

SEPTEMBER 17, 2022
VIRGINIA VS. ODU
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA. (SCOTT STADIUM)

VIRGINIA HEAD COACH TONY ELLIOTT

On if this team is “learning how to win,” coming off the loss against Illinois

“They found a way to win the game. The thing that I can take away from our Wednesday practice when we did our two-minute drill, we had a similar situation. We had twenty-five seconds on the clock and we had to have a field goal to win with one timeout, and we actually won the two-minute drill on offense this week and kicked the field goal with nine seconds left. We work all of the possible situations to try and prepare these guys and to see them not bat an eye with a minute and one, and one time out, and go down and find a way to win the game. It tells you what's inside of them. But the key is, up until that point, we got to play with that same mentality, that same swagger, that same confidence and learn how to finish. When you're on the two-yard line, any running back, I'm on the two-yard line, I'm squeezing that ball and I'm finding a way to get into the endzone. We find a way to put it on the ground, and then try to say it was the quarterback's fault. Those are the things where you say, if anything, 'my bad, I'll fix it.' Those are the little things that we got to continue to work through, and those are the things that I'm talking about, learning how to win and not being okay with that happening. Working hard every single day and then ball security, and then for those who come out to our practice, you know that the first thing we do when we go to individuals is a ball security circuit. We put them through all the different body positions and motions, and try to teach them the proper body mechanics and the muscle memory, and what you're supposed to do with the ball when you go to the ground. You squeeze your elbow in, pinch your chin, but seeing them transition those things into the game and then just the discipline. You look at some of the discipline issues and we're off the field, we got two hands to the face. It's fourth down and we're off the field and we got our best guy locked up in man coverage and we got to pull the guy down to avoid a touchdown. Those are the things that we got to learn, how to visualize and be prepared for those moments way before you ever get to those moments.”

On growth in the execution of the run game and Xavier Brown's production as a first year

“I thought that we were able to be more consistent running the football. Xavier found some big plays and what you saw is that the stage is not too bright for him as a first year guy, and that he's ready for the moment. Now he's got some growth, you talk about the turnover down there when we had that sack, fumble, as a young running back that comes out and protects that edge for his quarterback. He's got some areas to grow, but the way that he's running the football, he's putting pressure on all the other guys in the room. And as I told him in the locker room afterwards, I'm not a discriminator of age or whatever it may be: if you're the best guy, you're the best guy. And right now he's running with the most tenacity out of all the guys.”

On missed opportunities left out on the field

“I'm going to be conservative and say 20 points, at least 20 points [left out on the field]. We were down inside the five, inside the 10, and several times we fumbled on the two going in, and

so I'm being conservative, There's some other situations like the other turnover in midfield. You probably get three, you get 15 more yards, you get a chance to kick a field goal and going in that direction is where (Brendan) Farrell is at his best. But I feel, being conservative, that we probably left 20 points at least out there. The thing about it is if you capitalize on those scoring opportunities then that just puts more pressure on their offense. Now their offense has to press a little bit, which now lets the defense have opportunities to get the ball back with them turning the ball over. I definitely felt like we left at least 20 points out on the field.”