

**Virginia Tech Football**  
**Head Coach Justin Fuente**  
**Game 5 – Clemson Media Conference Q&A Highlights**  
**Sept 25, 2017**

***Opening statement***

“Special thanks to everyone that came out Saturday, thought it was a great environment and a beautiful day, a lot of fun. We did sustain an injury there with Divine Deablo, he’ll be out for the year (fractured foot). We’ll have him back and he’ll get rehabbed and be ready to go for the spring and into next season. As you guys have seen, we’ve moved (Khalil) Ladler into that spot. In his time he’s done a good job and has continued to improve so we’ll continue moving forward with that. We’ll continue to evaluate Adonis’s (Alexander) situation for this week. If there’s any change I’ll make sure to make that announcement. Obviously a fun week this week, in terms of all of the things going on outside of the football game with College GameDay coming here. I’m sure Virginia Tech will do a fantastic job welcoming them and provide a great environment. Great opportunity to show off our community and our school. Our responsibility is the game and preparing for a very talented Clemson football team, defending national champions. It’s our first conference game, we put the non-conference slate behind us. We’ve got two conference games here and then a bye. Really talked about resetting everything and getting ready for conference play. This is just our first conference game; I know that it is a big stage and there are a lot of things that come with that but it’s the begging of our conference play and we’re looking forward to the challenge.”

***On did the players take the loss to Clemson in the ACC Championship Game as hard as he had taken it:***

“I don’t know I haven’t asked them, we won’t talk about it. I think everybody handles those things differently on an individual basis. Last year my message to our team was that was last year’s team, last year’s Virginia Tech team vs last year’s Clemson team. This is a completely different situation. We’ve got guys that played in that game that are no longer here and so do they. So we won’t use it as a reference point for this week.”

***On what impact if any does College Gameday have on the team:***

“I mean I think it’s great there coming to our school, I think its great exposure for our community and for Virginia Tech. I think it’s neat that they’re back, it’s been a little while since they’ve been here but what affect it’ll have on our team, none, we’ll be at the hotel in Roanoke. We’ve got to get prepared for the game and It’s a late kickoff and we’re going to handle all day Saturday without playing until late at night.”

***On what stands out about Clemson defensive coordinator Brent Venables and his style of defense:***

“Well I think the first thing that stands out is their talent level on the defensive line, it’s pretty exceptional. Attacking, they’re not a sit back and just try to keep the ball in front of you defense. It’s been my limited experience with him and its been limited that they’ve been an attacking defense for some time. They force turnovers, try to get in the backfield, penetrate on the defensive line. It’s not a read and react kind of situation. It’s a pin your ears back and try and create havoc.”

***On what will his policy is regarding the national anthem:***

“We’ll be in the locker room. We’re never on the field for the national anthem so it’s not really an issue for us.”

***On whether he sees a bigger meaning to this game for the program in any sense:***

“No I see it as our first conference game. I know its highly ranked and a big stage and all of those sorts of things but I see it as our first conference game against the defending National Champions at our place. We’re in our second year here we’ve had one recruiting class. Coach (Dabo) Swinney is in his eighth or ninth year or something like that and obviously, they’ve been very accomplished, not just the last couple years but the last several years. It’ll be a great opportunity to play a great football team, other than that’s about the context I see with it.”

***On what are some things that the team has gotten away with in the first four games that you won’t be able to get away with against Clemson:***

“Well you’re not going to be able to get away with much of anything, if you make a mistake they’re going to make you pay. There have been some things here and there on defense and some things on special teams and some things offensively that if we make those mistakes. Really you don’t even have to make a mistake you can take one step in the wrong direction or hesitate for half a step. When you’re playing the talent that we’re going up to it’s like defusing a bomb. Just one small snip of the wire that’s incorrect and boom you blow your hands off, that’s just how talented and good they are. Making sure that we’re on point with everything we’re doing, crystal clear in our directives and our assignment being able to play well because everything will be difficult. A first down will be difficult, a defensive stop will be difficult, punting the ball and covering the punt will be difficult. It’s just all amplified. I’m not exactly answering your question and I apologize but every step you take is amplified when you play talent like this.”

