

WEEK ONE  
VIRGINIA at PITTSBURGH

Cavaliers ride Perkins, defense to 30-14 win over Pitt

PITTSBURGH -- Down a point at the half on the road against a team it knew it had to beat if it wanted to legitimately contend in the Atlantic Coast Conference, Virginia coach Bronco Mendenhall wondered how his players would react.

The answer may have provided the foundation for what the Cavaliers hope is a breakout season. Virginia overwhelmed Pittsburgh in the second half of a 30-14 victory on Saturday night, a performance in which the Cavaliers showed Mendenhall how far they've come in his three-plus years on the job.

"The program just looks more seasoned," Mendenhall said. "There weren't the wild ups and the wild downs and the crazy miscues. It just looks like we are maturing, a more seasoned program."

One that finally pushed back after largely getting pushed around by the Panthers since Pitt joined the ACC in 2013. The Panthers won five of the previous six meetings largely by manhandling Virginia when it mattered. Not this time. The Cavaliers sacked Pitt quarterback Kenny Pickett four times, picked him off twice and rarely let him get comfortable.

"We knew each game was going to come down to who was more physical, who wants it more," Virginia quarterback Bryce Perkins said. "That's exactly what happened. The last few years, they were more physical than us. I think this year we made an emphasis to be more physical than them."

Perkins threw for 181 yards and two touchdowns and the Cavaliers (1-0, 1-0 ACC) took advantage of a series of Panther miscues to win in Pittsburgh for the first time in program history. Perkins found Chris Sharp for a 2-yard score in the first quarter after Virginia blocked a punt and connected with Hasise Dubois on a 13-yard touchdown in the third quarter following an interception by Matt Gahm. Perkins also ran for 44 yards and Virginia's defense knocked around Pickett, who had an uneven night operating new offensive coordinator Mark Whipple's more pass-heavy attack for the first time.

Pickett attempted a career-high 41 passes, completing 21 of them for 185 yards with a touchdown and two interceptions. Pickett spent large portions of the night on the run as Pitt's offensive line -- featuring four first-year starters --struggled to keep the Cavaliers at bay.

"That's what happens when you're throwing it a little bit more is they're going to come after you a little bit more," Panthers coach Pat Narduzzi said. "So that goes with the territory. We've got to learn how to pick that stuff up. Kenny took some hits today. We can't let our quarterback take hits like that."

The Panthers (0-1, 0-1) are coming off a surprising Coastal Division title last fall, when they emerged from a rocky start to become the sixth different team in as many seasons. The Cavaliers -- coming off an 8-5 mark in 2018, including an impressive win over South Carolina in the Belk Bowl -- were tabbed as the favorites heading into 2019 thanks in large part to Perkins and a defense led by cornerback Bryce Hall.

Virginia certainly looked ready to live up to the hype, particularly after halftime. The Cavaliers shut Pitt out after the break with Pickett absorbing a month's worth of hits in the span of three hours.

"The pressure we put on them had him frazzled," said Virginia safety Joey Blount, who had an interception to go with two sacks. "He was taking some hard hits. I thought on some plays he wasn't going to get up. I give him kudos for the resilience that he had to keep going forward but I think it had a cumulative effect on him and the team."

REINFORCEMENTS

Virginia expects to have H-Backs Tavares Kelly and Billy Kemp back next week. Both sat out the opener after violating team rules. Wide receiver Dejon Brissett is also expected back after dealing with an undisclosed injury.

THE TAKEAWAY

Virginia: The defense -- and not Perkins -- might be the biggest reason for optimism in Charlottesville. The Cavaliers mixed up coverages and blitz schemes brilliantly and the front three spent most of the night operating on Pitt's side of the line of scrimmage. Pitt's four running backs -- A.J. Davis, Todd Sibley, V'Lique Carter and Vincent Davis -- averaged just 3.4 yards per carry.

Pitt: The Panthers hired Whipple to reinvigorate a passing game that was one of the least effective in the FBS last season. The early returns were equal parts promising and problematic. There were times when receivers broke free down field, but either Pickett overthrew them or they dropped it. A bigger issue going forward? Finding a way to make sure Pickett doesn't endure the kind of punishment he took against Virginia.

