

**Virginia Tech Football**  
**Safeties Coach Justin Hamilton Q&A Highlights**  
**Media Session**  
**August 9, 2019**

***On Chamarri Conner at the whip position and his progress since the spring***

“He’s made good progress. Chamarri is a guy that initially played rover, we were kind of thinking a linebacker playing some defensive back, but he’s able to run and cover which has been good. He had a little (hamstring injury) in the spring so he’s gotten some good reps during training camp and he’s been exactly who we need him to be, competitive, learns quickly and is a guy that brings a type of dog mentality to the room that I really like and the guys like.”

***On the pros and cons of fall camp:***

“Well the pros are that we get to go to work every day. The cons are kids have to go to work every day. They fight, they battle everywhere, but that’s typical. You’ve got soreness, you’ve got mental fatigue because its football all the time. I try to tell them ‘Hey, if you want to play in the NFL, this is how it is.’ But I think pro-wise, you see guys gelling together, learning to compete, learning to communicate, learning to function as one on our side. Then you see on the offensive side, guys making plays and each unit having to react, respond to adversity after the other side makes a play or you give up something and a coach is getting after you or you see on the field that you give it up. I think it’s pretty typical year in and year out, but I really like the cohesion of this team, offensively, defensively and together.”

***On the spring and his mentality on what he wanted to bring into his role coaching safeties:***

“All the way back to the spring, it was exciting for me to get to coach them, but I think it was more so about trying to learn exactly what Coach Foster wanted from the defensive staff room, learning what he wants in terms of relating with the kids and learning what Coach Fuente wants in that role, but it was a good thing to have gone through last year because I got the couple of tweaks that Coach Foster has added since I played here and was able to give that to the kids and am able to speak to them through the lens of a guy that has worn the helmet, worn the cleats, has gotten the calls and has been under the same expectations that Coach Foster puts on them now and Coach Fuente.

“I think it was trial-and-error in terms of each guy how they respond to coaching, how they prefer to be coached. Learning that in the spring was really beneficial, carrying that forward in the summer in what time we could be around the guys and now I think there is a level of trust that has been built up between them and between myself with them. Along with Coach Foster and Coach Fuente which I think has given me some confidence and I think and hope that that confidence has bled into our room because that’s ultimately what I want to bring to our guys and that comes from knowing exactly what you’re supposed to do and doing it fast and aggressive.”

***On whether serving in player development last season on the Virginia Tech staff helped him for relationships with his current position group:***

“I think it definitely helped. I know some of these guys had no idea who I was when I first got in the building and it was a learning process where I could be the good guy last year. I didn’t get to coach anybody so I could be sort of the ‘good cop’ so to speak. But now, having spent that year with them, they know who I am. I think they know that all I want is what’s best for them and what is best for Virginia Tech. Day in and day out we get challenged to prove that and our first real adversity will be when we have to go play somebody else. I think that all of the guys in the room know that they can trust and believe in each other and I know they can all trust and believe in me and that’s going to be our mission going forward to get the best out of them.”

***On whether he thought as a player that he would become a coach later in life:***

“I always wanted to get into coaching, I never thought that I would. I always wanted to do it but never thought about doing it. Having played those three positions, it was a little bit frustrating and I told our guys that, but on this side, it is certainly beneficial, there’s no question about it. The fact of learning running back, learning receiver and now learning and coaching the secondary has certainly been beneficial. It has also added knowledge for our guys so I can give them the mindset of the other side. Then when you have a guy, particularly in the secondary here that’s maybe moved from corner to nickel, nickel to rover you can talk through that experience from first-hand experience which I think our guys appreciate and it’s been good for me, too.”

***On what was the final push to get into coaching and who his mentors are in the profession”***

“Well the final push was when the NFL said ‘Hey, we’re done with you’. I said, ‘I got to do something’. I volunteered at a high school in Knoxville, Tennessee I lived there for a little bit. All I coached was for spring ball and it was like every day I came home and was like ‘Oh yeah, this is what I want to do.’ Mentor-wise Coach Foster definitely, since I’ve been here Coach Fuente has been a great mentor for me. Mel Tucker was a great mentor, I played for him in Cleveland. Corey Undlin who is now at Philadelphia, was in Cleveland, a great mentor for me. My high school coach was a great mentor. Those are the guys that I probably sound the most like when I talk to the kids, and those are guys who have had a great impact on my life and all I want to do is what they did for me.’

***On DB J.R. Walker and what he has done to impress:***

“Well J.R. it was interesting because in the spring, he came in and he is wise beyond his years. Then there would be a concept or two that he would take some time to understand and he was like, “Oh by the way, I’m also going to my prom, do you guys mind if I miss a day on Friday?” This kid was finishing up high school and going to the prom, but he has been exactly what we thought he would be from a standpoint of maturity, from the standpoint of personality and character he has a very high ceiling and I think he understands that it takes time but he has a good group of guys in front of him to lead the way and show him. I have very high hopes for J.R. and I think he has very high hoped for himself.”

***On what DB Divine Deablo is capable of:***

“Divine is what I wish I would’ve looked like in college. Our numbers are the same, height and weight but in terms of how we look – that’s what I wish I would’ve looked like. But I have to utmost respect for him for what he’s gone through in his career and switching positions he understands that too. The hope for him is that every day we can go out and help him get better. That’s really the hope and that’s all he wants to do. That’s why I love the guy so much, because he genuinely wants to put on the cleats and the helmet and go out and get better. I think if he continues to do that and we will continue to help him do that, then wherever it ends up for him I think will be his maximum potential. I think when it’s all said and done, people at Virginia Tech will look back very fondly about him because he’s a warrior, a battler and also a leader. He’s not a very vocal leader all of the time, but when he speaks, guys listen and I appreciate that about him, too.”

***On getting the chance to coach with Bud Foster for his last season and if that is special:***

“Absolutely, Coach Foster has had a monumental influence on my life from being a player to being a coach and being a husband and a father. So, the fact that there is one chance to go out there and send him off in style would be awesome. The first thing that I thought was ‘I need to get out there and do my best and make sure our safeties play as well as they can possibly play for him.’”