***On Clemson QB Kelly Bryant having to wait his turn and is there anything distinctive about his game:***

“Well one thing and I don’t know the young man but I think it’s neat that we’ve got a kid that waited his turn. Was behind a fantastic player and practiced I’m assuming every day, continued to develop his craft. Was behind maybe the best quarterback in college football for a couple years there and now has his chance to play and shine and today’s instant gratification society we don’t see that enough in my opinion. I think it speaks volumes about him and now he’s getting his chance and the thing that I notice about him, while he is an accomplished passer he obviously understands what they’re doing. It seems to me while it’s his first year playing I think he has quite a few reps under his belt and he’s a big physical presence out there. I mean this is a big strong runner and 220 pound athlete back there. When he does want to run the ball falls forward. (He) can pose a tremendous problem for us.”

***On what Clemson does so well up front on the defensive line:***

“Well I would stop saying it’s just talent. They are well coached and disciplined and all of those sorts of things but you don’t have the success that they have without those sorts of things. The size and power jumps out at you. They’ve got almost an embarrassment of riches over there on the defensive line and I know some of the guys over there that they’ve recruited and they’re not on the two deep roster. I mean they are just really talented. There’s an element of an attacking style, there is an element of fundamentals and power and they do a great job scheme wise. You don’t want to get behind the chains on these guys they’ll scheme you up from a blitz standpoint and a pure rush standpoint and dropping guys into coverage.

***On what did he see on Josh Jackson’s interception and what has he done to take care of the ball:***

“What I saw on his interception, I think maybe he assumed a little bit too much on the play. We’ve done that deal several times and I think he assumed how the player was going to buzz and he didn’t buzz and was right underneath it. I’ve seen him value the football. I think there’s an element of understanding real time out there with him, he understands how important that is. He’s very coachable and listens.

These guys will certainly put that to the test with the pressure they can put on the quarterback position. He's just been really efficient in terms of securing the ball."

***On how well has Vinny Mihota adapted to playing part of his time at defensive tackle:***

"Vinny (Mihota) has done a great job, I'm really proud of him. I kinda made a point in front of the team the other day. In the East Carolina game, the game is out of hand and our second team offense is on the field and A.J. (Bush) has a run around the edge and gets tackled over there by our sideline. There's one guy over there yelling and screaming and pulling him up, genuinely excited for the second team offense and that's Vinny Mihota. That was a great example of Virginia Tech football and selflessness and what we're trying to get across. When it comes to Vinny moving inside or playing outside he's going to do whatever it takes to give us a chance to be successful. He's handled that movement very well. He's highly intelligent and can handle that sort of stuff. He understands the big picture in terms of scheme and has a physical skillset to do either one."

***On what it's like driving in on game day from Roanoke:***

"Well I think the thing that hits you is you go all week practicing and preparing and there's nobody at practice there's nobody around and you hear all of the excitement but when you pull into town it's your first chance to actually get some perspective on it. When you're pulling in, and it's the same on the road in a big game, and you see the tents and the RV's and the people everywhere and it's like the first realization that all of this talk was about something. That there really are people behind the chatter and the excitement of the game and that's a neat thing. It's fun to work at a place, I've said this before and I'll say it again, fun to work at a place where people value the hard work that our kids put in and show their support to them by showing up and cheering them on. The same thing is though we'll have to get prepared for the game regardless of how many people are there or how many television sets are tuned in. We'll let those people worry about that, we've got enough to worry about with the Clemson Tigers."

***On how does he handle the increased national attention and distractions that come with a game of this magnitude:***

"Well, (Assoc. AD) Pete (Moris) is going to do a great job of eliminating a bunch of them but it'll be business as usual for us. We shouldn't change our schedule or our focus because of those things. I'm a firm believer in the process and routine regardless of the opponent and the stage and that's just been my message. We're playing a great football team don't get me wrong but the game is the same it's the stage that is different and the stage is not our responsibility. So our job is to worry about ourselves and get ourselves prepared to play"