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Q: Being a member of the Hokie Club and supporting Virginia Tech athletics is important to me and my family because ...

A: I grew up a Hokie fan (as a third generation Hokie), and I have many fond memories from Tech football games throughout the years. Being able to support Tech's athletes and teams both on the home front in Blacksburg and on the road (especially here in South Carolina) is important (and fun) for us as Hokies. The university has meant so much to us, through our time in Blacksburg and since graduation, that it's a pleasure to be able to give back on multiple fronts.

Q: Do you have any game-day or tailgating traditions or superstitions? If so, what are they?

A: Ha, I pick out a new "game day" t-shirt each season and wear that to every game. Also, up until last season, I wore the same pair of shorts to every game despite the temperature. We

have a group of friends (Lot 13 Tailgate Crew) whom we've tailgated with for years. We guiz each other on roster names/numbers and toast to various players and predictions (pick-6's, etc.) throughout the tailgate. Erika and I received a Bud Foster-signed lunch pail as a wedding present from several of the tailgating crew, and it makes an appearance at every tailgate and sits by the TV for all the games we watch from home.

Q: You come from a large "Hokie family." What has it been like growing up in a family with a strong love for Virginia Tech?

A: Early on, following my dad wherever the Air Force sent him, it mainly involved explaining what/where Virginia Tech was, as no one had ever heard of it. My parents (and grandparents) did a good job of instilling Hokie pride in myself and siblings (Mary, class of '97, and Dan, class of '06/'07). Once my sister enrolled at Tech and the Air Force

brought us closer, we began attending games much more regularly, and it all coincided with the beginning of Tech's bowl run and our family tradition of traveling to the bowl games (admittedly we've slowed a bit with children, but my parents and brother are still going strong!). Now, with my parents and brother residing in Blacksburg, coming "home" means heading to Blacksburg, and thus, Virginia Tech.

Q: You are involved with the Hokie Club in the Greenville, S.C., area as a Hokie Rep. How and why did you get involved and has it been a good experience for you?

A: I became involved soon after school as a continuation of my excitement for Tech athletics. I was already sending weekly emails and updates to a wide group of fellow Hokies and saw being a Hokie Club rep as an opportunity to help maintain and build that excitement among the large local Hokie contingent here in Greenville.





The 2013 edition of the Orange & Maroon Tour is now complete, and on behalf of the Hokie Club staff and Virginia Tech athletics, we would like to thank everyone who played an active role in making this year's tour the best ever! Spanning across Virginia and reaching into North Carolina, Maryland and West Virginia, the 2013 Orange & Maroon Tour made 16 stops and saw thousands of Hokie Club members and Virginia Tech supporters come out to interact with Tech coaches and athletics department administrators. We want everyone to know how much we appreciate your hospitality, attendance and support of Virginia Tech athletics. We know that we are successful because of you, and we are always excited to come into your communities for a visit. We are already looking forward to next year's tour! Go Hokies!

Johnson adds two more recruits

Tech basketball coach James Johnson added two more recruits in the spring signing period to this year's recruiting class, bringing the total haul to six as he and his staff replenished the roster.

The two recruits are Malik Mueller, a guard from Frankfurt, Germany, and Devin Wilson, a guard from McKees Rock, Pa.

Mueller, a 6-foot-3 combination guard, chose the Hokies over Utah, Evansville and Tennessee Tech. The 19 year old won the MVP award at the 2010 Jordan Brand Classic International Game at Madison Square Garden after scoring 21 points and hitting four 3-pointers in the game.

He also played in the Arby's Classic, a tournament in Bristol, Tenn., each of the past three years. His club team, Urspring, won the Arby's championship in December,

becoming the first foreign team to win the tournament. He was named the tournament MVP after averaging 17.8 points per game, as Urspring went 5-0 in the

Wilson, a 6-4 point guard, chose Tech over George Mason and St. Joseph's. He was named the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette player of the year after a senior season in which he averaged 16.7 points per

game for Montour High School. He led his high school to the WPIAL (Western Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic League) Class AAA championship and in the PIAA an appearance (Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association) semifinals. In one game this season, he recorded a triple-double, scoring 24 points, grabbing 10 rebounds and dishing out 10 assists.

Wolff inks three for the women's program

Tech basketball coach Dennis Wolff added guards Vanessa Panousis and Serafina Maulupe and center Tara Nahodil during the spring signing period, bringing this year's recruiting class to five members.

Panousis, a 5-7 point guard from Sydney, Australia, has competed on the international stage as a member of the 2012 Australian U17 World Championship team that finished fifth in the FIBA event. She averaged 11 points per game, as the Australian team finished with a 5-3 record. She also grabbed 5.5 rebounds and handed out 2.0 assists per game.

Maulupe, a 5-8 combo guard from Vista Murrieta High School in Murrieta, Calif., finished her career with 1,617 points. During her senior season, Maulupe averaged 21 points, 4.5 rebounds and 3.3 steals per game.

Nahodil, a 6-4 center from Pine Grove, Pa., is ranked the No. 20 post player in the country by ESPN HoopGurlz. During her senior campaign at Tri-Valley High School, Nahodil helped the team to the Pennsylvania Class A state title. She finished her career with more than 1,700 points and 1,000 rebounds and gives Tech depth in the post.

Two Tech players selected in NFL Draft

Tech football players Corey Fuller and Vinston Painter were selected in the sixth round of the 2013 NFL Draft held April 25-27 at Radio City Music Hall in New York City.

Fuller. receiver Baltimore, Md., went to the Detroit Lions, who selected him with the third pick in the round (No. 171 overall). He played in 13 games this past season, starting eight of them, and he caught 43 passes for 814 yards and six touchdowns.

