

Boston College Football

Media Conference

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Boston, Massachusetts, USA

Jeff Hafley

Postgame Press Conference



Boston College 17, Virginia Tech 3

JEFF HAFLEY: Special night, emotional night. Obviously red bandana. You know, Wells's mom, honored to be part of that. Special night. They were in there when we ran OUT of the tunnel that. Doesn't go unnoticed. It's very appreciated, especially if things had not been going so good lately.

So for them sticking with us, that meant a lot when we ran out of the tunnel guy, and I mean that. I heard a couple of our guys, it was almost like they were surprised to see that they were there early and they were so loud and it gave us a boost. Proud of the way the team played today.

Defensively, tied an ACC record Jason said, allowing for us for three points scored in the game. I think they had 350 total yards. I think under 80 yards passing. So defensive staff and players did a great job putting that together, how hard they played. We took the ball away. Shoot, we almost had a touchdown off it. Had a really big stop.

Offensively, obviously Phil coming back, and let me say about Phil. This wasn't something that we were hiding or planned. He got cleared Friday and had not really practiced and just being honest with you, called him in and I would have said it best, 50/50 chance with the amount of reps he was going to be able to check and to be able to play. I didn't want to do anything to jeopardize or get him hurt.

So we wanted to really guide him but let him make the decision, and he walked in to Coach Cignetti and I said and, "I'm playing." It was, "I'm playing." It was like that. And when Phil looks you in the eye and says that, you listen to him. Brought a lot of juice I thought.

Made some big runs in that game at the end for the touchdown but I can't say enough about these players. Four losses in a row is hard, guys. You find out a lot about your team when you struggle in life. You don't really know much about your team when you're winning because things are really easy and even finding out about myself, what

kind of head coach I am, it's easy when we are win everything and feels good.

But you find out a lot about yourself and things about your team when things are hard and they are hard and our guys pushed through and I'm proud of them. It's emotional. It was just a really special night. I'm grateful to be part of it and I'm proud of the staff. With that, I'll open up, questions.

Q. You mentioned that he didn't have a lot of reps. So how hard is it to let him go out and start in that situation? And did you take an aside when he took the early hit to the ground?

JEFF HAFLEY: We wouldn't have let him play if we didn't feel confident about him getting hit and getting hurt. We were very confident in that. Maybe part of me, but when I saw him bounce up and the look in his eye, we felt good about that.

Monday was a short week which made it even harder. Monday was just like a legitimate walk-through. Tuesday was our only real day, so he didn't even get the normal amount of reps you would get in a week. He didn't take them all either. He split them the first two days, and the last two days we let him take all the reps when we knew he was playing. So very minimal reps to come out playing the way he did, it's very impressive.

It's probably the most confident, fearless, and the best leadership I've seen from him since we've been here, not his best performance but he threw some good balls. He had a different way about him today and we all felt it.

Q. Clarification, you said in your first statement that he got cleared Friday, that's today. Did he get cleared this morning?

JEFF HAFLEY: No, he got cleared last Friday. He got cleared last Friday.

Q. And is that early injury to Braxton Burmeister, how do you adjust your game plan when you have game planned for the entire week for this quarterback?

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JEFF HAFLEY: Not as hard as you think. It's not like they -- they don't have enough time to change their whole offensive game plan. It's just figure out what he does well because we didn't really have much film on the backup. We saw him on a couple snaps. Figure out what they are going to try to do with him, which they are going to try to do what he does best and then try to stop best.

We figured they would try to run the ball, throw screens, run some RPOs, and not take too many chances down the field, which is truthfully what the other guy did, too. The last two games, if you watched closely, they have really leaned on the run game, the quarterback run game, the RPO game and the screen game. They have not been throwing the ball down the field as much. So I hope that answers your question.

Q. Talk about Mike Palmer stepping in at safety.

JEFF HAFLEY: Yeah, as you know, Jason Maitre was unavailable today and Palmer is a guy we have trusted and relied on and has played a lot of football here and he's smart back there. He gives great effort.

And I'll say about Mike, Mike was our starter and Mike was a little bit banged up and Jason became our starter, and Mike is another guy who never pouted. He just kept working and he took care of his body. You know, as a senior sometimes that's hard. He could have went the other way but he didn't and he played really well tonight, and his attitude has been awesome and I have a ton of respect for him.

Q. Zero sacks, 30 rushing yards, what did you think of the offensive line, particularly Ozzy coming in?

JEFF HAFLEY: Credit to Coach Applebaum, the staff and the players, with Vrabel out, you move positions, you move Zion to left tackle to credit to him for showing his versatility and you put Ozzy in at guard and we rush the way we do and protect the field the way we did, that's a really good night. I'm really fired up for Ozzy. He's going to be a really good football player, really good. And Zion, I know we trusted to play center guard tackle. I thought Phil did a good job of scaping a couple times and getting us off scheduled plays we missed.

But credit to the O-line and the cool part is to finish it on four-minute offense, to get the those downs when the whole world knew we were rushing, the backs got it done. That's the way you finish a football game, and that's really cool to see.

Q. You found yourself in the middle of the action in

the second quarter, you kind of got bumped and your players immediately had your back. Just take us through what happened?

JEFF HAFLEY: Did they have my back or did I have their back? I don't really know, which -- that was a blur to me. I got pushed and that's all I remember. I'll have to watch it on tape. We all have each other's back and that's the coolest part about this team. I appreciate that, and they know I have got their back, too. That's why I love coaching these guys and that's why I never doubted these guys, and that's why this is an awesome place, and we are going to win football games.

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