

**Virginia Tech Football**  
**Head Coach Justin Fuente Q&A Highlights**  
**Game 12 – Virginia Media Conference**  
**Nov. 20, 2017**

***Opening Statement***

“Thanks to everybody that came out for senior day, it certainly was a memorable game. I’m certainly happy for our seniors to find a way to win that game. I’m sure it’s something they and I will remember for the rest of our lives.

“Before we move on, I do want to congratulate Tremaine Edmunds on being a finalist for the Butkus Award. I know Virginia Tech has a lot of history; we have a lot of history of great defensive players and linebackers. I think Tremaine deserves to be recognized for his play. We forget sometimes how young he is and how far he’s come in a short period of time but he’s certainly deserves to be mentioned amongst the nation’s elite. Fantastic young man, as good a person or as better a person than even as a player, happy to get a chance to coach him.

“We have a tremendous challenge this week. Obviously, it’s rivalry week we’ve got Virginia on the road. Much improved, a completely different football team than we played a year ago. You can see that across the board in how they play. The belief in what they’re doing. They’re scoring points and throwing the ball down the field. They’ve got skill players that can really run and make big plays. Their quarterback is playing at a high level. Defensively, the second year in that system they have certainly expanded and kind of the hallmark of Bronco Mendenhall defense is being tough, physical, basing out of the fifty and giving you a variety of other looks. They’re playing really well in all three phases of the game. They’re bowl eligible and we’ve got to go to their place. We’ve got a short week of preparation, we did not practice yesterday we just got a lift and a run in. We will practice today, a little bit later than normal just to give ourselves a little more prep time and hopefully get ready to go.”

***Can you talk about how big DE Trevon Hill was in blowing up the fourth-down play on the goal-line stand against Pitt and in the game overall?***

“He’s continued to improve. I’ve been pleased with his development. That play in particular he did a great job getting off on the ball, kind of punched a hole in the offense so to speak in terms of slowing the running back up, making him kind of run the hump there and allowing the pursuit to catch up. We ended up with a lot of hats to the ball but I have been pleased with Trevon (Hill) as he continues to work hard and get better and play a complete game. Not just rushing the passer but playing against the run. Still has somethings to work on, got a little up field a little bit on the shovel pass that was a big play but continues to get better. I think coach (Charley) Wiles has done a fantastic job with him and kind of refining his skills and improving his play.”

***You were new to this rivalry last year and had to lean on Charley Wiles, Bud Foster and Frank Beamer. Do you feel like you need to do something like that this year?***

“I think I have a good appreciation for what this means to the Hokie nation, to our players. Coach (Frank Beamer) is out of town. I’ve already figured that out, I talked to (Executive Associate AD) John Ballein yesterday about it. Coach Beamer is not available, but I’ll call anybody in if I think it’s going to help. I think we have a pretty good understanding of it. Our focus needs to be on our preparation and the challenge ahead of us. Like you said it’s going to be a far different game than it was a year ago. We are

playing a much improved football team that's going to be excited and hungry to play and we've got to match that."

***Seeing as how you're beat up at some positions, I'm just wondering what the difference is if instead of coming off the emotional high of winning you were coming off three consecutive losses?***

"Well I'm thankful we're not, so I try not to think about it. Everybody has guys that are beat and nicked up. We're not going to use those as excuses, there just the facts of the matter. Hopefully we get a guy or two back this week. I have a feeling that this game is the type of game that both sides get up for regardless of what has happened. I don't think you need any extra motivation for this one, I think everybody understands what it means. It's kind of all hands on deck, whoever you've got has to be able to go play at a high level."

***Last week you said good and bad with QB Josh Jackson's play lately, how do you assess how he played on Saturday?***

"Well I was a little disappointed in a couple things that happened around him. We had a couple opportunities for big plays, we had an interception that was no this fault at all. So I was a little disappointed in a couple things around him that could have helped him play better. That doesn't mean he was perfect. We had a chance for a big play with Phil (Patterson) down the sideline early in the game, had a chance to be a big play; didn't quite get it. So yea he continues to improve. I still feel the same way I felt when we started to be honest with you. I feel like continuing to focus on the guys around him as Josh (Jackson) continues to improve and feel more comfortable is important. Josh (Jackson) has to focus on making the average play on a consistent basis and the big plays will come. We've got to have an offensive staff that does a great job getting the guys around him to play well. We're playing a redshirt freshman quarterback, the guys around him need to step and produce, as well."

***With this rivalry game how special is it to see both teams are having successful season and are bowl eligible going into this rivalry game?***

"Well I think it's great for the state and it says a lot about football in this state. You look at the quality of I-AA football, I know they don't call it that anymore but I have eight years of I-AA experience so I get to call it I-AA football. The quality of play from top to bottom in this state speaks volumes. It's just rising tide floats all boats. It's good for our league and will make for a fantastic game and there's a reason the game got moved back in the day on Friday so more people in the region and the country can watch it."

***DB Mook Reynolds and DE Vinny Mihota went down on the play the Reggie Floyd made the game-saving tackle, what can you tell us about their status for the upcoming game?***

"Not much. We'll know more a little bit later today."

***Virginia has a pretty good vertical threat this year in WR Andre Levrone and QB Kurt Benkert. How concerning is that combination?***

"You watch them against very good people throw and complete balls down the field. The Georgia Tech game I think they hit three or four go balls. Last week they came out and got behind a fast Miami team. They are going to push it down the field, they're going to take shots. More so than doing it they're good at it, they are completing those things. I mean anybody can just heave it down the field but they're making people pay. It certainly is a part of what we'll have to be ready for."

***RB Jalen Holston has looked more comfortable in the offense and how big of an adjustment it was coming from the Wing T offense to this offense?***

“Well I think he would have had anywhere. I guess maybe if he went to Georgia Tech and played the fullback position it would have been a little bit easier for him. Just about any offense was going to be different for him. The thing about Jalen (Holston) is he’s a very conscientious person. He does extra work to try and figure things out. Being correct is important to him, which sounds like a small thing but isn’t the case with everybody. He likes to know what’s going on out there and kinda be in control and he wants to play. I really hoped and felt as we went through the season he would become more comfortable and play a bigger role. That’s kind of come to fruition the last several weeks. I think it would have happened a couple weeks earlier had he not he not gotten sick there about a quarter of the way through the year, that kind of set him back. Just pleased with the transition he’s made. He’s becoming a bigger part of what we’re doing.”

***Was RB Travon McMillian a little nicked up last week?***

“Yeah he didn’t practice much. Towards the end of the week he practiced a little bit more. I basically said Travon (McMillian) lets get you out there and see how you feel. He felt okay but I still didn’t want to push it so I would anticipate he will be fine.”

***How much have injuries at the running back position has held you back in terms of consistency?***

“It certainly has been a little bit of a revolving door. I know we’ve talked about I don’t care who is carrying it and all that kind of stuff. I we had a one dominate person I would leave one dominate person back there. Between the injuries and guys getting beaten up it has been a good thing that those guys are all invested in what’s going on. They’ve all gotten playing time, they’ve all contributed to it. The one that comes to mind is Steven (Peoples) though. When you go back to the very first game of the year and watch him run the football, he was a force running the ball in his carries. I really anticipated that expanding as it went along and it just hasn’t because he’s just not been able to play as much. Hopefully moving forward he’ll get back and be able to contribute. On one hand it’s nice that those guys have all jumped in there and filled in. On the other hand it has been a little bit of a revolving door due to guys getting beat up.”