

Virginia Tech Football
Head Coach Justin Fuente Q&A Highlights
Game 2 – Delaware Media Conference
Sept. 5, 2017

Opening Statement

“Thanks to everybody that made the trip to D.C., it was a fantastic environment. It was really fun to get to see the kids celebrate and find a way to win a ball game. Now we turn our attention to our next challenge. We gave the kids off yesterday, back on the field today, we’ve got a short week of preparation after what was a tough ballgame that went late into the night and was hard fought until the last play. But we got to get our guys by Saturday good and knowing what to do and ready to play for the next one. We can handle all the things that come with playing a big opener and all the opinions and all those things on the outside, overreaction good or bad. We got to handle all those things and get ready to play what I believe to be a very tough and disciplined football team in Delaware. Just following Coach (Danny) Rocco’s career and seeing his teams historically, we’ve only got one game of him at Delaware but this is a coach that’s never had a losing season, that’s won everywhere he’s been. His teams play great defense and incredibly sound so we’ve got to do a great job getting our guys ready to go.”

On moving on from West Virginia and playing an easier team:

“Well I don’t know about easy, we’ve got plenty of challenges within our locker room and own team. I mean we did not play a perfect game by any means, there’s a lot of things for us to improve on. There is a lot of work left to be done for us. We’re going to play a team that has got good skill players, big athletic quarterback, wide receivers and very sound defensively. I’m happy to move to the next game. I’m excited for that part of it.”

On how big of a problem the short week will be to navigate:

“Well the one thing that I have had through my stops whether it was as an assistant at TCU or through my time at Memphis, was playing odd weeks. I’ve got a lot to draw on in terms of our schedule whether it was what Gary (Patterson) did at TCU or how we tried to approach it at Memphis, we have some background there on short weeks. The thing is, there is just a little bit less physical in practice to get the guys feeling better, get their bodies healed, legs back, that sort of stuff. We’ll cut back just a little bit not necessarily because I want to but because I feel like that is the best way to get guys back ready to go.”

On evaluating Josh Jackson after viewing the film:

“Well, the way he took care of the football. I mean there were some times when things weren’t just perfect and he didn’t turn them into a bad situation for us or a game altering play for West Virginia. Obviously valued the football, he was calm and collected out there throughout the entire game and he made some plays. Everybody talks about the quarterback position managing the game, well you can’t just go out there and take a knee every snap and you got to eventually, you’ve got to go make plays and Josh did a good job of making plays. He manufactured a few plays which is, one I’m going to misquote exactly when it was in the game,

but it was in the second half went second and 10 they had a little bit of momentum and we didn't have anything there and he kind of moved to his right and scrambled and got us a first down and got us going there. I mean that was making a play, so the fact that he took care of the football and found a way to manufacture when things weren't necessarily there I thought was encouraging."

On winning the field position battle and how P Oscar Bradburn and K Joey Slye pinned West Virginia in their own territory on punts and kickoffs:

"It was huge, we had, again I'm going to miss the numbers exactly but 93 kickoff return yardage to zero. In the punting game, we averaged about 10 yards more per punt than West Virginia. Part of that was because our punt returner did a good job fielding the punt, we didn't have a lot of return yards but we fielded punts. When you accumulate that throughout the game and that's one of the thing we'll talk about today is, you get outgained by 120 yards or whatever it was but you can make all of that up through field position. I think our average field position was 11 or 12 yards further down the field than West Virginia's. Think about that over 15 possessions those are big numbers."

On Joey Slye's missed field goals and what could have led to them:

"I don't think it's anything. Well obviously they didn't go in. I have talked to him. He feels good about the operation and about his mechanics and that sort of stuff, its just a matter of punching it through. Obviously it wasn't the result that he wanted or that we wanted. He has earned, he has proven through time that he can be reliable, particularly on the shorter ones. So we anticipate him bouncing back. My message to him was you can't dwell on those things, they can bother you that's good, I understand that it bothers you because you want to be there for the team. You've got to move forward and diagnose whatever it is that's ailing you there and those things and get it fixed."

On being 4-1 on games decided by a touchdown or less:

"Well I think it's a lot of things. We practice those scenarios, those close-game scenarios everybody does but, when we were on the last drive defensively we had put those guys in those situations before. Its nice for us to come through. I think our kids believe they are going to find a way to win the game which is probably more than half the battle, believing in what we're doing and finding a way to get it done. I'm happy for that but it doesn't guarantee that the next close game we're in we are going to win. We have to understand each individual and finding a way to make the plays whether you're in four-minute offense or two-minute offense or two-minute defense finding a way to get it done."

On moving S Divine Diablo to the defensive side from wide receiver and what made you think he could be a good safety:

"Well his upside of defense was much higher than his upside offensively I felt like. As a football player he was very productive in his time on the field last week. I think he will continue to get better, you're talking about a young man that is incredibly athletic and long but is a tough, smart football player. We didn't feel like he was going to struggle to pick it up, we felt like he certainly could tackle and do the things that needed to be done in order to play defense. So we

really felt like it was an easy decision. To Divine's credit, he took it in stride and jumped over there and has worked incredibly hard. I didn't have to really come in there and sell him on it. I was prepared to lay out everything but he said 'Ok, Coach sounds good' and he's gone over there and hasn't missed a beat."

On giving the defensive line reserves more reps in the future:

"Well, I think we would have liked to have played the other guys a little bit more. Part of it had to do with, its difficult to substitute. Those guys are operating pretty quickly, that's part of the advantage of operating like that is sometimes it makes it harder to get guys on and off the field so I think that was part of the reason why the second group of guys didn't get a few more snaps. Yeah I mean we would like for the other guys to get in a little bit more."

On Brandon Facyson being nicked up after the West Virginia game and his status:

"He's full go, he's fine."