

Virginia Tech Football
Head Coach Justin Fuente Q&A Highlights
Old Dominion Game Press Conference
Sept. 7, 2019

Opening:

“First of all, to everybody that came out to the game, we certainly appreciate it. It was the first time for many of our players to get to play in front of a home crowd. It wasn’t that long ago that many of the guys that played in this game were in the stands. The fan participation was fantastic. I’m obviously happy to have our team find a way to win the ballgame. We really wanted to keep the focus on football and not all of the other stuff and I think our kids did a good job of that. It was a little bit of a circus, quite honestly. Really wanted our guys to stay focused on the task at hand, they did a good job of that, finding a way to win the game. We’ve got plenty of things to work on. Obviously, (that is) a big play in special teams. We were up seven, they had just scored, and a huge play there by our kick off return unit to sway the momentum back to us.”

On the performance of players filling in for Zachariah Hoyt and T.J. Jackson:

“Well, I have to watch the film, obviously it wasn’t perfect. We played a couple true freshmen, a redshirt freshman. All those things, they’re just facts. I have to look at it, continue to get better, continue to coach off of that and see how they play. Hoyt and Jackson will be back when they’re ready. Hoyt dressed and was there for emergency. Because of the position he played, center, in case we get so far down that list you can’t put the ball in play. But I anticipate they will be back when they’re ready.”

On holding Ryan Willis out at the end due to the concern of injury:

“Well, I was a little concerned and I also didn’t like that we turned the ball over. When he was a little shaky getting up, I was yelling at him to get down so we could sub. It got us on the goal line. Dalton got hurt and stepped off the side and was getting treatment and we didn’t know that he was hurt. All of a sudden, we’re calling the play and Dalton’s out and we don’t even know it. So it got us on there. So I was trying to get Ryan to go down. Well Ryan thought I was telling him to get down when he was running the ball, which I can see now why he thought that. I held him out because I wanted to make sure he was okay, ready to go back, and because we turned the ball over.”

On the inconsistent pass interference calls:

“I thought it should have been called. Personally, I thought it was pretty clear. They have a tough job, I do know that.”

On Terius Wheatley’s return being planned:

“Well they were squeezing pretty hard so it was a field return, nothing that was new. We always carry boundary infield returns in to a game. So we called the field. I guess he ran out of gas there at the end. But it was a huge play for us.”

On Ryan Willis' passing game:

"I guess I would say he made a couple plays that were pretty dang impressive. Really quick snap decisions and got the ball in great spots. There's still a few decisions we have to be better at and that's just simple. It sounds very easy and it's not. But that's part of our focus moving forward."

On Keshawn King possibly being injured:

"Keshawn's fine. He's got to get up with the ball in his hands to continue to get carries."

On defense becoming stronger in the second half:

"As far as defensively, they basically came out. I'm not over simplifying it, (they) came out in every unbalanced formation you could imagine, fly sweep arching the tight ends in the first half. We began to pressure it a little bit and defended it really well. In the second half, it was more passing formations, more spread type things. We were spread out a little bit, trying to defend the pass and got hurt up inside a few times."

On the energy loss in non-close games:

"I didn't feel that on the sidelines, but I know what you're talking about. I have felt it before in my career; I didn't feel that. I know when it was down to seven points, there was some real urgency for us to find a way to go finish the thing off. I didn't feel like we relaxed, I feel like we didn't execute very well at times. They made some plays to put themselves back in the game."

On former Virginia Tech players Eric Kumah and Chris Cunningham that transferred to Old Dominion:

"I saw Eric and told him congratulations and wished him the best of luck. I didn't see Chris. I looked for him, but I did not see him."

On Luke Tenuta's eligibility:

"When he has an eligible jersey on he is eligible. That's why we switch the jerseys on and off so he can be eligible. It's something we've been tinkering with for some time. I like our tight ends. Tenuta, I like him along the line of scrimmage. So we'll see how much more of it we do."

On the players going against former teammates:

"We tried to really focus on our improvement, trying to get better for the game. There was a lot that went into that. Between the game last year and all that stuff. For us, we can't do anything about any of that, other than we have to focus on the football game and get ready to play football. I'm not accusing anyone of anything, but all the stuff outside, the talk and the things that go on, we can't concern ourselves with those things. We can't. We have to focus on trying to get better and finding a way to win the game. It's a unique situation, but I thought our guys did a good job."

On Hezekiah Grimsley's day and his disappointment last week:

“I was so happy for him. You talk about a guy that we’re all pulling for because of how he works and the things that he’s been through. When you see guys have success that we see everyday behind the scenes work so hard and we’ve been in their living room. Those are special moments, not just that it was a fantastic catch, but to see those guys have success is pretty fulfilling. Acrobatic, fantastic, happy he pulled it in but even happier for the smile on his face when he came off the field. Certainly, I think he was disappointed about [the punt]. He catches a big post over the top for a touchdown, then has a miscue on punt return. He takes his performance very seriously. He's not a pouter. He’s not a guy that lets you know he’s upset. He’s just a guy that pulls himself up, shows up, and works hard.”