Final	1	2	3	4	T
UVA	10	3	10	7	30
PITT	0	14	0	0	14

Scoring Summary -----

UVA	PITT
<b>FIRST QUARTER</b>	
UVA FG 8:17 Brian Delaney 39 Yd Field Goal	
11 plays, 53 yards, 6:13	3 0
UVA TD 6:11 Chris Sharp 2 Yd pass from Bryce Perkins (Brian Delaney Kick)	
3 plays, 19 yards, 1:31	10 0
<b>SECOND QUARTER</b>	
PITT TD 13:29 A.J. Davis 2 Yd Run (Alex Kessman Kick)	
7 plays, 85 yards, 2:26	10 7
UVA FG 10:19 Brian Delaney 36 Yd Field Goal	
8 plays, 63 yards, 3:10	13 7
PITT TD 0:38 Tre Tipton 3 Yd pass from Kenny Pickett (Alex Kessman Kick)	
14 plays, 80 yards, 5:34	13 14
<b>THIRD QUARTER</b>	
UVA FG 11:54 Brian Delaney 45 Yd Field Goal	
10 plays, 47 yards, 3:06	16 14
UVA TD 8:23 Hasise Dubois 13 Yd pass from Bryce Perkins (Brian Delaney Kick)	
5 plays, 29 yards, 3:13	23 14
<b>FOURTH QUARTER</b>	
UVA TD 0:32 Wayne Taulapapa 10 Yd Run (Brian Delaney Kick)	
5 plays, 27 yards, 3:06	30 14

Team Stats	UVA	PITT
First Downs	20	15
Passes for First	7	6
Rushes for First	10	7
Penalties for First	3	2
Third Down Efficiency	7-15	7-16
Fourth Down Efficiency	0-0	0-1
Total Yards	310	263
Total Plays	67	71
Avg Gain Per Play	4.6	3.7
Net Yards Rushing	129	78
Rushes	33	30
Yards Per Rush	3.9	2.6
Stat Name		
Net Yards Passing	181	185
Comp-Att	20-34	21-41
Yards Per Pass	5.3	4.5
Times Sacked	4	3
Yds Lost To Sacks	-28	-18
Interceptions	0	2
Punts	4	5
Punt Average	0.0	0.0
Penalties	3	5
Penalty Yards	35	51
Fumbles	2	0
Fumbles Lost	0	0
Time of Poss	34:16	25:44

Individual Stats

<b>RUSHING</b>							
<b>VIRGINIA</b>	<b>Rush</b>	<b>Yds</b>	<b>Avg</b>	<b>TD</b>	<b>LONG</b>		
Wayne Taulapapa	10	66	6.6	1	14		
Bryce Perkins	18	44	2.4	0	27		
PK Kier	5	19	3.8	0	7		
<b>PITTSBURGH</b>	<b>Rush</b>	<b>Yds</b>	<b>Avg</b>	<b>TD</b>	<b>LONG</b>		
A.J. Davis	8	25	3.1	1	16		
Todd Sibley Jr.	7	23	3.3	0	8		
Kenny Pickett	12	16	1.3	0	11		
V'Lique Carter	1	8	8.0	0	8		
Vincent Davis	2	6	3.0	0	6		
<b>PASSING</b>							
<b>VIRGINIA</b>	<b>Comp</b>	<b>Att</b>	<b>Yds</b>	<b>Y/A</b>	<b>TD</b>	<b>Int</b>	<b>QBRat</b>
Bryce Perkins	20	34	181	5.3	2	0	50.0
<b>PITTSBURGH</b>	<b>Comp</b>	<b>Att</b>	<b>Yds</b>	<b>Y/A</b>	<b>TD</b>	<b>Int</b>	<b>QBRat</b>
Kenny Pickett	21	41	185	4.5	1	2	40.2
<b>RECEIVING</b>							
<b>VIRGINIA</b>	<b>Rec</b>	<b>Yds</b>	<b>Avg</b>	<b>TD</b>	<b>LONG</b>		
Hasise Dubois	4	45	11.3	1	27		
Joe Reed	7	34	4.9	0	14		
Terrell Chatman	1	33	33.0	0	33		
Terrell Jana	3	29	9.7	0	17		
Tanner Cowley	2	27	13.5	0	19		
Chris Sharp	2	8	4.0	1	6		
Wayne Taulapapa	1	5	5.0	0	5		
<b>PITTSBURGH</b>	<b>Rec</b>	<b>Yds</b>	<b>Avg</b>	<b>TD</b>	<b>LONG</b>		
A.J. Davis	2	65	32.5	0	59		
Maurice Ffrench	6	54	9.0	0	16		
Taysir Mack	6	33	5.5	0	8		
Tre Tipton	3	26	8.7	1	19		
Will Gragg	3	4	1.3	0	6		
V'Lique Carter	1	3	3.0	0	3		