Painter, an offensive tackle from Norfolk, Va., went to the Denver Broncos, who took him

with the fifth pick in the round (No. 173 overall). He started all 13 games at right tackle this season for Tech.

The two became the 87th and 88th Tech players to be drafted in coach Frank Beamer's tenure.

Several other Tech players signed free-agent deals. Offensive tackle Nick Becton signed with the San Diego Chargers, while receiver Marcus Davis and whip linebacker Alonzo Tweedy inked with the New York Giants. Linebacker Bruce Taylor joined the Cincinnati Bengals, and Antoine Hopkins signed with the Pittsburgh Steelers.

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editor's desk | by Jimmy Robertson



Lots to take away about the Hokies following important spring practice

The Maroon-White game wrapped up Tech's 2013 spring practice, which was arguably the most important in head coach Frank Beamer's tenure. Coming off a 7-6 campaign that was a bit of a struggle throughout, he hired a new offensive coordinator, line coach and receivers coach, and he spent a lot of the spring emphasizing toughness.

So how did the spring go? Well, here are one man's takeaways from spring practice:

OFFENSE STILL A WORK IN PROGRESS - A lot of people were disappointed in Tech's offense following the spring game, and that's understandable because the Hokies turned it over three times and struggled to muster any sustained drives.

That said, be careful about judging anything off of a spring game, particularly when a new coordinator is installing a new offense. It takes time, plus the Hokies lack experience, and in some cases, skill, and it will take more time for Scot Loeffler to get this offense going in the direction he wants.

But Tech showed flashes this spring. For example, in a scrimmage, the offense scored on a Logan Thomas touchdown pass to Demitri Knowles to finish a six-play, 65-yard drive against the first-team defense. That showed their potential. Consistency needs to come, and it will once the coaches get the offensive line squared away and a tailback emerges. People need to be a little patient.

• TREY AT TAILBACK – Speaking of tailbacks, Trey Edmunds served notice this spring with a very good display. He got better as the spring went along, and from this perspective, he was the best tailback the final week.

In the Hokies' final scrimmage before the spring game, he burst through a hole and ran 50 yards for a touchdown. You saw everything in that run vision, burst, power and speed.

The coaches liked what Michael Holmes accomplished this spring, but his status now remains in limbo pending the outcome of an offfield issue. They also like J.C. Coleman and what he brings to the table. But Edmunds' skills and continued improvement may vault him to the top at tailback by the time the Alabama game rolls around.

• EMERGING TIGHT ENDS - Brvan Stinespring got very good production out of his tight ends as spring practice went along, and they saved their best for last. In the spring game, the tight ends combined for nine catches and 125 vards and scored the lone offensive touchdown.

Ryan Malleck is just a solid guy at the spot, and his two years of experience showed. Zack McCray showed flashes. He needs to get better as a blocker, but he's a huge target in the open field, and he runs well enough to create some problems.

Loeffler said he likes getting the tight ends involved, and they saw a lot of action this spring. It will be interesting to see if they continue to emerge as weapons next fall.

• DEPTH IN THE SECONDARY - Last fall, the Hokies lacked depth in the secondary. So much so, in fact, that three true freshmen played (Donaldven Manning, Desmond Frye and Donovan Riley).

Now, even with Michael Cole having given up football for medical reasons (neck), the Hokies appear to be two deep at every position in the defensive backfield. Obviously, starters Antone Exum (once he returns). Kyle Fuller, Kyshoen Jarrett and Detrick Bonner rival anyone's, but Manning and Riley played adequately at field corner this past spring. Frye gave the Hokies something at both free safety and rover, and Der'Woun Greene made plays in just about all the scrimmages and the spring game. Also, Brandon Facyson made himself noticed this spring behind Fuller.

Sure, defensive backs coach Torrian Gray wants better than adequate from Manning and Riley, and he worries about Frye and Greene only because the safety and rover positions are complicated ones in Tech's scheme. But Tech's defensive backfield is much improved and deeper than a year ago - and awaits the arrival of Kendall Fuller this summer.

• DADI AND THE DEFENSIVE ENDS - Dadi Nicolas received the Dr. Richard Bullock Award for the defensive player who showed the most improvement this spring, and it wouldn't surprise at all if Nicolas saw extensive time next fall. The redshirt sophomore is relentless off the edge. He combines speed with a refusal to quit. Now, he may get thumped in the running game a time or two, but he should be a factor when teams need to pass.

Tech possesses five defensive ends of starting quality, a ridiculous bounty by any team's standards. James Gayle, J.R. Collins and Corey Marshall are proven quantities and don't forget about Tyrel Wilson, who missed a lot of spring with a foot injury. The coaches love his steadiness.

In all, this may be the most talented position in the ACC - and Tech's defense may be the best in the league, too.







kroger roth report | by Bill Roth



ACC taking right steps to preserve conference's future



In late April, the ACC announced that each of the current and future 15-member institutions had signed a grant of media rights through the 2026-27 season. The agreement gives the conference control of each school's television rights, which, in essence, locks each of the institutions in the ACC for the next 14 years. That period runs congruent with the league's current television contract with ESPN.

The move solidifies the future of the ACC

and protects it from being poached by any other conferences. The ACC becomes the fourth league with a grant of rights agreement, along with the Big 12, the Pac-12, and the Big Ten.

