

Virginia Tech Football
Defensive Coordinator Bud Foster Q&A Highlights
Fall Camp – Media Conference
August 2, 2018

On having a bunch of youth at the cornerback spot and who he is looking at the first-team spots:

“It’s going to sound like a broken record at a lot of positions in terms of the youth, but I do believe this – that we have some talented guys. We have those types of guys at a lot of spots, but just don’t have the experience like we have had in the past. But I really like this group of kids.

“Where we start out, I really like Bryce Watts. He had a great spring, so I feel really good about him. Jovonn Quillen was arguably our most improved players through the spring. I really like Jermaine Waller who came in early, I think he has a chance to be really, really special. Getting Caleb Farley back and him being healthy and watching him run makes me really excited about him. Obviously, he worked with us this spring a year ago and I just like his skillset, length and capabilities.

“I have been really impressed with this freshman class, especially in the back end. You got D.J. Crossen and we are going to move him to corner from the safety spot. Nadir Thompson I’m extremely impressed with and excited about him. And then Armani Chatman, another 757 kid. And then Chamarrri Conner working at our rover spot.

“Those guys to me really stick out and those young guys coming in are going to get a really good evaluation. We already have a pretty good evaluation of those guys, but now it’s just putting on the pads and then how they perform in those scenarios.”

On this potentially being his youngest defense since 2010 and how that impacts how he approaches fall camp:

“This might be the most we’ve had to replace since after the (1999) season, when we had to replace nine starters. Obviously, we have to replace eight off of this group, but we are not going to change. Really, this summer we have not been involved in skills and drills as a staff per se. We have installed a lot from spring practice and we have really moved forward instead of going back to Day 1, we really kind of threw in a lot of our blitz packages early. Because they did a little bit of group work together and the offense wanted to emphasize blitz pickup. We wanted to overload our kids and do it over, over and over again.

“We are actually going to start with throwing a lot at our guys on Day 1, which is earlier than we ever have. I think that is a credit to the kids we have here and it goes back to the football IQ from some of these young freshmen. So, we are going to throw a lot at them early and then do it repeatedly. We are not going to slow down, I want them to come up to our level. For us to compete at the level we expect our football team to, they need to step up to that level. That

doesn't mean we are going to pay attention to the little things, we are going to obviously, but we are going to do a lot of teaching and sharpening the tools in their tool box, as far as technique and fundamentals. We know there will be some growing pains, but our kids have to step up to the challenge."

On how he felt about the linebacker following the spring and how locked in he is on the competition:

"Well, I feel good about my room. I feel as good about my room as I have in a long time, as far as the quality of young men that are in that room. We will be as green as I've ever been starting out. You have one guy that played four or five snaps on defense in Dylan Rivers and then Rayshard Ashby who played on special teams, then after that there is no experience – and experience is the best teacher. But I really like these guys.

"Rayshard has really solidified himself, I thought he had the best spring of anybody with being consistent. I thought Dylan played really well the last week and a half, I think he was trying to do everything exact and I was wanting him to pin his ears back and play. I really like the battle we are going to have at that spot, with Jaylen Griffin and Alan Tisdale. He's shown and done some really good things and has shown some signs of athleticism that we like at that backer position. I've been really impressed with Dax Hollifield. When we put the pads on and if he hits like I know he is going to and the way he's picked things up, he's everything we thought we could be."

On if linebacker is the hardest position to play on defense as a true freshman:

"Well, I think you have to be a complete football player. Obviously, you have to know your gap fits and the front, where they are fitting to scrape off of. You also have to be good in the passing game and the complexity of the coverages we do. I think it is the hardest position to play mentally as well as physically when it's all said and done."

With Virginia Tech players and coaches saying, 'We got Bud,' and how he processed some of the off-season developments with some individuals on defense:

"Was I happy with a couple things? No. But those are things that are out of our control. Really, what we can focus on is the guys in our program and they want to be successful. And that's really what we are focusing on and that's all we can control. Obviously, you lose some guys in the draft and lose some guys for whatever reason who we were counting on, but that's all part of it.

"I appreciate the guys having confidence in me. I know this, I have a great staff around me and we will be professional and will do a great job of teaching, coaching and demanding. I think we have a willing group of kids that want to be coached, want to please and work and they understand what it takes to be successful."

On how he feels about the backups at the defensive tackle position:

"Right now, in a perfect world, Vinny Mihota would take over Tim's [Settle] spot and he has had a great offseason. He will probably be turned loose the second week fully in camp. Ricky

[Walker] is obviously our bell cow for who he is and we gave him our Lunch Pail to kick this thing off for us. I think Xavier Burke has had a great summer and has put himself in a position to play a significant role for us. Jarrod Hewitt is another for us who had a great spring. Then after that the next couple spots will be by committee.”