

October 17, 2020

Virginia at Wake Forest
Truist Field (Winston-Salem, N.C.)

Bronco Mendenhall Press Conference

On rotating the three quarterbacks and what you saw from each:

“I thought that gave us the best chance to move the football and delete our team. Each has a different skill set. We're looking for complete play at quarterback after losing Brennan [Armstrong]. And so we tried to innovate and use them in a manner that would be helpful to us. I think, probably as you look at the statistics, you'll probably see what happened both Ira [Armstead] and KT [Keytaon Thompson], were probably around seven yards per rush. Ira's scrambling ability probably added something to that. And so I thought, collectively, our approach, gave us a chance. We didn't execute well enough to finish the game and to finish with the win, but I think it gave us a chance.”

On feeling of where team was going into fourth quarter:

“Yeah 23-23 against a really explosive offense, and really believed we had a great chance to win. At that point, we had played the run game very well, up till that point. A run game or a running play goes out the gate for a touchdown immediately following, we muff a kickoff return and then an interception. And so really those three plays back-to-back-to-back, changed the outcome. Up until then, yeah, it was more what we had hoped, more what we planned for and more we had expected in managing the game and expecting whoever basically is driving at the end of the game would win or not win. And so that's what it looked like at that point. And then our lack of execution. Again, one-on-one on defense, one in the special teams and then an interception was the difference I thought.”

On the secondary:

“Yeah, the secondary is giving up a just too many too many deep passes not playing the ball well. And the yards per catch today was around 16, I think yards per catch. And so the yardage jumps really fast when we're not making plays on the football. The secondary more than any other position controls points. And so not only knock the ball down but we need to tackle well. We did lose today, so Joey Blount went out early, De'Vante Cross later in the game and Brenton Nelson before half. So I don't know the status on any of those three.”

On biggest message that you can give your team to kind of get things turned around:

“Really what turning anything around does, it starts inside then works out. So, first of all the mindset and the competitive spirit and the work ethic, I was really impressed and encouraged by what I saw all weekend and throughout the game tonight. Then it's the execution and the identities as those continue to flesh out, and flesh out with different players changing through injury, etc. And so, a little bit of a moving target right now. So mindset is mindset and work ethic and preparation is what we can control. Then eventually that will lead to execution at some point, if we remain diligent and when we remain diligent.”

QB Keytaon Thompson

On being back playing quarterback:

“It felt pretty good, you know, just getting back there and getting to talk to the guys in the huddle. I kind of miss it a little bit, but honestly I enjoyed playing quarterback out there today.”

On game plan to use all three quarterbacks:

“I think it worked pretty well, to be honest. We've been getting out to kind of slow starts and stuff like that and I think it helped us, you know, jumpstart and it helped us in the running game a lot. I feel like Ira's a great player, you know he's really fast. He got in the end zone and that was really big for us. I got a few carries. I was able to get a few first downs. I feel like it helped you know and all the way up until the fourth quarter I feel like we had a chance. And just a few critical plays, you know we dug ourselves in a hole in the fourth quarter that we just was not able to recover from. So I think it did give us a chance to win but we just made a few critical mistakes at the end.”

On coming in and out of the game as quarterbacks:

“I mean, I wouldn't say it was difficult. It was pretty smooth actually, and we practiced it and walked through it. When we did go into the game at quarterback, and it was just one of us in, we actually you know subbed each other, and just know scripts to where you when coach calls this play I'm going in at quarterback. So we subbed each other out and I feel like it went pretty smooth.

DT Jowon Briggs

On feeling extra pressure on defense:

“You know, I feel like as a team I never have to worry about what's going on on the offense because I know that what they're doing over there is you know solid. So, you know, Brennan is out but I know that we got people prepared. I know everybody prepares the same way and I have, you know, 100 percent trust in what they're doing over there on the team. So no, there wasn't really much extra pressure as far as that goes.”

On defense doing its part tonight:

“As far as that goes, it's more so, you know, playing as a team. You know, we talk about complimentary football. Everything you do complements other people. So everything the offense does complements defense, complements special teams. So really it's just a team effort. As far as all that goes, you can't really place the blame on anyone, because we play as a team.”

On mood among team and message from coaches:

“Basically, you know, our culture is pretty solidified on this team. So, we all know, we, you know, watch the film, watch the film come back and get right down to working. You know, there's no slippage as far as people feeling sorry for themselves or people pointing the finger at others, you know, we all know we got to put our noses down and get to work and get this culture back where it needs to be.”