

**Virginia Tech Football**  
**Defensive Coordinator Bud Foster Q&A Highlights**  
**Pre-Bowl Media Conference**  
**Dec. 21, 2019**

***On the defensive coaching staff for the Belk Bowl:***

“Right now, Zach Sparber is working with the defensive line, who I trust has done a great job. A really good young football coach. Very energetic, very attention to details sort of guy. We have Pierson Prioleau working with the corners, who I trust immensely. Obviously, Justin [Hamilton] is working with the safeties and myself still working with the linebackers. We’ll have Jack [Tyler] in the box and things of that nature. We’ll probably move Prioleau up, he’s been on the field. We’ll put him up in the box, replacing Brian Mitchell there. It’ll be Prioleau, Tyler, who I love and trust, Matt Kardulis who has been up there. Those guys will be my spotters. My talk to guys will be by myself, Sparber and Hamilton on the field and that’s how we’ve done it.

“Coach Tracy Claeys and Darryl Tapp have been more in evaluation mode more than anything else. They’ve sat in some of our meetings and I really like some of their input and feedback and that type of thing. The one thing I’m taking from that, is they’re great hires. Obviously, Tapp knows the expectations and traditions here. Coach Claeys is an outstanding coach in his own right and is going to be a great asset to Hamilton. He’s been a coordinator for a long time. Been a head football coach at a Power 5 school. I just like his mindset. He’s been in our scheme, a very similar scheme over the years. I think the way we have it set up is very good and the way its set up for down the road, I know they have a couple more hires, but it’s going the right direction to surround Coach Hamilton with the people he needs to go be as good as we can be on defense.

***On the challenges of Kentucky’s quarterback:***

“You know, No. 1 [Lynn Bowden] is just a great athlete. Great speed, with the ball in his hand just extremely dynamic. If you look at the stats, he’s their leading receiver, kick returner, punt returner and at quarterback their leading rusher. Just a dynamic athlete. He’s first-team All-American at utility, he won a national award recognize for that, just really special. Has breakaway speed, great vision and great strength. Has the ability to put his foot in the ground and get north-south and the ability to break tackles.

“They have three outstanding tailbacks and they’re roughly averaging 160 yards per game just from that spot alone with three guys and then you throw the quarterback in the mix. Since [Bowden] has been in there, they’re averaging 300 yards a game running the football, but they’re always getting extra hats. We’re always trying to get that extra free hitter, that alley player. They’re always trying to find a way they manipulate that guy through blocking him, gaining an extra hat or stressing those areas and that’s really been the challenge for us, trying to figure those things out. I’ve been impressed by their physicality up front. They may be one of the bigger offensive lines that we’ve seen all year. they kind of remind me of a Boston College or somebody like that who we’ve played and are big, physical, strong, move their feet well athletically and handle movement well. They’re doing what their strengths are, which is their

running game with the running backs, and the quarterback now, and their physicality up front. It's going to be a challenge.

"It reminds me a bit of Virginia and Georgia Tech's QB combined. [Bowden] has [Bryce] Perkins' ability, but he also has [James] Graham's speed and explosiveness. He's going to be a problem for us. I've told our kids that we need to get ready for a 60-minute middle drill. At the same time, we can't be undisciplined on the back end. They only average a little over seven throws a game maybe since he's been in there, but a lot of them are deep shots and that type of thing. Obviously, if we can stop the run and put the ball in his hands that way, that's got to be one of our goals as far as a defense is control the run game if we can do that.

***On Justin Hamilton being his successor as defensive coordinator:***

"I'm excited No. 1. I couldn't be happier as a guy that, we built a tradition here defensively. To hire someone who understands the tradition and expectations. He'll put his own twist on things, but the foundation was laid for him.

"I know when [Head Coach] [Justin] Fuente and I talked about this right after I made the announcement, we threw out some names and obviously its early in the season, but he told me to keep my eye on some things and recommend some people if I do. We were in fall camp and I just remembering going down, knocking on coach Fuente's door and saying 'hey look'. You think about when you felt like you were ready to become a coordinator and I kind of look back on myself and feel like when I was ready for that and had that opportunity. I said 'we don't have to look very far, the guy is right under our nose.' It was a great opportunity for Fuente this season to evaluate him and see what he's all about. I just had this feeling that he was the right guy just all the way around. From a football IQ, obviously he's well respected by the players, a great teacher and great communicator. He's the total package.

