

Virginia Tech Football
Head Coach Justin Fuente
Game 3 – ECU Media Conference
Sept 11, 2017

Opening statement:

“It was good to be home last week obviously, beautiful day, great crowd, happy to get the win. Plenty for us to work on moving forward in really all areas of our team. We’ve got a big challenge this week, we have to go on the road to play at East Carolina. Our first true road game, which I always enjoy. Take the bare necessities and go see if you can get a win. I know probably much will be made about East Carolina’s start, I can tell you they’ve played two really, really quality opponents. I know there are not a lot of people running to their athletic directors asking for James Madison to get on the schedule, I can promise you that. That’s a fine football team and West Virginia kind of got on them early, so we know how good West Virginia is. We’re looking forward to the challenge and the preparation and hopefully we’ll have a great week of work and get ready to go.”

On whether he has any experience in dealing with a change in coaches during the season for an opposing team and if he has a connection with Coach Robert Prunty:

“No, not any real connection. He was at Cincinnati a little bit when we were at Memphis, but no real connection. I can’t recall if at some time during my career we’ve gone against a team that’s had this happen. Not of the top of my head. I don’t particularly recall it happening the week of the game, but we’ll get our guys prepared and get ready to go. I can’t recall off the top of my head being a part of one of those.”

On whether it changes what he expects from them defensively:

“Well we’ll find out Saturday, you know I’ll imagine they’ve only got a week to prepare and they’ve been working on what they’ve been doing defensively for this is going into their second year. We’ll do the best we can and get ready for it and if we need to make adjustments we’ll make adjustments. The good thing is we’ve been around each other long enough, we’ve been in games and made adjustments before and if need to we will.”

On how important its been winning the special teams battle in the two games played so far:

“When I look at our football squad I think we have to do all the little things correctly to give ourselves a chance to win. Part of that’s because of our youth, part of its because of the people we’re going to play. We’re going to play quality people that have other good players as well. For a long time that’s been a formula for winning football. I think we’re going to play in close football games week in and week out and doing the little things in all three phases, but special teams is the one time you’re dealing with large chunks of yardage. Again, we talked about the big game altering plays. The punt return by Greg (Stroman) and those things are obviously fantastic, but through the course of the game, you get multiple opportunities to chip away at that kinda hidden yardage. I think it’s paramount to have a chance to win or have success we’re going to have to give ourselves every opportunity.”

On how he judges success in the run game:

“I don’t know, the one way that I’ve always felt about running the football is if you could get to the point where you can force them to play run defense, commit people to the box which then can in turn allow you to maybe make some bigger plays down the field than being efficient running the ball. The other thing is when you can get to third and three or third and five and the other team doesn’t know if it’s a run or a pass I think you’re having success running the football. Statistically I’ve never really gotten to

much into that obviously we didn't run the ball very well last week. There's several reasons for that, we also didn't make very many plays throwing the ball as well. They were preordained to line up, to commit themselves to prevent us from running the football and we could not make enough plays to be really be efficient in other areas. You know, to me it's about keeping the other side off balance and you run the ball on some mid-level downs well enough that you feel confident about doing it and then in turn set yourself up to make big plays."

On what has been the difference between the turnovers committed last year at the beginning of the season and the lack of turnovers so far this season:

"Well I think first of all, and take this with a grain of salt, I'm not saying that Jerod (Evans) did not do a good job early in the year last year. Many of those were not his responsibility. It starts with our quarterback, he's done a good job obviously evaluating the football and I think its carried to our other skills players. Obviously, we try to make it a point of emphasis and we did that last year, but I think there is a general recognition that we can't afford to do those things in order to give ourselves a chance to win. The key for us is continuing that mindset, as coaches as assistant coaches we can't get tired of reinforcing those points. As a Head Coach, I can't get tired of bringing those things up or coaching them throughout practice because they don't carry over. Each play each week is an individual, I know you guys probably get tired of me saying that but it's true. The fact that we've done a decent job these first two weeks will have no bearing on what happens on Saturday. We have to continue to do our job taking care of the ball."

On how impressive has Oscar Bradburn been:

"He's done a really good job, we're really proud of him. The first two weeks he's done a great job of Getting the ball off, good get off times, hanging the ball up there. We will sacrifice a little bit of yardage for more hang time. It makes a little bit easier to cover those punts. I've been really pleased with him and you know I think this is really important to him; doing a good job is important to him. This is not a recreational sport for him, he really wants to do well and please and he's been up to the task the first two weeks."

On is it different going to a true away game compared to a neutral site game:

"I think it's just a little bit more of a personal endeavor to go into someone else's on campus stadium and try to win a ball game. While the West Virginia game was a fantastic atmosphere and really a neat venue and it was loud. West Virginia had a lot of fans there as obviously we did as well, but I do think it's a little bit different and we will talk about that, we've already started talking about it. It's just a little bit more of a personal endeavor to go on the road and go into somebody's stadium on their campus and the discipline and the intensity that it takes to go win a ball game on the road anywhere, to me is a little bit different."

On what he's seen from the ECU offense that has impressed him:

"Well they're still explosive. They got it behind the eight ball a little bit last week and had to abandon their balance, kinda just throw the ball a little bit more, but they've got wide receivers that can make plays. When the games in the balance they can run the ball and throw the ball. That's the first thing that you look at across the board. Defensively and offensively this is group that's got players. They've got some senior transfers, some guys that have played in division one football games and they've developed some people through their program. They've got a long storied history of doing those things and producing good players and they certainly do"

On what he's seen from the development of the receiver group:

"Well Sean (Savoy) is the guy that comes to mind first. He's still working on some of the nuances of playing the position, but he went up and made the big catch there in the first half and continues I think, to feel more comfortable. We continue to push him in his practice habits. It's just a little bit different for him week in and week out, but he's a smart young man that cares and wants to do well, so I'm pleased with that. Hezekiah (Grimsley) is another young guy that continues to improve. I'd like for him to continue to come along and I think he will. We just got to stay with it a little bit, so I get happier every day that they go out there and continue to push themselves and practice well and it makes us feel better about putting them in the game."