

Virginia Tech Football
Head coach Justin Fuente Q&A Highlights
Game 11 Pittsburgh – Media Conference
November 13, 2017

Opening statement:

“Obviously, we had a disappointing outcome on Saturday. Our guys were obviously disappointed as was I. There were many things that happened in that game. We had plenty of opportunities and couldn’t get it done. I was very pleased with our response yesterday. I think our guys understand it and are ready to move on for this week. We have a tremendous challenge again in front of us. It will be senior day, our last trip in Lane Stadium for this senior class that has worked incredibly hard. I do believe there’s a tremendous amount of respect and ownership on this team with ownership and affection I guess I should say for our senior class. And a genuine desire to make sure we do everything we can to send them out the right way – and we’ll have a heck of a challenge doing that. We are at the point of the year where we have had some success and some struggles, and we are going to have to find a way to get it done this week with the guys that we’ve got.”

On last year’s senior class and if it is tougher to follow up for the current senior class:

“Well, I think it that was a pretty special group, but I believe this group is, too. I think they are different in terms of their makeup and maybe a little bit overall less vocal than that group last year, but certainly as invested and have done a great job in my estimation and kind of living up to those expectations. I did not want it to be a burden on them, with trying to live up to those guys but I wanted them to learn and that’s what we talk about probably most often. So, when things come up, what can we learn from this with good and bad examples.”

On if Pitt will use a lot of press coverage just like last year:

“I would imagine. Their MO with Coach [Pat] Narduzzi is to stop the run, pressure the quarterback and play tight coverage. They have tweaked a few things, as everybody does, but I would certainly anticipate that.”

On how frustrating it has been for Tech receivers not being able to create separation:

“Well, I’ve been through tough times, but I have always stopped short of that word, quite honestly. I don’t think it is our job to be frustrated, it’s our job to try to create solutions. It’s our job to teach and try to get our guys to play to the best of their ability and to put them in as good situations as we possibly can. So, it’s just different. We got different people who have different strengths and weaknesses and trying to capitalize on that week in and week out.”

On how quarterback Josh Jackson has played the last two weeks with missing his left tackle:

“We made the decision going into last week to let AJ [Bush] get in there and carry the ball a couple times. That wasn’t an indictment on Josh’s performance, I think it was just more of how he felt during the week and trying to lighten the load on him a little bit. Overall, I think there has been some good with some bad. I think he is giving us a chance to win games. He’s played

admirably, he's played tough and has taken care of the football and earned the respect of his teammates. Has he always been perfect? No, but he's continued to improve and has tried to do the things we have asked him to do on a weekly basis."

On whether QB AJ Bush will get snaps this upcoming weekend with a run emphasis:

"Yeah, I don't know. We'll see. I'd certainly say it is a possibility, but we haven't had that conversation yet. I just don't know if that is something we will do moving forward or not."

On why RB Deshawn McCleese didn't get more snaps versus Georgia Tech:

"I would say the first thing I would say is that I am not unhappy with Deshawn. There were a couple times we were going to get him in there, but things just didn't work out for whatever reason. I grabbed him sometime in the middle of the game just to tell him to stay warm, loose and be ready because I knew he hadn't played a lot of snaps. So, I think it was just the flow of the game and how it went with Travon [McMillian] and Jalen [Holston] playing well."

On despite being statistically one of the best defenses in the country, having given up a few big plays given up the last two games:

"Well, Miami has made some big plays on a lot of people, that's the first thing I would say. I think we all saw how talented they are on Saturday night against a pretty good Notre Dame team. So, I think some of that is that we have been playing some pretty good teams. As far as the Georgia Tech game, they stretch you pretty hard. One false step or one eye in the wrong spot and you can take all that hard work you have been doing with stopping the run and end up trying to chase a guy down from behind. We certainly expect to be better and more disciplined, but we are also stretched pretty thin in order to stop the run."

On WR Kalil Pimpleton deciding to transfer:

"Well, I would say this about Kalil. First of all, he has just worked his tail off. He's a fine young man with a bright future and I don't want to speculate too much into all of his reasons. I think those are his reasons. I do think this is a guy who really, really wants to play. I think that was a pretty big thing. This is a young man who is extremely competitive and who really wants to get on the field. I'm sure there are some other things there for him to address if he needs to. But I do know that one of those things was seeing the field, and I respect that."

On being last in the ACC for yards per carry and why the rushing attack has struggled:

"I would say that it has been kind of indicative of where we have been. Some plays we have gotten the ball to the unblocked hat and weren't able to make big plays there. We have had some plays where we should have done a better job at executing and we've had some plays where people have forced us to throw the football."

On after a game, what is going through his head for pondering on play calls and if he allows that to get into his mind at all:

"Every day, in all honesty for good or for bad. There's a myriad of decisions that get made. The thing I would tell people is that I understand all of that, I get it, that's part of it. It is a short trip in this business and from the penthouse to the outhouse – and I get that. The thing I would tell

you is that we have thoughts and reasons for those things and when they don't work, then they were wrong. When they don't work, and I can own that, I can handle that, I understand that, and if they call come out working well, we move on down the road. But what you can't do is allow yourself to do anything other than try your best to make the decisions that are the best for the group. Do we look back, talk, ponder, reflect and second guess ourselves? Absolutely, every single game and every single call. We talk about all of those things. But you bet, all of the time."