

NOVEMBER 5, 2022
VIRGINIA VS. NORTH CAROLINA
CHARLOTTEVILLE, VA. (SCOTT STADIUM)

NORTH CAROLINA HEAD COACH MACK BROWN

Opening Statement

“Really proud of these guys. It's hard to win on the road. And they're 5-0 for the first time on the road, five consecutive wins, first time since 1997. Nobody on that team was alive the last time we won five consecutive games on the road. I'm so proud. We played really well at times today, we didn't play well at times today. And the guys overcame it. They kept their head up, they kept their good body language, they kept their confidence and they just kept playing. We said this was gonna be hard. If you look at it, every game we've played on the road, seven points or less. That's just what it is. That's what happens. I don't know why it's harder but there's a lot of boxes that you check that say it's harder and it really is. Last year we lost six on the road. And that was the six we lost. Give these kids credit for being able to do that. Proud of Elijah Green. Him gaining 91 yards, made the great catch out of the backfield. One of the problems he struggled with when he first got here was pass protection because he was an I-tailback and he struggled catching the ball. And he is a great example for all young people who have some deficiencies, because he catches a ball today and outruns everybody for a touchdown, because he has worked after practice every day since he's been here to catch the ball better. So I'm so proud of him and really proud of Drake [Maye]. He just continues to amaze me with the things that he does. In fact, when he has an incompleteness we all say ‘What's wrong?’ Because he's doing that well. Josh Downs, what a great day for him. He just keeps getting better and better. He's the go-to guy obviously and then we have a 64-yard punt with Ben Kiernan. That really helped us change field position. And we had a punt return by Josh Downs that had a chance to score. Defensively I was disappointed in the first half. Their three receivers are out so you figure they're gonna run the ball, and they haven't run the ball all year. So we've got to handle that better. Because they start with a kickoff return for about 34 yards and have some excitement and enthusiasm and take it right down and score. And for some reason we don't start well offensively. So we've got to continue to look at that and see why we're not starting well in the first quarter offensively. Then we come out at halftime, and we do really well for the third and fourth quarters. I was really proud of the defense that they stepped up and had three, three-and-outs immediately. The turnover they had in the first quarter led to points but we got to stop the run better. Really disappointed in the offense at the end- that we didn't finish the game on offense. We had the ball twice with a ten-point lead. You have got to finish the game. You've got to finish the game. And we didn't kill much clock or finish the game. You've got to do that. So we've got to go back and look at that. You can have a four-minute offense and still run your same offense. That was disappointing for us. But overall, I felt like the guys understood where things are. Brennan Armstrong is one of the best quarterbacks the ACC has ever seen. To have him hit 17-of-35 with one interception is really good. And he's hard to sack because he's so athletic. He ran for 70 something yards but like Drake [Maye], he's been their leading rusher. So that was pretty good to keep him down inside. Give Tony Elliott credit. They played hard, they played well, and they gave themselves a chance to win. So Tony's got things headed in the right direction. And give our kids and coaches a lot of credit, we are 8-1. I don't think we got anybody hurt today. If we did it wasn't bad and we should be better next week. We were trying to fill some holes on defense today with moving this one around. We had come in Kaimon Rucker play in both places and that's confusing. The wheel route we had Malaki Hamrick in there and he probably hadn't been in there enough to cover the wheel route. Jahvaree Ritzie was trying to play both places, power end and three technique. And it was hot, it was humid and we gotta get those backup guys so we can trust him more. We just have to do that.”

On if Josh Downs is one of the best wide receivers you've ever coached:

“He really is because he doesn't drop a ball. He can get open, they can't cover him man-to-man, he easily takes two. The coaches have done an amazing job this year moving him around. It got last year in the last part of the season where he was bracketed every time. He still caught a bunch of balls, but it wasn't as effective. And now they can't find him. The little tunnel screen for a first down on third-and-ten was key and huge. He's elusive, he's hard to tackle, he's tough and he can catch. And he catches the ball anywhere. He plays or practices like that every day. It's hard to do that- it's hard to do what Drake [Maye]'s done any way but it's hard to do what Drake's done as a freshman. It is hard to play at this high of level for nine straight games. Freshmen don't do that. You keep waiting on that freshmen moment. Early in the game I said, ‘Oh my gosh, I hope we haven't found it.’ But he didn't. He came out of it and he played great. Same with Josh. And the best thing about them, they practice that way every day. And Josh is so competitive if you're not throwing it to him most of the time he's mad because he wants the ball in his hands.”