

Aflac Kickoff Game: Virginia Tech vs. South Carolina

Sunday, August 31, 2025

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Virginia Tech Hokies

Coach Brent Pry

Postgame Press Conference



South Carolina 24, Virginia Tech 11

BRENT PRY: First of all, I want to thank our fans for the turnout. Outstanding. We got the greatest fans in America. Showed up here in Atlanta and from the walk into the stadium and all game long they were outstanding, so thank you for those that made the trip and we'll need you Saturday night in Lane Stadium.

Disappointed in the outcome and there's no pats on the back. Too many self-inflicted errors, untimely penalties, drops, dropped balls at the same time. Not good enough in the red zone. You got to have touchdowns down there, you know.

And then to give up -- I don't want to take it away from their players, to give up the punt return and the deep ball after making them earn it after that first series, making them earn everything they got, which is a really good team, making them earn it, to go into the fourth quarter down by two points and then give up those two plays? We got some things to clean up and we will. We got to be a better team and we can be.

Plenty of positives tonight. And you guys can look at the stats. You know what they are. We did some good things. We just got to grow from this. The penalties are disappointing. The dropped balls are disappointing. Bad decision in the red zone. I think we lineup, we don't have our gunner on the line of scrimmage on the punt and so we got to re-kick it. So you just don't know when those things, those details lead to big plays and that's certainly what happened there.

I thought the guys fought their butt off. I was very pleased with that. It wasn't about the effort. I think we answered quite a bit. They'd make a play, even after the punt return, we went down and kicked a field goal. We did a good job right before the half working the two-minute, going down, leaving no time on the clock, kicking the field goal. We

made plays but we would make a big play, we'd have the penalty and bring it back. We'd have them second and 25 and we let that run get out of there. For the most part, the run defense was pretty good. Sellers made some plays, which he's going to. He did against everybody last year. I think we got to be better than that ourselves. Questions?

Q. On the return for the touchdown, looked like a pretty good kick from Nick. Was that just a coverage breakdown? What did you see on that one?

BRENT PRY: Yeah, I think it's two things. You never like to have your cover team go twice in a row. You just don't want that. I didn't like it when it happened. And then our gunners, you got to take your shot. You got to finish. I don't know if they assumed that he was wasn't going to catch the ball or he was going to fair catch it, but they came off the gas instead of taking their shot which makes the guy go sideways and gives the rest of your coverage team a chance to make the play. Certainly disappointing.

Q. With the defendants, seemed like Sam mixed things up quite a bit, tried to get Sellers out of rhythm. Did you feel like they were able to do that, especially with the ability to rotate as many guys as you were and especially the adjustments that you made to be able to mix things up and really force South Carolina to earn it like you said?

BRENT PRY: Yeah, I think we mixed coverages up. We changed fronts up on him. I think we had him hesitating back there a little bit. I think we had four sacks. I thought the game plan was the right one. I got to look at that first series again. They had us yinging and yanging and we didn't slow them down until we got the third and five in the red zone. We got to make a play there and force the field goal, because we were pretty good after that with the exception of the deep ball. But I think we got a good group and we had a good plan. Certainly things we got to do better but for the most part, I think it showed a foundation there with a new defense and new structure in who we can be.

Q. Brent, you mentioned the untimely penalties. What

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explanation did you get on the chop block and did you think it was the right call?

BRENT PRY: Yeah, you know, 66 Mont was still tied up with him and Coney dropped on him. It's a high-low. I've seen it not called, you know, but they called it. I thought Donavon's penalty... I don't know. I have seen that one not called and it got called. I didn't look at Dante's alignment yet and then we had the penalty early. Third and three offensively and we flinch and we go to third and eight. So, again, the positive is there's things we can clean up in week one. It wasn't -- there was plenty of good things. But, man, against a good team like South Carolina, we can't make the number of mistakes we made.

