays throughout the course of the game. We were right there throughout the entire game, making them earn every completion and yard.”

***On conversations with DC Bud Foster before game:***

“It’s kind of an interesting situation to be in. You have Bud wanting it to be about the game and the players, rightfully so. However, we’re not going to go all week without talking about this. So, we’re going to address it as part of the game and what it means. It’s part of our obligation to someone that has given 30-odd years in service. We talked about it early in the week and at the end of the week. We bookended it. I thought the kids understood it. They understood what it meant and the challenge in front of us, as well. The celebration was great. The kids were happy. It’s amazing — the difference between winning and losing — right now is right here. What I’m most proud of is our guys ability to understand the razor thin margin and not have their feelings affect their preparation. That’s pretty cool.

***On reflecting on impact of win:***

“We’re right in the middle of it. For us, it’s about our current team. That doesn’t mean we don’t stop to smell the roses, but the next game is six days away. It comes whether you win or lose. That’s the blessing and the curse of football. Tomorrow morning at eight, we’re all going to be watching film. You have a lot of time in between seasons to think about it and plan. I’m having a lot of fun with this group of kids. I’ve said it before, we’re not perfect, but they care. They care about representing Virginia Tech, listening and trying to play well, and they care about each other.