What does this mean for Virginia Tech and the ACC? Here's a primer:

WHAT EXACTLY IS A "GRANT OF **RIGHTS?"**

Effective immediately, all current and future

ACC members have granted their television broadcast rights in all sports to the ACC through 2026-27. If a member of the ACC leaves the conference during that time, the league retains that school's TV rights. That's critical since the true value of a school to any other conference is the television revenue it can generate. A "grant of rights" agreement makes the 15 ACC schools essentially worthless to any other conference looking to expand. As of now, the league -





not the school - owns the rights to Virginia Tech football games. The agreement shows tremendous solidarity among the current schools and Louisville, which joins the ACC for the 2014-15 season.

WHERE ARE GRANT OF RIGHTS AGREEMENTS USED AND HOW POWERFUL **ARE THEY?**

Well, some easy-to-see examples of contracts that contain a grant of rights clause include recording contracts between musicians and artists, or publishing contracts between an author and his publisher. Many Virginia Tech alums in the IT industry are familiar with software licensing contracts that also feature similar legal clauses. It's not new or complicated. It's only been in the past few years when we've seen conference officials use this as a tool to protect their leagues from being poached.

IS THIS REALLY A HOME RUN FOR COMMISSIONER JOHN SWOFFORD AND THE ACC?

You bet it is. Look at a map. And look at the population of this country. The ACC, at least through 2026-27, is the rock-solid, dominant power in the most heavily populated region of the U.S. The ACC covers I-95 from Boston to Miami. The population of our country is moving south to Virginia, to the Carolinas, and to Georgia and Florida. The ACC has the TV markets, it has great schools and it has them locked up for 14 years.

HOW GOOD OF A YEAR HAS THIS BEEN FOR SWOFFORD?

Well, let's recap what's happened in the ACC since last summer:

July 3, 2012: The league announced a 12-

year agreement that will annually send the ACC champion to the Orange Bowl as part of college football's new postseason model. Then, in November, the league announced that the opponent would be from the Big Ten, SEC or Notre Dame.

Sept. 14, 2012: The conference unanimously voted to accept Notre Dame as a new member and announced that the Irish would compete as full members in all sports with the exception of football. The Irish's football program will play five games annually against league programs.

Nov. 28, 2012: Swofford and the ACC essentially swapped Maryland for Louisville (a program that won the Sugar Bowl and the NCAA men's basketball national title, and whose women's basketball team lost in the NCAA championship game.)

April 22: Swofford and the ACC announced the grant of rights agreement.

What has happened in the ACC from May 1 of last year until this year is remarkable. It's unprecedented.

DOES THIS MEAN WE WILL HAVE AN ACC NETWORK?

There are tremendous risks to starting a cableonly network, but there can also be huge rewards. The Big Ten Network is successful, and we know the SEC's will be launched soon. The ACC's current television model is different - its current syndication package of over-the-air stations covers much of the country. A cable-only network would likely mean the end of any syndicated network because a new network would need additional inventory (games).

Secondly, there are clearance and revenue issues. For example, the University of Texas, despite having more than 52,000 students and

hundreds of thousands of alums within Texas, has suffered major issues in clearing the Longhorn Network even within the state. Cable operators are hesitant to raise rates just to add the channel.

If you follow this closely, you'll see that teams like the Houston Rockets and Houston Astros own their own regional network, but don't have clearance through much of the city of Houston. Would cable operators clear an ACC network? Would fans agree to increased cable rates? Can the ACC increase revenues for its membership without one? All are legitimate questions and everyone will be watching how the SEC network progresses in the coming months.

WHAT WILL THE ACC LOOK LIKE MOVING **FORWARD?**

It's immediate future is incredibly exciting. Hall of Fame coaches like Roy Williams, Mike Krzyzewski, Rick Pitino, Jim Boeheim and Frank Beamer are in the ACC. But that's going to change. Maybe sooner than later. The league will always have tremendous coaches, but will be hard-pressed to match the star power it will have in the next few years. So we should enjoy this while it lasts.

However, the most important factor in the ACC's success in the coming years will be its success in the new College Football Playoff. The ACC will need to win major non-conference regular-season games, key bowl games and have teams selected for the playoff.

Swofford got the ACC a seat at the table with the Orange Bowl deal and an automatic bid into the College Football Playoff. He got Notre Dame to agree to play football games at ACC stadiums. He got millions more in TV money for each school. He has set the league up for success.

Now it's up to the teams to deliver.







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Junior student-athletes jumpstart their professional development

by Reyna Gilbert-Lowry



What college student would turn down a fourcourse meal, an opportunity to network with a room full of professionals and the chance to leave with a free business suit? On Feb. 13, 30 Virginia Tech student-athletes were given the opportunity to try all three at the "Junior Jumpstart." This annual event, sponsored by the Office of Student Life, is geared toward providing junior studentathletes with the opportunity to connect with professionals on campus and within the larger community to assist with their professional development.

This year, the event was strategically scheduled around the annual Business Horizons Spring Career Fair and Connection Co-Op and Internship Job Fair, which both took place the week following the Junior Jumpstart. A speed networking session was added to this year's program in an effort to assist student-athletes in enhancing their networking skills with the goal that those in attendance would use the information they learned at the event to help increase their confidence for on-campus career fairs and interviews.

The evening began with an etiquette dinner, facilitated by Johanna Smith, assistant director for Career Services. Many interviews take place over meals because employers may want to see candidates in a more social situation to see how they conduct themselves. Smith's presentation focused on proper dining techniques and manners, as well as tips to help students feel more relaxed during interviews that take place over meals. Christopher Terry, the senior district marketing manager for Federated Mutual Insurance, then spoke to the student-athletes about ways to become memorable during their career search. Terry has been a staple at this event for several years and brought a lively approach to how Tech student-athletes can market their accomplishments and focus on their strengths, such as time management, strong work ethic and competitiveness. He also encouraged

them to find ways to use examples of these in their resumes. Lastly, he provided the group with tips for interviewing and stressed the importance of being prepared and sending thank-you notes immediately following interviews.