Q. Brent, your thoughts on Kyron Drones tonight, 15 for 35 two interceptions, seems a little inconsistent at times.

BRENT PRY: Yeah, honestly the throw in the red zones I was really disappointed. That stuff that he's moved past, I haven't seen that necessarily in camp. We can't make that play. We need those points down there. We got to be smarter than that. We had three drops out there that we got to have. I thought there was a couple down the stretch in the fourth quarter that need to be on the money right there. He's got a chance to keep the change going and make that thing a one-score game again and we were misfiring there but we'll look at the film. He'll own it more than anybody but he did some got things with his feet. He made some nice throws. I thought he showed poise. First game back, certainly something we can grow from.

Q. How much frustration is there. You mentioned some of the confounding mistakes in this game for you guys, how much frustration is there with that given how this has been a theme at times in the past for this team.

BRENT PRY: What's been a theme?

Q. In terms of some of the compounding mistakes like illegal formation?

BRENT PRY: I think for me, it's about what are we capable of? What can we clean up? These are self-inflicted wounds that to me, we're a better team than that. I don't expect us to make these. We're further along than that. I think against a team like South Carolina, you don't get away with it, you know? But in the end, two big plays, a punt return for a touchdown and a deep ball. You want make it that easy on them.

Q. You said that was the right defensive game plan in terms of having Sellers hesitating and whatnot. You

sacked him four times. What did you like about the way the guys up front executed that game plan for a lot of the game?

BRENT PRY: Yeah, I thought they did a good job. They were relentless in the rush. They tried to cage him. He got outside of us a couple times. He broke some tackles but I think that we were competitive enough up front that that wasn't a huge factor in the game. We gave us a chance to win the game where we weren't exploited there. And that's not to take away from how good he is.

Q. Hey, Coach. I know you mentioned you guys struggled in the red zone there. Do you like at least the plays you were calling and trying to mix it up and get into the end zone there?

BRENT PRY: Yeah, I don't have a problem with the play selection. We'll look at the film again but it's the execution. We got to be better. It's the penalty. It's the execution. It's the decision-making. And we've doubled down on our work in the red zone so that makes it even more frustrating. We've invested more time there. You convert a couple of those field goals to touchdowns and it's different.

Q. Coach, so by the sound of it, down towards half-time the game plan was to run the clock out. Why not go for a touchdown there considering you get the ball back in the second half and you have a chance to essentially double-dip if you can score on both times.

BRENT PRY: Oh, no, we were trying to score a touchdown. Don't get me wrong. Of course we were. But as the clock went down, we were fortunate we got to huddle up on the side twice as they reviewed calls, but, yeah, we took a shot. We wanted to score a touchdown but we also didn't want to put us in a situation where we didn't have an opportunity for a field goal so you're kind of playing both sides of the fence.

Q. So just to follow up on that, then why run the ball in that situation instead of throw it?

BRENT PRY: Yeah, I think you always want to keep the defense honest and so I've seen plenty of runs against me, unfortunately, where a run in that situation garners a big play and we had the time-outs. So the message is that we got the whole play book, let's get the most explosive play we can. We can burn a time-out if we can.

Q. You didn't start Caleb. Is that the extent of punishment he faces from last week? What were the discussions behind that?



BRENT PRY: There are certainly internal measures we have taken besides stripping him from being a captain and not starting him tonight, but we're going to let the university policy, the athletic department's policy, the court system, we're going to let that play out so there may be things down the road that are necessary, some other measures.

Q. John Love, three more field goals, 56-yarder to finish the half. Is he a luxury that once you get past midfield you know you're in scoring range with him?

BRENT PRY: Yeah, I never want to take it granted, but you certainly gain confidence in your placekicker. He's done it time and time again and we're fortunate that John is the type of kicker that he is. He's confident. He wants the opportunities. Honestly, he kept us in the game with those field goals.

THE MODERATOR: Thanks, Coach.

BRENT PRY: All right thanks, everybody.

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