Buzz Williams: To Stay or To Go

Sunday night, the Virginia Tech men’s basketball team received its first postseason bid in the NIT (National Invitation Tournament) since 2011. The team, coached by ex-Marquette head coach Buzz Williams, posted a 19-14 record this season after an 11-22 record in William’s first year as head coach in 2015. The Hokies only won two ACC (Atlantic Coast Conference) games last season as well but held onto a winning conference schedule with a 10-8 record this season. It is clear to anyone who follows sports that Williams and his team are one even two years ahead of their projected success. “For us to be … 103 weeks into my tenure and to … be playing in [the] postseason, I think that speaks to not only our players but our staff,” Williams told *The Roanoke Times* on Sunday. “That’s a big flip, and hopefully there’s some more to come. But to be able to do this this quick I think is really good.”[[1]](#footnote-1) The NIT bid is another huge step in the right direction.

However, with a transition so swift from a losing team to a successful one, in just a span of two seasons, one can’t help but wonder what could happen to Buzz Williams in the future. He came to Virginia Tech from Marquette to turn the Virginia Tech basketball program around and quite frankly he has done just that. Not only has he succeeded in doing so, he did it with minimal talent, for most of the veteran players had left after former coach James Johnson resigned. Williams was left with a group of average players, playing in an above average conference, but thankfully with a will and drive like no other, to which I credit a portion of the team’s success.

But imagine Buzz Williams filling a coaching vacancy that could come out of the ever-changing realm of college hoops next year. Imagine Williams succeeding Roy Williams, after what is looking like his last NCAA Tournament appearance, and utilizing the constant funnel of talent at UNC (University of North Carolina). Or if Rick Pitino steps down at Louisville and Williams filled that job, a team flooded with scandals and insecurities, but filled with just as much athleticism and drive. Oh, how he would thrive. If he had this much success at, as some would argue, the pits of the ACC, why wouldn’t he take his coaching talent elsewhere?

As an employee of the athletic department at Virginia Tech and also good friends with members of our team, I have seen first hand the change Buzz Williams has instilled in this program. All I’ve known at Virginia Tech is the Williams’ era, and I can’t imagine anything else. I have watched Cassell Coliseum fill up, slowly but surely, game after game. I’ve overheard students in the dining halls talking to each other about if they’re going to the game that night. This year, the promotions department has started giving away tickets to students for certain games, first come first serve. Never would I have imagined that I would see a line wrapped around our entire stadium for a basketball game. Virginia Tech, a notorious football school, was making a transition, all thanks to Buzz Williams. So, why would he leave?

I do not think Buzz is money driven by any means. If he was, I don’t think he would have left Marquette in the first place. I believe he found a home in Blacksburg, Virginia, a flame in Hokie fans that needed to be fueled, a team that was tired of losing. That’s why he came to Virginia Tech. Williams has all the talent and influence in a coach that could make him just as successful at a bigger, better basketball school but would he find the same special identity that Virginia Tech holds? Buzz Williams needs to stay at Virginia Tech. He has sparked a renaissance of sort in Blacksburg. He has shown 15 guys that with hard work and integrity, success is inevitable. In the cold winter months, when Lane Stadium is dark and quiet, he has kept Cassell Coliseum bright and loud. Success can be found anywhere, and to a town that thought it would never be here, Williams has shown us it can be.

1. "Virginia Tech to Host Princeton in NIT on Wednesday." *Www.roanoke.com*. N.p., 13 Mar. 2016. Web. 17 Mar. 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)