

OCTOBER 8, 2022

VIRGINIA VS. LOUISVILLE

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA. (SCOTT STADIUM)

VIRGINIA HEAD COACH TONY ELLIOTT

On the team's response to adversity:

"I think what happens is everybody's looking around for somebody else to make the play. A lot of that, from the past, was you look to five [Brennan Armstrong] to make the play. And then five had some guys that were supporting him and helping him make plays. I think what you got right now is when adversity hits, everybody looks to five, but trying to get the team to understand we're not asking five to make every play, right. We're trying to play as a team. We're trying to ask him to make the play required and also ask you to make the play required. So I think what happens is, is two things, when we have success, guys get satisfied. They get fat and happy. It doesn't matter what the score is. That's something that I talk about a lot, you can't play to the scoreboard, when you play to the scoreboard you're externally motivated. So then it's easy for you to make justifications for you to not give your best effort. But when you're internally motivated, and you're playing from inside out for your teammates, grateful for that opportunity, then you push yourself a little bit harder because there's some collective accountability. So I think it's twofold. The guys are struggling to handle success when they have success. And then when adversity hits we're all looking around and we just don't have guys right now that are stepping forward and saying, 'Hey, I'm gonna be the guy that's gonna make the play.' They wait on Brennan, and unfortunately, when they wait on Brennan, it is forcing Brennan to be in a tough predicament to make a play. And then he tries to, and his buddies don't help him out."

On the good start to the game and what the team focused on over the week:

"I felt last week at Duke we didn't come out with the right energy. I felt like the guys came out with really good energy [today], they had good focus, they had a great pregame warm up and boom, we got off to a fast start. Then Brennan [Armstrong], down inside the 20, and he's not trying to fumble. But when we're coaching you in practice, take the coaching and make sure that it's not just a yes sir and move on. Like this is why we're doing [this]. We even stopped this weekend and I had some of the offensive guys come up and try to teach the five points of pressure. So that meant we talked about how you properly carry a football and why we carry it, even talked about the history of the high and tight. It's a Virginia guy that went with the high and tight in Tiki Barber, he put it up there. So just trying to create some accountability, but again, there's a lot of, especially with veteran guys, and I know it and I understand them, I'm a football guy, there's muscle memory. So guys just sometimes get in the heat of battle just revert and that's where we got to be disciplined. Just trust the coaching, trust the training so that you don't revert. Because if you revert, you put yourself in jeopardy and it's not even guaranteed when you do it exactly right, that you're not going to have some failure, but you're better off trying to do it right and minimize the failure then put yourself at risk by not doing it right."

On what he takes from Clemson to build his program when facing challenges:

"Transparency and being honest, and that's how Clemson became successful. People are focusing on the last seven years, but I was there for 11. I was there when we started 8-0 in 2011 and we lost three of the last whatever games. I was there for the Orange Bowl when it was 70 or whatever. And you know what, if you go back and you watch that game, if you remember, Andre Ellington fumbles on the one-yard line, we're up by four points getting ready to go up by 11. He fumbles on the one-yard line, they return it for a touchdown. We press on the next drive; we throw an interception then the game is over. In just a matter of two drives. It's not all success, even in victory. That's when you learn, a lot of times what happens is, in victory, guys enjoy the victory and they have a different self-confidence about themselves, but you have to handle success well and then you have to grow through adversity. So, for me, how I handle it is, I'm building a program. I'm building a program and guys are going to run on and off the field. We're going to have an appreciation. When we go to eat as a team, I told the guys in the locker room, if we go to eat as a team, you're going to clean up after yourself. It's nobody else's job to clean up after yourself. And that's where we have to grow because you know what, it creates an appreciation. Once you have an appreciation, then you can transition to being internally motivated, not externally motivated, because the game is long. Energy is going to fade right from the stands, from the music, all that stuff is going to fade. What are you going to draw on? It's that internal motivation, and it starts with an appreciation and a belief, and in that belief, you make a decision, and that's what we've been talking about with this football team. There's a lot of expectations. I have expectations. They have expectations, the fans have expectations, the administration has expectations of this program. But before you can reach your expectations, it starts with a decision. You have to decide to be successful. You have to decide that every single play, you're going play to win, that you're not going to take a play off. It's that you're going to decide that our core values, running on and off the field, dressing like a team, being disciplined, which we're not doing a great job of right now. Ultimately, that's we're playing for. So I have to do a better job as the head football coach of making sure that is clear within the organization. That's what we coach to and that's the standard that we practice to and that's what either we're going coach or we're going to allow. That's what I learned from Coach [Dabo] Swinney. And so there's some things right now that are being allowed that we have to eliminate."