

**Virginia Tech Football
Head Coach Justin Fuente Q&A Highlights
Duke Week Media Conference
September 23, 2019**

Opening statement:

“Obviously, we have a huge challenge this week. Duke is coming in here Friday night, and they’re a complete football team on all three phases of the game in my estimation. We’ve always known that Coach [David] Cutcliffe is a fantastic coach, and they’ve got a tremendous amount of talent over there as well. They are really playing at a high level; they are cutting it loose and doing some great things. Offensively they have a great mix of everything; there’s some option looks that they’ve obviously been working on and some spread looks as well. It’ll be a great challenge there, they’ve always been good on special teams and the return game and defensively they’re really getting after people and doing a great job. We’ll have to continue our week of preparation to have a chance to get ready to go.”

On the health of DE TyJuan Garbutt and his offensive linemen:

“No, I would say that they’re probably close to day-to-day. We’ll see. They’ve been out there getting some work, all of those guys have been. I don’t know if they’ll be ready to play.”

On where the team improved over the bye week:

“Well, we worked on quite a bit of good-on-good looks. We did quite a bit of drill work on special teams. Obviously, we worked on some third-down stuff on both sides of the ball and some early down run game on both sides of the ball. Those are some pretty big points of emphasis for us, and we’ll see how it worked out.”

On initial impressions of RB Keshawn King during his recruitment:

“He and his uncle came up and I just remember him being an absolute joy to be around. As far as his recruitment, we felt like he had a chance to have a really good senior year, which he ended up doing. But the thing I think of first – there’s no odd stories – it was just we really appreciated how Keshawn and his family handled his recruitment and how great they are to be around. They’re humble, hard-working, grateful people with great personality and they’re pretty laid back. It was a really enjoyable process.”

On initial impressions of Coach Jerry Kill as special assistant to the head coach:

“I think he’s going to be incredibly valuable to our players and staff, he’s a fantastic addition. He’s been here a short time, he’s been getting settled and he’s figuring out the way this team operates. He’s continuing to provide feedback across the board, and I think he’s going to be really beneficial to us.”

On any updates on WR Damon Hazelton’s status:

“Not particularly, there’s a handful of those guys that we alluded to with TyJuan (Garbutt) who are still hurt. I know I said two weeks ago I felt foolish because I really believed he was going to

play. To say he's day-to-day would be accurate, but I don't know. Hopefully in the coming weeks he'll be able to play. He's out there trying to get some work in right now."

On the emphasis of QB Ryan Willis being cautious as a runner:

"I certainly think that position is physical enough, so there's no reason to add to it to prove anything. So, he needs to be diligent both with the football and with his own body. We've got to continue to help him understand that part. Making the right reads and going the right place with the ball will certainly help those things, but we would like him to be a little more careful."

On impressions of watching college football on a bye week:

"I think for college football as a whole, you never know what you're going to see every week when you turn on the television. The UCLA and Washington State game was crazy, and you have people traveling across the country and winning games. So many of the Group of Five teams are competitive and can win games against Power Five opponents. I did enjoy the weekend and I try to enjoy it when I watch football. I was always raised as a fan of the game, so I did get a chance to enjoy a little bit of it. The biggest thing is that you just don't know what you're going to see when you turn the tv on, the game is all over the place. Some of the things people are doing schematically, the way recruiting has gone earlier and earlier, I think teams that are more patient in recruiting are reaping some of the benefits. That's why you see some of those teams that maybe don't correlate with the recruiting rankings doing really, really well. Teams like that have done a really good job of pumping the brakes on the hype and really done a good job of evaluating people."

On night games in Lane Stadium:

"There's nothing quite like playing at night in Lane Stadium. I know this program has a long history of Thursday night games, I can remember years ago watching Thursday night games in Lane Stadium on television and marveling at how the stadium seemed to change every year. It seemed like every year at the Thursday night games something was added – seats or scoreboards or whatever it was. So, we understand and we're anxious to get out there and be a part of it. I know it's a little different because the game is on a Friday as opposed to a Thursday, but I know our kids and coaches are excited to get to play."

On development and chemistry between the offensive linemen:

"I think they've gotten closer. Pretty quickly we became pretty young and I've seen those guys continue to work and improve. Not everyone can slide in there as a true freshman, so it's impressive to see that we have two guys who are capable of doing that. I do think the chemistry is going to continue to improve. As long as that group as a whole continues to focus on that, I think they'll continue to get better."

On who he thought would be Duke's starting quarterback last matchup:

"It's hard for me to remember to be honest with you. For some reason I thought we knew early that Daniel Jones was going to play, maybe there was an announcement earlier that he had been practicing, I talked to David [Cutcliffe] in the offseason, but I can't remember. I'm probably incorrect, but they discovered some type of new brace to protect him. I don't think

this is revisionist history; I think that we knew pretty early that Jones was going to play last year.”

On impressions of Duke QB Quentin Harris:

“He can do it all. They’re doing a bunch of different stuff which is really good. They line up in some triple option, and he can throw the football. He’s decisive and obviously well-coached, and he knows where he’s supposed to go with the ball. He can obviously make plays running the ball and he’s played quite a bit, but he seems to be pretty efficient as a passer as well.”