

September 24, 2021
Virginia vs Wake Forest
Charlottesville, Va. (Scott Stadium)

Bronco Mendenhall Quotes

Opening remarks:

“First of all, congratulations to Dave Clawson, I thought Wake was really well coached, I thought that you executed very well, I thought their plan was exactly as it needed to be, and they made the place consistently in the critical moments from beginning to end, that allowed them to win the game. That reflects discipline, it reflects repetition and just a clean play. We weren't able to play cleanly, and that's a direct reflection on me as the head coach, which then my job is to pass that on to my assistant coaches and their job then is to pass that on to the players. Man, not making enough plays in the right moments to take over the game - especially at home. I was so thankful for the crowd and the energy. They had every chance and we were trying to give them every chance to stay with us and into the game. But the reality is I didn't have our team executing well enough to maintain the home field advantage. That's just something we've taken such great pride in and made so much progress that it probably hurts, maybe more than anything. We have lots and lots of work to do in terms of execution, in terms of discipline, in terms of making the right plays at the right times and having that sustained consistently from beginning to end. Again, that's a direct reflection of my leadership, and the coaches are now an extension of that, and how the players play reflects preparation. I've always believed teams play as they're prepared. I'm not happy with the result. I thought our team was willing and I thought they wanted to try, and I thought they did try, and I thought they did battle, and I loved a lot of the efforts for my younger players at the end. But effort alone is not going to do it, you have to execute you have to be clean, you have to play with great poise and not any of those things are in place right now that I am proud of or think that is good enough to win the Coastal Division. We have lots and lots of work to do another short week, it's right back to work.”

On defensive performance

“I actually thought we played better defense than we did last week. I thought we were more consistent, and I thought we were more executionally sound. I thought we had more positive plays when I was looking out there, from beginning to end. But still, mistakes at critical times. We gave up the long pass early, the deep crosser, and we got to run as well early on where we misfit that run. But then there's key third downs, key fourth downs, things like that where you have to make those plays to get enough opportunities for your offense to score. We had chances all the way through middle and third quarter, where I still felt we had a great chance to possibly regain momentum and execute our way in, but we didn't through inconsistencies. They executed their plan really well and as they have for quite a while. It reflects a well-disciplined and a really sharp team that really made the critical plays.”

On the increased penalties called

“The team has a competitive spirit whether or not channeling it into their execution and the only thing that matters is between the whistles, after the whistle only hurts our team. I haven't been able to discipline or have them execute cleanly enough or disciplined enough, as we're coming from behind and frustration is apparent.”

Potential concerns this week in practice

“Based on what I saw last week against UNC on the defensive side, that exposed a lot of things and again I'd actually thought we played better tonight defensively than against UNC. I would say significantly better, but not anywhere close to where we need to be. What I didn't see coming was our inability to protect Brennan (Armstrong). I didn't expect six sacks. I didn't expect only 17 points. I expected more big plays, so the picture of our team is continuing to become clear. Right now, it's a reflection. Now on the other side where we've been moving the ball at will and scoring lots and lots of points and protecting our quarterback and we didn't do either of those this evening. That's another piece now to consider, but that reflects the consistency and preparation and execution and poise.”

On the message to the team and the goal of winning the Coastal Division

“I love the opportunity to develop, grow, and battle and strain and become. I loved seeing Malachi Fields tonight battling at the end. I love seeing Keytaon Thompson dragging bodies at the very end. I love seeing people that will fight, scratch and claw for a cause right to the very end and so now the execution and the planning that all has to come together with eight games remaining. Plenty of opportunities to learn, grow and become. I'm not ruling this out, but it's really clear that we have lots of work to do.”