"I've been around some guys that could maybe deserve it too that played here before. Particularly, a guy like Torrian Gray. A lot of people threw his name out. I think there are a lot of similarities in [Hamilton]. He's been a coordinator before. I see a guy that can really do a great job communicating to the kids, on top of being a really good football coach. He's a guy as a player here, he was a team first guy. He played so many positions for us and as a team first guy, I think that's a tremendous asset because he played multiple positions. In this game, day and age, getting your best athletes on the field, that's not always in maybe the position you recruited them as. Having that own experience himself, he's got a wealth of experience in a lot of different ways. I think that's going to be an asset to this program as it moves forward."

***On his emotions heading into his final bowl game:***

"it's a little bit of both. I'm excited. It's a great bowl for us. We were probably a play or two away from having a dynamic year. I'm really proud of our guys. I'm excited for the bowl game. I'm excited to have one more opportunity with these guys, the staff and this group of players. It is bitter sweet though. Tomorrow's my last practice at Virginia Tech. It's all starting to come to a head right now. (Sunday) will kind of be my last official practice on Tech's practice field with my gear on and all of that stuff.

We've gone so much this year of going to the next game. We got ourselves in the hunt for the [Coastal Division]. You're really kind of focused on the next game at hand, the next play with in the game and I really haven't had a lot of time to really just sit back. I know it will probably hit me hard after the game, or maybe in another week or two. When there's going to be a void there when I'm supposed to come back to a staff meeting to get ready to go on the road for recruiting. I really like recruiting, but it's going to be interesting when I go leave the office, if I'm in the office, to go home and eat dinner and not have to worry about coming back and working for three or four more hours. It's going to be kind of nice I think. I'm excited for these guys.

"We have a tremendous opponent, an up-and-coming program. Coach [Mark] Stoops and his staff has done a tremendous job over there. We're an up and coming program I think. Even though we've gotten to a point that we kind of leveled off. I like the direction we're going, it's in great hands and it's going to be in as good as hands it's been in. That's the part that makes it tough because you know there are some great kids there. We're going to enjoy it. We're going to have a great week of practice and I'm going to enjoy every moment."

***On new things you learn when you first become a coordinator:***

"I think it will be a little bit of everything. Just the volume that job entails. He's already approached me with a couple of things that he'd like to sit down and talk about. Part of it is getting started, where do you start. I think trying to build him an agenda that he needs to put in place to [state], this is your starting point. What do you want to discuss first, what are your expectations of the staff, just that type of thing. Getting his foot in the door that way you know. I think from a football standpoint it will just roll. Obviously, you learn a variety of things over the course of a game, a season, or a career that, through experience you'll do things differently than maybe you did early. Sometimes those things are hard to teach somebody as much as you learning them on the job. Because he's been a coordinator, it's all relative, but it'll be a different steep up.

"Being at VMI gives him a great tool of how to evaluate guys. I think anybody that has coached at the Academes of some sort, they'll all come away with that. I believe that the evaluation of talent and getting the right people in to your program is extremely important. That's no different than this place. You need to get the people that want to be Virginia Tech Hokies, want to develop, and want to grow. Even though it's the era of the portal, that's still a part of this program. It's a developmental program. Identifying those guys, I think that's where he'll have a big-time asset. Those other parts, I think that will come. I think just getting started is always the biggest thing. Getting that foot in the door and going and running with it. He has those things and he's an extremely sharp guy and extremely organized. I don't think he'll be overwhelmed."

***On setting this team up for next season:***

"The thing that we've really talked about is finishing. This is how it's been over the years. We finished 8-4 in our regular season and that's a good year by a lot of standards. We were a. play away, or a couple of plays away from having a great year. There's a fine line in winning and losing at this level. That's where I'm proud with the kids, that they gained some self-confidence

for a variety of reasons. All of a sudden you saw that and saw our play improve. Then you saw that cohesiveness and that chemistry develop and get closer and all of those things that it takes to be successful. We need to finish for the right reasons. For the seniors, but also we've used this game in the past as a statement about the future. Obviously, you're sending people off the right way, your seniors particularly. Let's not wait until the. Middle of January when we come back for reporting date, let's start now. That's really kind of been our attention to detail, continuing to improve, grow and build on what we've done so far this year. To take another step, we don't have to wait until next semester, we need to go do it now. That's been our message."