

Virginia Tech Football
Head Coach Justin Fuente Q&A Highlights
Media Day Press Conference
Aug. 1, 2019

Coach Foster introduction

“Thank you all for coming. Good afternoon. We just walked out of a very emotional and, quite honestly, well done team meeting by Coach Foster, where he informed our football team of his decision. As we go through this, I’m sure there will be questions and things for us to talk about, but right now, I’m going to turn the mic over to Coach Foster for some remarks.”

Opening Statement

“First, I’ve said this before I’ll say it again, I have nothing but a tremendous amount of love and respect for Bud and everything he means to Virginia Tech. I think I have a full grasp on that and the history and what he’s meant to this place. He has been fantastic to work with. I’m anxious to go work with him this year. I’m excited about what we’ve got going and how it’s all going to go. He’s certainly earned the right to have say in how this all worked out and I think it’s going to work out really well. We do owe it to our team and our fans to draw the focus inward and make sure that we put our best foot forward for our young people that have been working so hard for this program.

“I know Bud will be anxious to talk about it after the season. I really admire him for how he handled today. To get up in front of those kids and talk as openly and as candidly as he did was a moving experience. All this being said, there’s a chance to celebrate a great career. I’m honored to have gotten to work with him and looking forward to our football team and our staff and everything we’ve got moving forward. Questions?”

On his thoughts about the process behind Coach Foster’s retirement decision:

“I didn’t really know which way it was going to go quite honestly. I know that we wanted him here if he wanted to be here and I’ve made that clear to him on multiple occasions. But I didn’t know, I guess everybody’s different. Some people go to bed one night, wake up and make a decision. Some people think and reflect and talk to people and have conversations and all that sort of stuff. This was certainly a long drawn out thought process and one that I think he’s come to peace with.”

On the emotional impact of announcing Coach Foster’s decision before the start of the season:

“We did not do it to manipulate our players’ emotions, first and foremost. What we did was to be honest and open. What our kids now have is a unique opportunity. Usually when a large event like this happens you don’t know about it until the end. Sometimes it’s too late for you to even do anything about it. That’s certainly not the case here. We know the ending, now we have an opportunity to write the chapter and I don’t think that point was lost on our players. I

think they understand that we have an awesome opportunity to celebrate through our play and through our work a fine, fine man and fantastic coach.”

On how retaining Coach Foster on his staff eased his transition as head coach in 2016:

“Everybody knows the rules, right? You don’t keep people on, you get rid of them. You don’t follow the hall of fame coach. You just know the ground rules. My first conversation first time meeting Bud, and we’ve gone through this before and I won’t go all the way back through it, the way he was in the living room, in my living room that day is how he’s been every day since I’ve been here. So how did he aid our transition? The ways to quantify it are obviously numerous but the biggest thing he did was he threw his heart and soul into doing things slightly different, into a different practice schedule, a different work schedule, something different than he’s had for many, many years.

“He was incredibly positive and supportive with our players and anything about and around town and he was everything that you could ever want in terms of having somebody that is all-in for the team. I firmly believe that’s why he’s handled this the way he has, for our team, for our kids, to get it out in the open, to deal with it for a short period of time and then plow forward.”

On how you handle this announcement with a young team:

“Well, I mean we need great leadership. I certainly don’t think it needs to be a deal where we’re ringing our hands because we’re so bent up and pinned up about pressure. These kids have already put a tremendous amount of work into this leading towards what starts tomorrow. The mission hasn’t changed, the goal hasn’t changed, the focus hasn’t changed. Along the way, we know it’s an extra special opportunity and that’s the way they’ve got to handle it.”

On the search for a replacement for Coach Foster after this year:

“To be candid, I’ve been worried about today. I’m not copping out of the question, I’m not sure is the answer to that. I don’t know. Certainly, I’ll put plenty of thought into what we need and what we’re looking for. I don’t think it’s going to be a distraction for me as we go through the season. As a matter of fact, I know it won’t. I guess in short, I haven’t gotten that far yet. I’ve been really focused on today. Today’s been a big day, obviously. Making sure we do things the right way has been at the top of our list.”