

Virginia Tech Football
Director of Athletics Whit Babcock
Media Day
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“Today we felt, such a special and unique circumstance to recognize and honor a legendary coach while he is still going and at the top of his game. Ultimately, coaching is teaching, he is an outstanding teacher, and you just can’t list the number of people that he has impacted on the field and also with life skills. Coach Foster is a generational talent, a multigenerational talent, and as the athletic director, I had the good fortune and blessing to work with one of those already in Coach Beamer. Now the honor to work with Coach Foster, I couldn’t be more proud of them. Thirty years is a long tenure; he is a Hall of Famer, and whatever Hall of Fames will come in the future. He is the greatest ever at his craft of defensive coordinator.

“The people that you lead have to know that you care about them, that they can trust you and that you can make them better. Coach Foster cares about his players, we saw that back there, very emotional, and he will give them his all this year. They trust what he says because he is straight up and what he says he backs up. He hopes to make them better. How many young men and people we don’t even know about has he made better? He is the definition of a leader, and I certainly want to celebrate that. His loyalty, his sense of place, he personifies this Hokie brand and even that tough, strong Hokie Stone. He is the fabric of this place, he is the brand, he is the icon, and there aren’t enough words to thank him appropriately.

“Before all of the nostalgia at the end of the year, we still have a season to play. We are still writing this book. Before there is any Bud Foster 30-for-30 programming let’s let the book finish. There are all these chapters written, and we have one more. Coach Foster wants that, Coach Fuente wants that and our players of 2019 deserve that. There will be celebrations. Is today a sad day? Yes, in many ways, but it’s also a celebration. I have not yet pondered my own retirement but having watched my Dad go through it, Coach Beamer and now Coach Foster, everybody seems to plan for the next job or achievement, but this retiring thing is hard to know when to do it. Coach Foster’s decision was not taken lightly. We had a number of conversations, and in each one of those conversations, he said ‘I’m pretty sure this is the way I want to go,’ every single time we talked he said ‘I feel so bad that I’m letting the players down,’ which he is not.

He said, ‘Justin I feel bad if I’m letting you down,’ which he is not. Even when he spoke to me, I said ‘Bud, if you want to coach let’s coach but you have already gone so far above and beyond, you aren’t letting anyone down, do what’s right for you.’

“I believe getting that announcement out today was a huge weight off of his shoulders and now he can do what he loves and just go coach football. Another great sign of a leader and a successful person is if they leave it better than they found it. He hasn’t left it yet, but he is going

to leave it a whole lot better than he found it. Virginia Tech is bigger than all of us, but it will be hard getting over Coach Beamer and now Coach Foster. It will move on, and he made it a lot better on all of us. Hopefully, the Hokie family can be united, let's celebrate it and pull it together. Some may ask why today and not at the end of the season. Coach Foster didn't want it to be a distraction throughout the year. His contract is up, and people would be asking about it. His unselfishness on the players and the team for what they deserved and that's where he came to the decision to do it today.

"During the season we will honor him and celebrate him. Just so you can get ready Hokie fans, the Duke game we will honor the 1999 team, 20th anniversary of that. The Pitt game will be for the seniors, and the Wake Forest game will be Bud Foster night, maybe we will even ask people to grow a goatee (laughs). We will get there, and we will do it right because transitions are important at Virginia Tech. "This is Home," actually that saying came from Coach Foster. We had a marketing director come up with it and then during the emotional interview after the 2014 Military Bowl Bud got choked up and said 'This is home,' and we knew we had it. In a way, he is also our brand champion.

"Coach Foster will have a new role here when he is done coaching, and we are still shaping this up. We are still working on the number of years, three or four. He will have a similar role to Coach Beamer, and it will not be a figurehead role, Coach Beamer isn't, he works and does everything we ask. Foster can be involved in the Drive for 25, fundraising, on-campus recruiting for all sports, he can coach our coaches, he can help with student-athlete development, he can be on the radio shows and ACC Network. He can be a liaison to all those former players that played for him. He will have value here, and he will be around it just won't be with that play sheet hanging off his khakis every day. He has taught me a lot, we love him and today is a hard day but a special day. Thank you for letting me talk about the greatest defensive coordinator ever."

On when Coach Foster first approached you and how long has this been in progress:

"Quite honestly, I can't remember the date. Out of respect to Coach Foster, it was over an extended period of time. It wasn't a quick decision, and we probably had four to five conversations, and Fuente was there. It was a very small group, and I'll just leave it at that."

On what type of resources he will put forward for the next defensive coordinator:

"We will talk about that and figure it out as we go. Coach Fuente will get us the best defensive coordinator we can have. We chuckled some about whoever gets that job better have thick skin because the first first down or touchdown they give the whole fan base will go up in arms. It will be a good one, have no idea what it takes to pay but we believe in Virginia Tech, and we are going to compete and go get it. Time will tell on all that. There is no decision even remotely close on all that right now."

On if Coach Beamer's retirement process was similar to Coach Fosters:

"They are unique individuals. Coach Beamer is one, and Coach Foster is another. They share a

lot of the same traits. I don't think it was a blueprint, but I do know Coach Beamer and Coach Foster talked a number of times about it, and if there ever was a road map for a nice transition Coach Beamer did that. I heard Coach Foster say, 'You never really know when it's time, but Coach Beamer did.' I just know it was very hard on Coach Foster and his first focus was always on the players. Coach Foster said 'I dang sure got one more good one in me,' when he looks at you with those piercing eyes. Look out on defense this year."

On what it was about Coach Foster that made him the guy for the defensive coordinator job for Coach Fuente after Coach Beamer's retirement:

"Twenty years of a pretty darn good track record is a good place at the start. As we got to know him early on, his humility, his fabric, and what he stands for. He could have left Virginia Tech so many times, and you just don't run into that loyalty and humility. He and Coach Fuente have an outstanding relationship. That was kind of a no-brainer if Coach Fuente was comfortable with we were thrilled to have him. Pretty long history and track record there to know how good Coach Foster was and is."