While registering for the event, student-athletes were asked to select areas in which they were most interested in gaining networking experience. Responses included athletics administration, business, coaching and marketing. A total of 20 representatives from the Virginia Tech Hokie Club, Frito Lay, Reynolds Architects Inc., First Bank & Trust, Coldwell Banker Townside, the Virginia Tech Alumni Association and Virginia Tech athletics were on hand to take part in oneon-one networking, as well as group networking sessions with the Tech athletes. Not only did the speed networking portion of the evening provide student-athletes with the opportunity to enhance their networking skills, but it also provided the professionals with the chance to interact with potential candidates for internships and full-time positions.

One of the main draws of the event was the suit contest, which was co-sponsored by Federated Mutual Insurance. For the past two years, one male and one female student-athlete in attendance has won a business suit. This year, women's cross country student-athlete Madalyn Nuckols and whip linebacker Derek DiNardo were the lucky winners.

Tech student-athletes are encouraged to take advantage of professional development opportunities sponsored by the Office of Student Life and other campus departments on a regular basis. The Junior Jumpstart is one of the many ways the Tech athletics department strives to meet one of its personal development goals for studentathletes by providing a positive environment and educational experience that promotes development of the whole person.



Interception returns headlined spring game

Der'Woun Greene and Donovan Riley returned interceptions for touchdowns to lead the White team past the Orange

by Jimmy Robertson

Like several other former Tech players now working in the NFL, Kam Chancellor, Jayron Hosley and Brandon Flowers returned to Blacksburg for the annual spring game, walked the sidelines and caught up with old coaches, and received recognition at halftime for being Hokies.

They had to have liked what they saw from the players at their old spots.

Defensive backs made the big plays, returning two interceptions for touchdowns and recording three interceptions overall to highlight the spring game played April 20 at Lane Stadium. The White team defeated the Orange team 27-9 even though the White team was comprised mostly of projected backup players.

The White team was spotted 13 points at the onset, as head coach Frank Beamer wanted to make the game competitive. But the White squad didn't need the points, returning the two interceptions and playing well defensively on a day in which the Orange team offense - with mostly projected first-teamers – struggled.

"I thought it was going to be cake work," Orange defensive end James Gayle said when he saw the format of the spring game. "But they came out and played well. We weren't able to overcome that. Even if they don't score those two touchdowns, we still would have lost. It was one of those days."

"In the end, you're trying to get things to be close in the fourth quarter because you find out things about your football team in the fourth quarter," Beamer said of the logic behind spotting the White team 13 points. "But what I found out is that maybe some of those second-team guys ought to be first-team guys."

Most of the talk afterward centered on the Hokies' new-look offense under coordinator Scot Loeffler. Early on, the Orange team looked good, with Thomas hooking up with Joshua Stanford for a 57-yard gain that gave the Orange a first-and-goal at the White 4 on the Orange's first possession.

But three straight running plays lost 2 yards. On fourth-and-goal from the 6, the Orange team went for it, and Thomas tried to throw a quick slant to Demitri Knowles. Safety Der'Woun Greene stepped in front of Knowles, caught it and outran Thomas 98 yards to the end zone for the first touchdown of the game. Brooks Abbott's extra point gave the White team a 20-0 lead.

That play was a continuation of what Greene did this spring - make big plays - since moving from corner to safety at the start of spring practice.

"It was different, but I played safety in high school, so it was just a matter of getting back into it," Greene said. "It was just a matter of working hard and grinding this spring, and Coach (Torrian Gray) kept telling me to play my game. That's what

"At the start of spring, I was kind of slow. But toward the end, I think I played kind of good. I think they've (the coaches) got a good idea of what I can do."

Thomas threw his second interception on the next possession. On that one, backup cornerback Donovan Riley stepped in front of a pass intended for Stanford and returned it 53 yards for a touchdown. Abbott's extra point gave the White team a 27-0 bulge.

"That was my fault," Stanford said of the interception. "I was supposed to go underneath the cornerback, but the cornerback squatted because he knew it was coming, and I went over the top. But by then, Logan had already thrown the ball because he's expecting me to go underneath."

The game contradicted the progress Thomas made this spring. He completed 16 of 29 for 214 yards and was accurate for the most part, but he threw three interceptions. In looking at the entire 15-practice spring, though, Thomas progressed nicely, according to the coaches.

"I think he's further along," Beamer said. "He had a couple there early that probably weren't such good throws. But I think Logan always gives you the ability that he's going to be right back. He's not a guy that's up and down. I think even good golfers have bad shots sometimes, but how you react and what you do after those shots is important. In my opinion, Logan will always be right back. Every play might not be perfect, but I've got a strong belief in Logan. When it's fourth-quarter time, I think he'll be good."

The Orange team got on the board when defensive tackle Kris Harley stripped walk-on tailback Maurice Taylor of the ball deep in the White team's territory. Taylor recovered the ball, but was in the end zone, and the Orange team received a safety as a result.

The Orange team's lone touchdown came in the third quarter when quarterback Mark Leal threw a 30-yard scoring strike to tight end Ryan Malleck. The play highlighted a big game for Tech's tight ends, as Malleck caught three passes for 45 yards and Zack McCray hauled in four passes for 65

Stanford caught three passes for 86 yards, including the 57-yarder, while J.C. Coleman caught three passes and Knowles hauled in two.

