

Aflac Kickoff Game: Virginia Tech vs. South Carolina

Sunday, August 31, 2025

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Mercedes-Benz Stadium

Virginia Tech Hokies

Kemari Copeland

Postgame Press Conference



South Carolina 24, Virginia Tech 11

Q. What allowed you guys to up front be so efficient for so much of the game sacking him four times and wreaking havoc for a good chunk of the game?

KEMARI COPELAND: I think that was our coaching. Coach Pry did a really good job recruiting. We have, like, three, four deep we can rotate, so our guys were fresh and we just went in. And we've been doing it all fall camp. We've been making plays and Coach tells us all the time, we just got to go out there and apply our type of ball, and that's what we did the first two quarters.

Q. Kemari, obviously a difficult start for the defendants, what were the discussions like for the sideline in terms of attitude and more so, strategic adjustments to Sellers and the offense.

KEMARI COPELAND: Can you repeat that question?

Q. Just wondering how you adjusted after South Carolina on that first drive went right down the field and scored.

KEMARI COPELAND: Oh, yeah, I just felt like we had to get adjusted to the game. It was a big-time game. I don't know exactly what happened. We have to go to the drawing board and see, but I think we adjusted and the first two quarters, you could see, man, our defense, we got someone special. I think we just got to go back to the drawing board and figure it out.

Q. Coach Pry was in here and said no pats on the back after a game like that. What is the general mood in the locker room after as game that was pretty tight through three quarters but ultimately ended with a loss.

KEMARI COPELAND: Yeah, man, the first two quarters

we thought we were going to win, so on the team is hungry. We're just hungry to be a good team and we know Virginia Tech, the legacy that Virginia Tech has, so no one was happy in the locker room. No one won the pat on the back. We have to come in and work. We have a great team. I just feel like we have to go to the drawing board and get better and that's it.

Q. This is the first time we were seen Emmett Laws in an extended way. He chipped in on a couple of sacks. What was your thoughts on his personality?

KEMARI COPELAND: I feel like he's been balling and he's been doing that all fall camp. We know Emmett can make a lot of plays. We have been saying that it's past few years. E-Law is a difference-maker. We can put him in. He's a part of rotation and we know we can put anybody in the game and they can make a play, so. He has two to three more years left so he's definitely going to be one of the people that you have to watch out for.

Q. And Brent mentioned in here there were a lot of self-inflicted errors, untimely penalties, things like that that got in the way tonight. How much frustration is there about some of these little things stacking up?

KEMARI COPELAND: It's very frustrating, but you can't control it. All you can do is go back to the drawing board, see what we got to fix and use it as momentum for Vanderbilt.

Q. Kemari, what was the sideline like their punt return touchdown? It seemed like you guys were staying in it, kept in it, and then what does that punt return do for you guys?

KEMARI COPELAND: What we said is control what we can control, like, us as a D-line we can only do so much so what we were saying is control what you can control and, I mean, it is what it is. It hurt seeing that, but we just got to do better. That's it.

Q. Seemed like the adjustments you guys made throughout the game, different types of fronts,

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different personnels. How much of the play book did you guys utilize or is there a lot more still left out there that you guys haven't shown yet?

KEMARI COPELAND: I don't really want to say too much on that because I know Vanderbilt's watching, but I'm going to say our coach, Coach Siefkes, he does a real good job of letting the D-line get one-on-ones. That's one thing I can credit on and when he came in for spring ball, I knew that this defense that we were playing, it would be different because they don't know what we're doing, honestly. Playing so many fronts, doing so many things. It's hard to guess or, like, anticipate what we're going to do. So that's one thing I can credit our defensive coordinator for.

Q. Kind of on that topic, did it feel like out there at times that you guys were kind of catching them off guard with some of the stuff you were doing up front?

KEMARI COPELAND: Oh, yeah. I would say the first, the TFL I had, I slanted into like the backside A-gap. I don't think that expected that at all, so that's one thing I can say.

Q. When we talked to Kelvin leading up to this he talked about just how important caging Sellers was and you guys sacked him four times and forced six punts in the game and had that safety. Do you feel like you guys did a really good job of -- obviously not the results you want but winning that battle up front and not letting that control the outcome of the game?

KEMARI COPELAND: No, I don't think we did a good job. I think we got to do more. We, in the first two quarters, I would say we did good there, but the score was too high. I think we have to be more as a D-line. We'll go and watch the film and see what we got to do.

Q. Kemari, just looking back on last year, injuries are not fun and having that itch to get back on the gridiron is definitely something that grew. What is it like to finally get back on the turf and to play with your guys?

KEMARI COPELAND: It feels great. I got hurt last year my fourth game. I was, like, the 50 tackle this the rotation. A lot of football is just waiting your turn, so I just stayed hungry, tried to learn what I can from the guys around me. We had like 40 tackles that went to the NFL, so I just learned what I could and every signal I just play like it's my last because football got taken away from me, so every snap I play like it's my last and I felt like it was a blessing in disguise. Sometimes you go into practice and you're like oh, man, uh, but now it's like every snap, every practice it's like I'm giving this thing everything I got because you never know if it's going to be your last snap, so.