

Virginia Tech Football
Head Coach Justin Fuente
Game 4 – ODU Media Conference
Sept 18, 2017

Opening statement:

“Thanks to everybody that made the trip to East Carolina, it was good to see our players celebrate with our fans. Our team did a good job of regaining their footing and then taking control of a football game. Now we turn our attention to Old Dominion, looking forward to playing at home. Looking at ODU I know probably people in this state give Bobby (Wilder) credit, I’m not sure he gets enough credit on a national level for the jobs he’s done at ODU. I mean, to literally build that thing from scratch is really a fantastic job. I got the chance to meet him just a couple times when we’re out and about, he’s just a really, really good football coach and has a good football team. They are going to provide plenty of challenges for us on both sides of the ball and in the kicking game. They have a really electric returner that returned one to the house against North Carolina. They found their quarterback, who seems to be a really sharp player that can cause people problems and then defensively they can certainly do some things that are challenging. All being said we’re looking forward to a great week of preparation and getting ready to play.”

On what has he seen from ODU’s starting quarterback and what stands out about him and has he asked Sean Savoy for any tips:

“First of all I haven’t talked to Sean (Savoy), today is our game plan day you really start to get into those types of things, so I haven’t talked to Sean much about Steve (Williams) but just watching him play in the North Carolina game, first of all he’s pretty convicted about where he’s going with the football. He had two drives for touchdowns, had another drive that got inside the 5 yard line and they fumbled. They had another drive that stalled out on downs, it got to the, I’m not sure, the 20-yard line. He was really effective getting in there and he can throw the football. I mean they pushed the ball down the field. They were not afraid to kinda cut it loose and let him go. Kinda almost instantaneously their dynamic offensively changed, when he got in there they became very explosive.”

On how unique it is to have two freshman that played together in high school that now have major roles:

“Yeah it sure is, I’m not sure in my career that I’ve had too many of these opportunities or coincidences where two guys that just played together are now playing integral roles on each others teams and so quickly too. It’ll be interesting to see I’m sure, I’m sure Steve has heard Sean say he’s open many, many times over the years, so I’m sure they had a really good relationship too.”

On whether it’s hard to keep the 1-0 mentality going every week, especially with a game against Clemson coming up very soon:

“I think the key to that is we don’t wait until the fall to start talking about that mindset. As soon as they comeback from Christmas break we start talking about in our winter workouts, our offseason program through our summer, through two-a-days and obviously into the season. That’s all training for that mindset of not getting ahead of ourselves, not looking forward, not looking backward. Just literally focusing on the next step that’s in front of us. We certainly talked about that and I feel good because That’s not something we just brought up three weeks ago, it’s something we’ve talked about since we’ve been here but for this football team, the 2017 Virginia Tech Hokies, we’ve talked about it ever since they came back in the winter time.”

On what was his impressions were on the backups that got playing time against ECU and did any of them stand out:

“Some good some bad, I liked the way they competed. They competed like they valued playing time, like they were hungry to get out there and play, not like they were anxious to get the game over with and that’s a good thing. I do believe in playing people that deserved to be played. (Khalil) Ladler would be the first one to jump out in my mind in terms of making the big play, running the alley and having a big tackle. I thought it was really neat, not just the play and the emotion from the players on the field, but the emotion of the players on the sideline. I think you could tell that the kids really like Ladler and really responded to him making a big play. That’s probably the one that jumps out to me the quickest.”

On the team being able to find their rhythm after a slow start:

“Well if you really think back in detail about the start of the game they hit us on a couple big plays we made a couple of adjustments there. Offensively we took the first drive and scored a touchdown, then kinda stalled on a couple drives. We really kinda got our feet underneath us and really had a good handle on what we were getting on both sides of the ball and the kids handled the adjustments and I like the fact we didn’t panic we just kept playing and ultimately got that thing turned to the way that we felt it should go. I think it speaks volumes about our staff and our players and their ability to handle some small changes and in turn go out there and execute them.”

On Adonis Alexander’s situation:

“We will continue to evaluate that throughout the week and see kinda how it goes. I stand by statement in terms our expectations for Adonis, he knows them and needs to meet them and we’ll evaluate it as we go through the week.”

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. So 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 what was the biggest difference towards the success of the running game against East Carolina:

“I don’t know, I’ve got a couple things on my mind. The biggest thing I would say is that we got movement on the line of scrimmage; two weeks ago we just didn’t get much movement. That would be the biggest thing being able to create some movement up front and generate a few holes. I thought we wore them down too, I don’t know how many snaps it was in the first half I think it was over 50, it was like 20 minutes they were on the field, I think that played a pretty big role. If you think back on the game in the first half they either scored really quickly or forced to punt really quickly. In the first couple drives they scored pretty quick and the rest of the half they didn’t really mount much which in turn put the defense on the field. I really felt like at halftime that we were really going to make a concerted to really run the ball because they had played so many snaps.”

On Dalton Keene and his play so far:

“I think he’s continued to improve, I’ve been really pleased with how he’s handled the game plan from week to week and the adjustments that come with that position. We’ve talked a little bit about it,

center, quarterback and H-back are kinda the three most difficult spots on our offense that requires the most adjustments, the most overall big picture knowledge and it's very rare to have a true freshman that can handle that and he's done a really, really good job. Those things change from week to week via game plan and looks. I also think he's made Chris (Cunningham) a better player. I think that's kinda the neat part of it and I don't mean that Chris doesn't deserve credit for improving, he does he's worked really, really hard, but I think having Dalton there has continued to push Chris as well. We have two guys that I really feel good about in there; I really like them."

On the process of recruiting Dalton Keene:

"I think was pretty much like, Charley (Wiles) brought up a kid, brought up Dalton and said that he knew his dad well, they played together at Murray State. He didn't call the shot but he said if we like him I feel pretty good that we have the chance to get him. I think Charley's exact words were, 'he's absolutely a no brainer in terms of work ethic, character and toughness'. When we took that evaluation and combined it with what we saw on film we offered him and they came out here and got it done."