



UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

DEPARTMENT OF INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS

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WEST VIRGINIA MOUNTAINEERS (3-6 • 1-5 Big 12) at #22/22 HOUSTON COUGARS (7-2 • 4-2 Big 12) Saturday, Nov. 1, 2025 • TDECU Stadium • Houston

HEAD COACH WILLIE FRITZ

Opening Statement

"Disappointing. You know, a minus-four turnover/takeaway [ratio]. It's very difficult to win when you're minus-four. We did some good things on offense. We did some things we just can't, it's hard to overcome.

Defensively, I thought we tackled poorly early. Some plays we had worked on; we got better as the game progressed. But too many big plays, you know. They did a good job of converting when they needed to convert. They did a good job with the clock at times. That's a big play at the end of the kicking game with the punt. Our guy was blocking, and it went off his foot. He punted a short one, and we talk all the time about expanding your vision and seeing the returner and if he's coming towards you, abort what you're doing. But obviously we didn't get that done. We didn't play really well, and I did a poor job getting everybody prepared. Disappointed."

On the team's ball security

"We had a few guys who fumbled it five times and lost two. That's five too many. You always got to be the guy that's got the ball in his possession, and you just got to do a great job with it. That's just how it is. There's a lot of things I wish I had worked on more. That's not one of them. We work on that, I think, more than anybody in America. We emphasize that more than anybody in America. Unfortunately, today, it just didn't hold true for us."

On the last possession before halftime

"We were going to receive the kickoff in the second half and felt like we had some momentum. We didn't want to do anything to give them an opportunity to score before the half. So hindsight is 20/20, right? We should have gone for it, but we didn't. That was a deliberate attempt on us to put ourselves in the best position for the second half, 21-21. We're receiving it, we had some momentum going and, unfortunately, we didn't do what we needed to do in the second half with that first possession."

On West Virginia's defensive adjustments

"They run a lot of stuff. They are a really diverse defense. We had some opportunities, but a lot of the throws were progression. When you do that, you need to be able to have protection to be able to get you from your first to your second to your third read. At times, we had difficulty with that or seeing where we needed to go or whatever the case may be. No, I don't think they changed that much. They ran a lot of stuff; it was some things they had in their package."

On Conner Weigman's pick-six

"[Amare Thomas] is open, [Weigman] just got the ball out a tad bit late. Just have to get it out just a little bit quicker. But like always, you know the quarterback, it's too much credit when things go well and too much blame when things don't go well. Come back for the ball a little bit, too, when you see it floating like that."

On West Virginia's fourth-down quarterback draw in the fourth quarter

"They did a good job. I'm sure it was a double call where they were going to throw it. They didn't feel good about the look, but they got the look that they wanted and did a nice job. We're kind of loading up the outside. They block out and with that free gap inside. Good call by them. Good execution."

On trying to adjust to West Virginia's rush

"Well, they threw the ball well enough that you had to respect that. At times, we ran the ball well enough where they had to respect that as well. But, they did a good job of running the football."

There's four or five times where we had an opportunity to tackle them and had leverage, and we missed it. There were times we didn't have the correct call. So, you know, both. We just got to do better. There's a lot of plays there that we've worked on all week. A lot of the outside stretch with the back coming across the quarterback, quick throws out on the perimeter where we've got to have an edge player. And we had a tough time with some of that."

On how the team will learn from this loss

"There were a good amount of good things in today's game, but there were a lot more bad things that we can easily fix, us as coaches even. We as a whole program need to get better because we know that the level we played today isn't our level, and there is a lot of cleaning up to do before we play UCF."

On missed opportunities to take the lead or tie the game

"I have to go back and look at it a little bit. Whatever we're doing, whatever we're calling, if we're on defense, we got to do a good job taking the ball away. We didn't do that. Offensively, we've got to make sure we don't give the ball up. We didn't do that. That makes any offense look pretty darn good."

On what he saw from West Virginia running back Diore Hubbard

"He made us miss a whole bunch. He had three or four runs where he made us miss, and it turned a short gain into a big gain. He's a good back and did a good job today. Ran hard, and moved the pile at times where I thought it was going to be a gain of three and all of a sudden it's a gain of six. We got to do a better job with low-tackling on those particular plays. Sometimes, the pack has got momentum, and he's running five yards, and you're coming off a block, and you've got no momentum. You've got to hit the guy low. So you stopped him there, dead in his tracks instead of allowing the back to push the pile, so I was disappointed. That probably happened seven or eight times to us today."

On chances to gain momentum

"It was a game of momentum without question. Unfortunately, we had some self-inflicted wounds with turning the ball over, and that's uncharacteristic of us. Like I said, I told the kids down there minus-four, my win percentage over the years is not real good. In this league, like I've said many times before, everybody's pretty good, and West Virginia, they're a good team. They had an opportunity to win last week. We knew they were a good team but, when you're minus-four, you're going to have a tough time."

On if there are concerns with Conner Weigman's throwing hand

"I don't know; I don't think so. I think that's maybe happened to us once this season where the ball slipped out of his hands. Nothing physical, not that I'm aware of."

On the loss serving as an eye-opening performance

"We've played pretty clean football throughout the season. I think we were minus-two and minus-four in our two losses. It's difficult for Vince Lombardi's Green Bay Packers to win when you do that. The other games we were either even or we were plus-one, plus-two, whatever the case may be. You know it's difficult to win, playing like that; it just is. I've been doing this a long time; I think we've been plus-one or better, and we've won 91% of our games. In the minus category, it's about 30-something percent. Still can win but it makes it harder on yourself."