For the game, the Orange offense finished with 297 yards. The White team, behind walkon quarterbacks Brian Rody and Connor Jessop, amassed just 87 yards. Rody completed 5 of 11 for 62 yards, while Jessop completed 4 of 7 for 25 yards.

Neither team mounted much of a rushing attack. Michael Holmes led all rushers with 24 vards on seven carries.

"I think we've played better football this spring," Stanford said. "Some days, we'd have good offensive days. Some days, we'd have bad offensive days. Some days, we'd have all right offensive days.

"I feel, as an offense, that we have to work on our stuff every day this summer to get comfortable so that we can consistently do the things we want to do. We can do it sometimes, but not all the time, and when you play a team like Alabama (in the season opener), you may only get one chance. You may only get this coverage once, or this play is only going to work once. I feel like we need to work hard to get the consistency we want."

Beamer agreed.

"Defensively, we've got a chance to be very

Defense - Derrick Hopkins

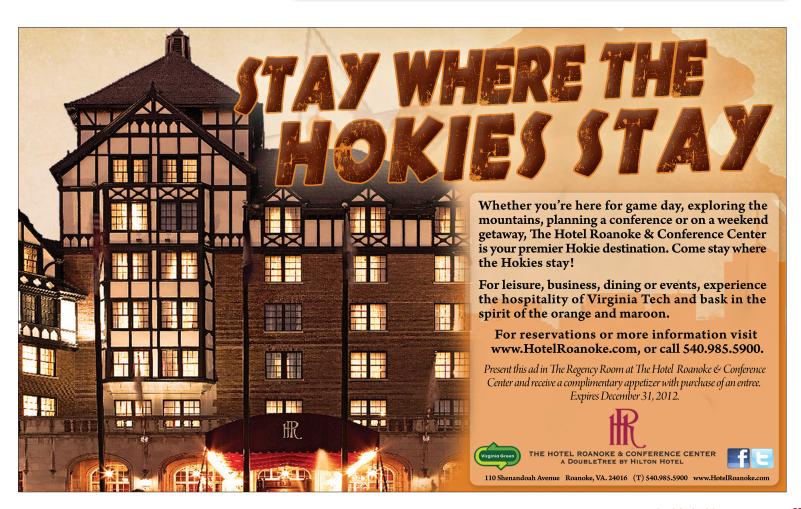
good," Beamer said. "We've got to keep working and keep improving. I think that showed today. Kicking wise, I think we'll be very good. We've got good kickers and good return guys. We didn't see much in returns today, but I think that can be a big part of our game.

"Offensively, we've got to get more consistent. We've heard that before, but in catching the balls ... you drop a ball and it kills a drive, and then blocking up front. I can tell you there's more to our offense than we showed today, but we also started out trying to get a good foundation, and I think we've done that. I thought there would be more running plays that would pop for more yardage today.

"It's going to be interesting to go back and look at this video and see who did what and how they did it, and so forth. We've got to function more, and part of that is evaluating. We played a lot of guys, but there aren't going to be a lot of guys that line up against Alabama. We've got to determine who those guys are, let's play better and be more consistent. I think that's where our football team is."

Tech now will spend the summer preparing for its season opener against Alabama in Atlanta on Aug. 31. Kickoff is slated for 5:30 p.m.

2013 SPRING AWARD WINNERS PAUL TORGERSEN AWARD the most hustle during the offseason (presented to the top newcomers and spring workouts) during spring practice) Offense - Trey Edmunds and Charley Offense - Jonathan McLaughlin; Meyer; Defense - Kyshoen Jarrett Defense - Brandon Facyson **COACHES AWARD** PRESIDENT'S AWARD (goes to the players who had an (given to the players who exceptional spring) demonstrate the most outstanding Offense - Ryan Malleck; Defense leadership during the offseason **Detrick Bonner and Luther Maddy** program and spring workouts) Offense - J.C. Coleman; Defense -**GEORGE PREAS AWARD** (presented Kyle Fuller to the most valuable performers of spring practice) DR. RICHARD BULLOCK AWARD Offense - Logan Thomas; Defense -(goes to the players who show the James Gayle most improvement during spring workouts) DON WILLIAMS TEAM UNITED AWARD (presented to the players Offense - Laurence Gibson; Defense - Dadi Nicolas who put the team first during spring workouts) FRANK O. MOSELEY AWARD Offense - Andrew Miller;



(awarded to the players who exhibit



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Spring game performance aside - when he threw three interceptions - Logan Thomas progressed over the course of 15 practices, as he moved into the role of conductor of the new offense installed by new coordinator Scot Loeffler.

Thomas got better with each practice and became more comfortable with his throwing mechanics and footwork. Loeffler spent a lot of time this spring working on mechanics with all the quarterbacks, and the strategy worked, as Tech's quarterbacks threw the ball with more zip and better accuracy.

Thomas obviously came out of spring practice in the top spot on the depth chart. Loeffler wants to see him carry that progress from this spring over into the summer and into August practices.

"The guy is just going to get better and better and better," Loeffler said. "Like I've said before,

he reminds me of the guys I've had that play in the NFL. They pick things up fast. You can tell him something once, and he gets it. There are a lot of things he needs to continue to improve on, but overall, he's improving and he's improving fast. His mentality is the same as mine - we're against the clock. We've got to go."

Mark Leal enjoyed a solid spring as well, throwing a touchdown pass in the spring game. He gives Tech a young man perfectly capable of being a starter in the event of a Thomas injury.

