

**Nov. 14, 2020**

**Virginia 31, Louisville 17**

**Scott Stadium (Charlottesville, Va.)**

### **Bronco Mendenhall Press Conference**

#### ***Opening Statement:***

“It was a tough, tough game, a tough victory and very competitive and hard fought. I was proud of our team from beginning to end. There were things we can correct. There are things we did well. There are lessons to be learned just like there is every week. But, I feel momentum. I see some consistency, moving and growing. I like how it's shaping up and how it's framing up for the last part of the season. I'm really lucky to be the coach. I love my team and I'm really impressed with Brennan (Armstrong) and his leadership. The stage is set for the next game and that's where our focus will be.”

#### ***On the run game involving the quarterback and the lack of depth at the position currently:***

“We intentionally chose not to run the quarterback tonight. Very few were designed runs, they were scrambles because they (Louisville) dropped eight and they played soft coverage for a while in the game - especially the first half. And so any of the runs, I shouldn't say that, the majority of the runs were scramble runs and the majority of the yards were scramble yards. Those weren't designed runs, there were very few designed runs, and we knew with our quarterback depth for this week, measuring this game and our season, we decided to not include quarterback runs at the same level. And so again, the yardage reflects maybe that's not the case, but scrambles runs versus designed runs are two different things.”

#### ***On the significance of the game when looking back to the beginning of the season:***

“It is really hard to have framed any of the games on what they might mean and what the context might be. But as the season unfolded, and is unfolding, after our UNC win last week this became just short of essential for this team to have the season, but also a chance to demonstrate just how committed they are. And they've shown that through their protocols and the changes in our roster – but not as many as most teams and they want to play, and they're showing that. I think they demonstrated that again tonight. And we're modifying or changing as much as possible, but so is Louisville, right? They have the same challenges with guys being out. But this game became, I think for both teams, really important for maybe the results oriented-profession that this is, of having the wins that we want to get.”

#### ***On the defense coming up with big plays***

“I really think that was the difference in the game. The three turnovers and the two fourth-down stops, I thought, were the difference. And it's always hard to say it was the difference. There's counter arguments to it, I know there is. But I think that changed the game and I think that ultimately was the difference between both teams. We struggled all night tackling their quarterback, keeping him contained. Designed runs worked for them against us. The quarterback scramble worked against us and he really did an amazing job. We did make those five plays and critical stops and then scored once, which really changed the outcome. So, while there were challenges, the positive plays kind of overrode the challenges in terms of the outcome of the game.”

#### ***QB Brennan Armstrong***

##### ***On his rushing night and any hesitance with limited depth at QB:***

“Yeah, we really didn't call too many quarterback runs tonight – I don't remember calling any. We saw a lot of our zone reads we had pulls off of, but I told myself coming into the game not to be timid just because that won't help me in any way. I really tried to focus on myself, just run and try to get down more often. Don't be timid, come to the game like you normally would and I felt good, honestly.”

##### ***On impact of defense and turnovers:***

“It's a huge momentum swing. The turnover from Noah [Taylor], the stops they made, the fumbles. It just gives us more opportunities to score. I think we didn't score as much as we'd like in the first half that we thought we were going to,

but then we turned it on. My goal now for this team, I want to at least hit 35 a game. We talked about 24 as a pillar but I feel like 35, when we do that, I just think it's more fun – I score more touchdowns. We got close to it tonight, but when the defense does that it just makes it so much more fun, makes it easier on the offense, especially when they put up seven points on their side of the ball for us.”

***On having Lavel Davis, Jr. back:***

“Yeah, it was nice to have him back. Shoot, for him it has been three weeks, that’s a long time... He finally got his touchdown this game. It was nice to have him back. He made some big catches into the hole shots that we have for cover-2 stuff and just to get him back out there was good for us. He needed to get back into it, like three weeks is a long time, and I feel like once he did that – the touchdown kind of did that – he's ready to go for us.”

***On importance of Shane Simpson in offense:***

“He had some nice plays today. He got some spin move and I'm happy for him, because we know Wayne's there and when Shane gets involved just helps it's a dynamic duo that helps them both out. They can run the ball extremely hard whenever we need them to. Especially with my knee, we ran a lot more just run plays tonight, and just having them both run the ball well tonight, it's huge.”

***LB Zane Zandier***

***On game changing plays:***

“I think just taking it play-by-play is always big because I know their quarterback was scrambling, making a lot of plays himself, and yeah I think we give up a decent amount of yards on defense but we did a good job keeping the points to a minimum. I think those big plays help with turnovers, sacks, you know any way that we can get the ball back to our offense. You know when you get plays like that, you're always going to have a solid outcome.”

***On Noah Taylor's interception return for a touchdown:***

“Oh yeah, I just saw the ball kind of go over my shoulder. I was part of the rush, and I saw him catch it so I kind of just turned to see who was the most dangerous guy, and I think their running back had a decent angle, and I kind of just laid out and tried to get as much as I can on him. And it might have been a little close to a block in the back, but they did not call it, so it worked out pretty good. You know, just to be able to see Noah run down the sideline into the end zone, just absolutely awesome.”

***On stopping Malik Cunningham and what made him effective tonight:***

“He's very fast. Not that I underestimated him because we played him last year and I think a little bit the year before, but he's just incredibly fast. He's a great athlete and made a lot of plays with his feet tonight. I think containing it to 17 points is a positive, but that dude definitely had a good night.”

***On Louisville missing players and Nick Grant forcing a fumble:***

“Yeah, that was a huge play. I think that was after what a 30-yard scramble for a first down. They might have been moving the ball a little bit. Yeah (numbers) 10, one and three were our main focus, for the past two weeks, I should say. And the fact that those guys were down, kind of just realized it would be No. 3 and, saw that early on. He would just run the ball and make plays, so it's our focus to just try to contain him.”