HOUSTON JUNIOR DEFENSIVE BACK KENTRELL WEBB

On today's loss

"It's disappointing. I feel like we know we're a good team. We feel like we're better than that team; a loss is disappointing in general, honestly."

On the big fourth-down play that resulted in a touchdown

"They had hit a play like that earlier in the game. We kind of tried to put some pressure on them. They did a good job. I didn't really see the play; I was in man coverage. I looked up and it said touchdown. But again, credit to them."

On keeping a strong mentality despite the loss

"We have a lot of good leaders on the team. I feel like it's not going to affect us a lot. We've lost to a really good team earlier in the season, and we lost to a good team today. Day-by-day, we flush it, both wins and losses. You don't treat it differently. I don't think we'll have a tough time shaking back."

HOUSTON SENIOR RUNNING BACK DEAN CONNORS

On what this loss does to the team

"Hopefully, it does nothing.. the same way as if we had won this game. We got to keep what we do every week, win or lose. The tricky thing about football is that wins or losses are just as poisonous, and we can't let that seep in."

On the preparation leading up to the week and how disappointing the loss was

"Super disappointing. Our coaches do a great job of keeping us prepared, and this falls on the players. We have to do better as a team. I have to do better as a leader because we have a great staff, and we let them down today."

On the difference in turnovers today compared to previous games

"A couple of them were wacky with the bounce of the ball. Like I've said, we've got to do a better job as players to emphasize [reducing turnovers] and protecting the ball because that's the key to win."

WEST VIRGINIA HEAD COACH RICH RODRIGUEZ

Opening statement

"It feels good to have a happy locker room, and I'm really proud of the guys. They played hard and kept working. I was wondering, 'Where has this been?' It's always been there, but we just had to work on putting it all together."

We had a great win against a great team on the road. We are going to enjoy the heck out of it for 24 hours and then move on. I am very proud of the guys."

On previous negative talk about the offensive line

"We talked all week about coming off the ball. I know they are capable of doing it, and they did. To end the game with getting a key first down when everyone knows we are going to run it, embodies what we won upfront. We could have done some different stuff, but I wanted to see if we could do it. Can we make a first down when we have to make a first down, and everybody knows we are going to run it."

Our freshman quarterback [Scotty Fox Jr.] is growing up, and he is very poised and good at seeing things out there, so I am proud of the way that he played."

Our running back [Diore Hubbard] ran his tail off. I challenged him and told him to make the opposing team run hard and make them tackle him. He definitely ran and possessed today."

On seeing the confidence and relief on the players' faces

"It's been frustrating because we started off so slowly, and it was surprising because I thought our practices were better. I thought that the team would come out better. I think sometimes it's just confidence, which they came out with today. There were a couple new things we did, but for the most part, they just executed better.

Our defense made some big turnovers and created some points for us to help the team win."

On Scotty Fox Jr.'s performance

"He took care of the ball, didn't throw it into harm's way and was seeing the field. There's a couple things that quarterbacks have to make decisions about on offense, in the running game and in the pass game that you wouldn't be 100% on. For a young guy, he was pretty solid, and he ran the ball well. He has next level arm talent, and you can see that. There's not a throw that he can't make, and he made some phenomenal ones today.

On seeing the team reaction to interception

"That was part of it. When you're struggling at times, you can look at the scoreboard and say 'oh well, it was me'. I don't think there was any of that today. We got the lead and that helped but, even when they came back a little bit, there was no panic anywhere. That maturity with the game situation is what we've been wanting all year. We got it today against a good team."

On the opening drive compared to other games

"I think the biggest key was getting the first two downs and getting five to six yards on an inside run. That gives you a lot of confidence. There were a couple new things we put in, and we used those in the first drive, but I think we came off the ball better. We needed to."

On freshman quarterback Scotty Fox Jr. holding back on specific play

"No, we have variations of it. That's one of our RPOs that we use. We've called it a few times; he read it right. They really lightened the box up and went and doubled our wideouts. He made a great decision there."

On four takeaways

"The first defensive score we got was a huge pick. We had some other opportunities. He got rid of the ball so many times that we were close to sacking the quarterback, and we didn't get it. We got some pressure without blitzing. Sometimes, we got burned a little bit, but without blitzing, we were still able to get some pressure on them with our defensive ends and that helped."

On Houston taking out their tight end out for most of the game

"He made a lot of plays. I think what we tried to do is force him to throw it, and we can do some stuff. I think we were solid in that. I wish we were close to getting a couple of sacks, and we just got to finish that job. They play hard. Those guys play with a lot of passion, and that was the best thing I saw for our guys. I said 'we got to play West Virginia football, playing hard'. It needs to be different than anybody else's playing hard. That was kind of my challenge to our guys, that our standard of playing hard has to be shown today."

On turnover hardly turning over the ball this season

"Their quarterback [Conner Weigman] has some experience. Every time you play an experienced guy, it's hard to kind of get him. We had some different coverages, and that might've held him about a little bit.

Obviously, [Jordan] Scruggs had a big play. We got a little pressure, and he did a great play on the ball. We needed that to win. You're not going to beat a ranked team on the road without some turnovers, and that made a big difference."