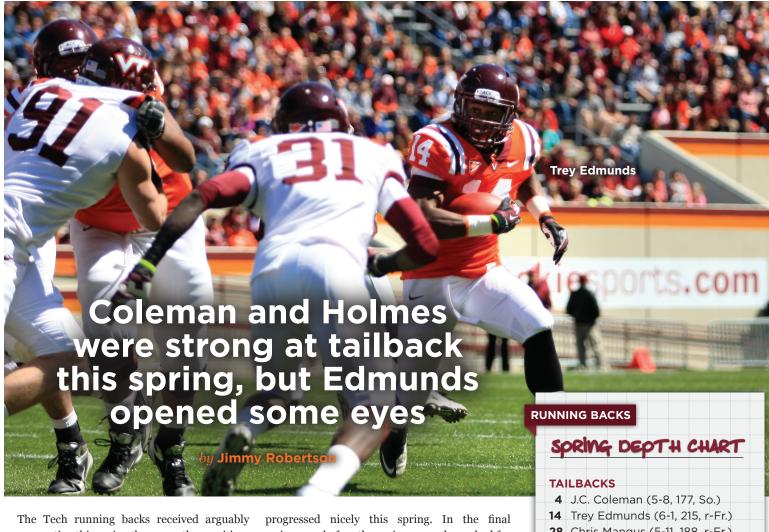
But the quarterback position is a relative unknown after those two. Walk-on Brian Rody got most of the reps as the third quarterback and threw a touchdown in the second scrimmage. Connor Jessop, another walk-on, and Trey Gresh saw very little action this spring.

Unfortunately, neither Brenden

- **3** Logan Thomas (6-6, 257, r-Sr.)
- 6 Mark Leal (6-1, 213, r-Jr.)
- 14 Brian Rody (6-6, 227, r-So.)
- Connor Jessop (6-3, 245, r-Fr.)
- Carlis Parker (6-3, 184, Fr.)
- **12** Trey Gresh (6-1, 215, r-Jr.)
- 9 Brenden Motley (6-3, 219, r-Fr.)

Motley, a rising redshirt freshman from nearby Christiansburg. Motley injured his knee early in spring practice, and the injury shelved him.

The final quarterback in the mix was Carlis Parker, the freshman who enrolled in January. Parker worked some at receiver as well, as Tech's coaches wanted to get a glimpse of what he could do at that position. He could still redshirt this upcoming fall. VZ/



more scrutiny this spring than any other position, as the Hokies tried to get their running game back on track. A year ago, J.C. Coleman led all Tech tailbacks with just 492 yards, while quarterback Logan Thomas became the first quarterback at Tech to lead the team in rushing since 1965.

Coleman went into spring practice at the top of the depth chart at tailback. But by no means did he have a stranglehold on the position. A threeheaded situation emerged at the end of spring practice and the battle will continue into August.

"Right now, probably Trey (Edmunds) and Mike (Holmes) and J.C. are a little more consistent than the others," running backs coach Shane Beamer said. "From the mental standpoint, Chris Mangus is coming along. Chris is going to do a lot of good things for us this year, but those three guys have done well (this spring)."

Of course, Beamer said that before Holmes became embroiled in an off-field situation that has left him suspended indefinitely. It may be well into the summer before that situation gets resolved, thus leaving Beamer with Edmunds and Coleman as the top tailbacks heading into summer workouts.

Edmunds, a rising redshirt freshman,

scrimmage before the spring game, he rushed for 82 yards on just nine carries, and he scored two touchdowns. One of those scores came on a 50yard jaunt. The scrimmage overall showed just how dangerous he could be as a tailback.

A year ago, pass protection held Edmunds back, along with not knowing all the nuances of Tech's running game. But he brings plenty of power and plenty of speed to the lineup, and he, too, will get a close look in August.

"I think the game has slowed down a little bit for him," Beamer said. "Pass protection wise, he knows what to do. There is a lot to know and do when the bullets start flying, but he's really doing a good job from that standpoint. He's doing what we expect from an execution standpoint.

"The game is important to him. He sits right next to me in the meeting room. He's practically in my lap. He knows what's going on. He writes stuff down. It's important to him. He takes a lot of pride in his work, and that's been the good thing. He wants to be the running back at Virginia Tech, and he's doing everything in his power right now to do that."

Daniel Dyer, Tony Gregory and Maurice Taylor round out the tailback spot. Gregory

- 28 Chris Mangus (5-11, 188, r-Fr.)
- **39** Daniel Dyer (5-9, 201, r-Jr.)
- 22 Tony Gregory (6-0, 183, r-Sr.)
- **30** Maurice Taylor (5-8, 171, r-So.)

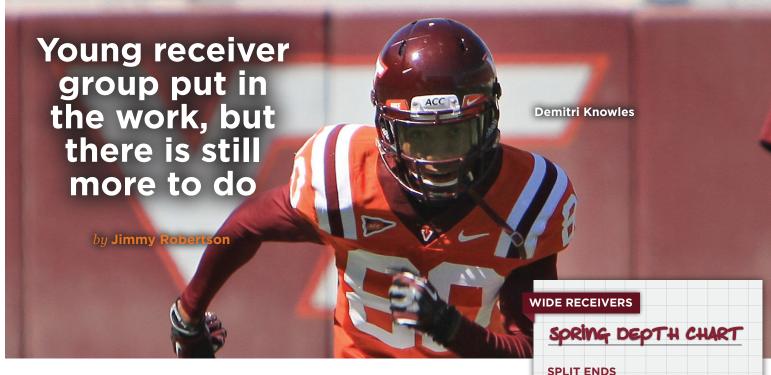
FULLBACKS

- 32 Riley Beiro (5-9, 229, r-Jr.)
- 29 Fuller Hoepner (6-2, 249, r-Jr.)
- **42** Greg Gadell (5-10, 195, r-Jr.)
- 25 Jerome Wright (5-11, 229, Fr.)
- 46 Griffin Hite (5-11, 223, r-So.)
- **34** Dan Garwood (6-2, 245, So.) (Note: Michael Holmes was suspended after

spring practice because of an off-field matter)

started two games a year ago and rushed for 299 yards, but he missed most of spring practice with a rib injury. Dyer thus got most of the reps as the fourth tailback.

