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Quotes from Tuesday's football press conference Blue Raiders host ACC leader Cavaliers

MT Media Relations



Rick Stockstill talked with the media at today's football press luncheon as preparation is in full swing for the UVA game this weekend. (-)

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Head Coach Rick Stockstill

Opening comments: "I thought our defense was excellent last Saturday against Florida International. We said we had to tackle better and we did and we were able to get off the field on third down. We did a good job defensively of keeping them deep in their territory and that gave us good field position. Offensively we were really good the first half. The second half we basically were just running the ball and trying to get people into the game. Protecting the football is always critical and we were able to do that. We had to play with great energy, passion and enthusiasm and we did that."

Opening comment on Virginia: "Virginia is a very good football team. They have the ACC's leading rusher. They are good on defense with 10 starters back Chris Long is really, really good. He plays hard, is fast and physical. He is exactly what you look for in a football player and he's fun to watch. He will be a first round pick in the NFL. Their quarterback has played very well and has no interceptions in the last four games. It will be a huge challenge for our team but one we are excited to take on."

What type of mismatch does Virginia's defensive line offer against your offensive line? "Virginia will be a lot bigger than us. Playing Virginia all those years I was at Clemson one thing you always saw was that they love to run the football and they have very big linemen. One key is how well we are able to stop the run. For our defense, how well we are able to stop the run will be a key."

What does it mean for Middle Tennessee to have a team like Virginia coming to play here? "It's a great opportunity for our football team and for our university. This is the first one from one of the major conferences and it won't be the last. (Director of Athletics) Chris Massaro has done a great job to ensure that and getting more teams like them in here. They are coming to our place and it's a tribute by a lot of people to get a team like Virginia here."

After last week's performance in his second career start, where do you see Dwight Dwight Dasher going from here? "Dwight has played two games and six total quarters as a college quarterback so he will continue to get better each day at practice and each week in games. He is going to make improvements in subtle plays as far as checking plays and calling plays in the huddle, reads, just so many little things and that will happen not only the rest of this year but throughout his career."

How does RB Cedric Peerman compare to other tailbacks you have played against this season? "Western Kentucky's runner that hurt us was the quarterback. Louisville's running back was powerful. Peerman is the fastest tailback we will have faced and the most elusive back we have faced. We have to practice fast and we have to do a good job tackling and getting a lot of people to the ball."

How does playing at Louisville and LSU help prepare your defense for a game such as this one against Virginia? "Our defense will be confident. I've heard so many

comments about Florida International. I tell our team it's the same team that was down six to Maryland with 10 minutes to go and it is the same team that was down 23-9 against Miami and then Miami upsets Texas A&M. We beat a good team in Florida International last Saturday so I think our defense be confident. If we play well defensively and the way we have been practicing then we can compete with most teams we play against."

What is the formula to beat these BCS type teams? "Look at every team in the Sun Belt, using the Sun Belt as an example that has beaten a BCS type school (Troy vs. Oklahoma State, Florida Atlantic vs. Minnesota). They have protected the football and the other team has turned it over. We have to protect the ball. You can't give good teams the short field, and then we have to create turnovers on defense. On paper they are better than us but we don't play the game on paper. If we go out and play with the type of passion we played with last Saturday and have practiced with this year and eliminate turnovers, which we have done the past few weeks, then we have a change. Our defense has been creating turnovers and they are playing with a a lot of energy and that's what defense is about."

TE/FB Clint Corder Talk about the challenge Chris Long presents. "He is an outstanding football player. He is everything you look for in a football player. He is quick, fast, strong, he plays with a quick motor and he has first round pick written all over him. He has great genes and he comes from a good football family."

How big is it to have a Virginia team from a major conference coming to play in Murfreesboro? "It's a big game because it's a home game and we only have five of them this year. Virginia coming in here makes it a little bigger. They are a talented team coming from a major conference."

DE Tavares Jones How do you match up against Virginia's big offensive line? "I think it will be a great matchup. They are very athletic and they run well. The biggest thing is we need to focus on our assignments and make them use their feet. Hopefully we can get some pressure on their quarterback. He is a very good athlete."

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