At fullback, Fuller Hoepner and Greg Gadell, two walk-ons who have impressed the coaches, led the way, but only because Riley Beiro sat out a lot of contact drills while rehabbing from shoulder surgery that ended his season last fall. He figures to be the starter once fall practice rolls around.



Last January, Tech head coach Frank Beamer hired a younger guy to coach the receivers in Aaron Moorehead.

Youth, though, was going to be served with this group anyway.

Tech's depth chart at the receiver position features exactly one senior - and D.J. Coles missed nearly all of last season with a knee injury. So Moorehead spent much of the spring just learning his players, teaching them the fundamentals of being a receiver and helping them learn a new offense. He liked what they got accomplished, but there is much work to be done.

"I wish we had another week to get some work done because they were just starting to understand how I was teaching and what I was teaching," Moorehead said. "The guys were starting to make some good adjustments, and those couple of extra weeks would have been nice.

"We have an inexperienced group. I don't think anyone will deny that. When you have a group of guys who haven't played in games, it's hard. You want to get them fundamentally sound before you start asking them to do anything else. It was a very 'fundamental' spring. As a group, we did a good job. The rest of the spring and summer is going to be very important for them to develop their cardio and their football skills. They've got to get out there and work their butts off this summer. That's what I've been telling them in my meetings with them."

Coles, a split end, serves as the leader of the group because of his experience, but he is, by no means, a finished product. His injury inhibited his ability to work out, and he got a little heavy.

He also spent much of his spring just getting back his timing with quarterbacks Logan Thomas and Mark Leal.

Moorehead wants to see Coles get in top physical condition this summer, and he also wants him to lead the group in passing drills with the quarterbacks.

"D.J. was okay this spring, but he's got a ways to go as far as getting himself in the condition he needs to be in to get to the level he wants," Moorehead said. "Catching the ball, he didn't miss a beat. But he needs to develop his conditioning because that's going to help him have an outstanding senior season."

Coming out of spring, Joshua Stanford and Charley Meyer followed Coles on the depth chart at split end. Moorehead said Stanford, who caught three passes for 86 yards in the spring game, including a 57-yarder, gets better and better with every rep, and that Meyer just has a knack for getting open despite not being the biggest or the fastest guy around.

At the flanker spot, Demitri Knowles led the way after a terrific spring. He caught two passes for 41 yards, including a 30-yarder, in the spring game, and everyone knows he possesses big-play ability with his track-star speed. But he showed Moorehead much more this spring.

"He was a guy who was probably our most consistent player this spring," Moorehead said. "I didn't see as much up-and-down with him. He needs to live in that playbook this summer and make sure he knows what we're doing because we're going to add a bunch of stuff in the fall. But he's a fast guy, and he has better hands than

18 D.J. Coles (6-4, 238, r-Sr.)

5 Joshua Stanford (6-1, 189, r-Fr.)

83 Charley Meyer (6-1, 208, r-Fr.)

85 E.L. Smiling (6-4, 202, r-Jr.)

21 Mark Irick (6-3, 197, r-Fr.)

1 Austin Jones (6-3, 176, r-Fr.)

11 Chad Savage (6-0, 190, Fr.)

FLANKERS

80 Demitri Knowles (6-1, 177, r-So.)

19 Kevin Asante (6-0, 184, r-So.)

15 Joel Caleb (6-2, 213, r-Fr.)

82 Willie Byrn (5-11, 177, r-Jr.)

2 Michael Brainerd (6-0, 190, r-So.)

people give him credit for. He even became a halfway decent blocker by the end of spring, which I was happy about.

"I'm excited about his potential. He's got a chance to be possibly our No. 1 guy in the fall."

Moorehead also liked what Kevin Asante did this spring and expects him to be even better in the fall. Joel Caleb and Willie Byrn follow Knowles and Asante on the depth chart at flanker.

"Overall, I'm happy with their effort," Moorehead said. "I'm happy with the way they worked. To a man, they said they wanted to work harder than any group on this football team. I think they did a great job, but I don't think they're quite there yet. I don't think they worked harder than everybody, but they're on the road, and that's the goal. That's step 1. Step 2 is going out and making play after play after play on Saturdays. That's the next step."



LEFT GUARDS

- 55 Brent Benedict (6-5, 301, r-Jr.)
- 69 Mark Shuman (6-7, 314, r-Jr.)
- 62 Ross Ward (6-3, 298, r-So.)

CENTERS

- 79 Caleb Farris (6-3, 303, Jr.)
- 64 Matt Arkema (6-3, 291, r-Jr.)
- 76 David Wang (6-2, 291, r-Sr.)

RIGHT GUARDS

- 74 Andrew Miller (6-4, 293, r-Sr.)
- 70 Jake Goins (6-5, 285, r-So.)
- **56** Marcus Mapp (6-4, 296, r-So.)

RIGHT TACKLES

- 63 Laurence Gibson (6-6, 303, r-Jr.)
- 72 Augie Conte (6-5, 294, r-Fr.)
- 67 Parker Osterloh (6-8, 330, Fr.)

Coming out of spring practice, Tech's offensive line remains in a bit of flux, as new line coach Jeff Grimes spent the 15 practices getting to know his players and finding out what they do best.

Grimes did not come out of this spring with a starting five. That may cause some queasiness among Hokie Nation, but Grimes fully expected it and showed no concern over letting the line evolve over the summer and into August practices.

"We don't have to have that decision made right now," he said. "The bottom line is we don't have to make that decision until we get close to the first game.

"Most times, I go into a fall camp not knowing things for certain, and I'm perfectly comfortable with that. I actually like that better than knowing who the five are going to be because competition makes everyone better."

Heading into this spring, Tech basically returned four starters at three spots. Andrew Miller started seven games at center a season ago before being lost with a broken ankle. Caleb Farris replaced Miller and started five games, and Brent Benedict started six games at right guard. David Wang started 10 games at left guard.

So one figured that Grimes only needed to find two tackles among a large group of contenders. Not

Grimes spent most of this spring mixing and matching, moving guards to center and tackles to guard and playing younger, raw guys at tackle. He came into the spring with no preconceived notions, preferring instead to see for himself what certain guys could do at certain spots in certain situations.

"There have been times in my career when I've thought guys were best at a certain position, but then at some point later on, I moved them out of necessity and found out that they could do something else - and at times even better than I thought," Grimes said. "So I've learned over the years, especially early on with a group, to let them do different things and try to see where they fit best. Part of it is doing that on an individual basis and part of it will end up being based on getting our best five on the field."

As most know, Miller anchors the line, as he possesses the most experience of the group and is an all-conference type of player. But even he, with his 21 career starts at center, found himself being moved around. He played some at right guard this spring, working in coordination with Farris at center.

"No. 1, he's our toughest guy and the leader of the group and unquestionably the guy that the other linemen - and to some extent, the offense - feed off of, so he could play a lot of places," Grimes said. "He could probably play tackle for us. But in terms of where he ends up, it's just one of those things where I want to see him do some different things and see other guys work at center as well. I think he's got great potential and could play very well at either spot."

Miller and Farris are two of four players who worked at center this spring. Grimes also played Matt Arkema some at the spot and Wang, too, before an ankle injury halfway through spring practice ended Wang's spring.

Obviously, success on the offensive line starts at the center spot. That person needs to be smart enough to make the calls along the front in addition to getting the ball to quarterback Logan Thomas. Miller is a proven entity at the spot, but the rest of the group there needed reps - and got

"You can't have too many," Grimes said of centers. "You can move a tackle to guard or move someone from one side to the other at the same position. But snapping the ball and making the calls ... that's a different animal. So you can't have too many guys who can do it. You obviously need three that you feel good about, with the C-Q [center-quarterback] exchange and the shotgun snaps and that kind of stuff. At some point, there comes a limit in terms of how many guys you rep there, but I've been in positions where I've had a solid back up at other positions, like when I was at Auburn, where our left guard was our back-up center. You can't have too many."

Grimes, though, faces more uncertainty at the two tackle spots than at the three inside spots. The Hokies saw their two starting tackles from last season, Nick Becton and Vinston Painter, depart (along with guard Nick Acree, who missed spring practice with knee issues and may be giving up football).

The depth chart at the tackle spots changed practically every practice, as – for the most part – Mark Shuman and Jonathan McLaughlin traded time working with the first team at left tackle, while Laurence Gibson and Augie Conte did the same at right tackle. Grimes even moved Shuman to left guard the final week of spring practice.

All showed flashes, but the battles will continue into the summer and during August practices.

"Laurence has really taken some big steps forward," Grimes said. "I'm really impressed with his attitude, his work ethic and his toughness. Shuman has gotten a lot of reps with the first group, and Jonathan McLaughlin has really shown some things that has warranted him getting an opportunity with the first group, so that's why he was in there. Then Augie Conte has gotten reps at tackle. Like with any position, I've been giving guys a lot of opportunities and waiting to see who is going to earn it."

Tech's offensive line may not be settled until a couple of weeks before the Alabama game. The unit improved over the course of the spring, and Grimes wants to see that continue through summer workouts.

The pieces are there for a productive line. It's just going to take some time to put them in the right spots. VZ/





over the course of spring practice, one only needs to look at the box score of the Hokies' spring game. The Hokies' tight ends combined to catch nine passes for 125 yards and a touchdown - an extremely productive afternoon on a day in which the offenses struggled to get any rhythm.

Their performance left coach Bryan Stinespring feeling pretty good about his group coming out of spring practice.

"I thought we got better as the spring went on, which was critical," Stinespring said. "The position needed to be better. Last year, we were never healthy across the board, and we didn't play as well as we needed to, or possibly could have. There were moments when we showed up in games, but we weren't consistent.

"But this spring, we got better. Even though we lost some seniors, I thought we were improved as a position."

Ryan Malleck came out of spring in the top spot at the position. That came as no surprise considering he started seven games a year ago.

weapon for Tech's offense, and he put that on display in the spring game, catching three passes for 45 yards, including a 30-varder for a touchdown.

"Ryan Malleck led the charge for us," Stinespring said. "He struggled with stingers last year and a pinched nerve, and that prevented his effectiveness, but he had a really good spring. He's stronger and he's got more confidence. We're excited about him.

"He's going to have to carry the load. He runs well, and he catches the ball. He had one scrimmage where he tried to do too much and dropped a couple. But the spring game showed what he has done all spring."

The depth chart behind Malleck is a little murky, though, with several battling for the No. 2 job. Zack McCray caught four passes for 65 yards in the spring game, and he displays an ability to make big plays in the passing game, but he needs to get more physical at the point of attack. Duan Perez-Means gives great effort and is improved, but still 88 Ryan Malleck (6-4, 248, Jr.)

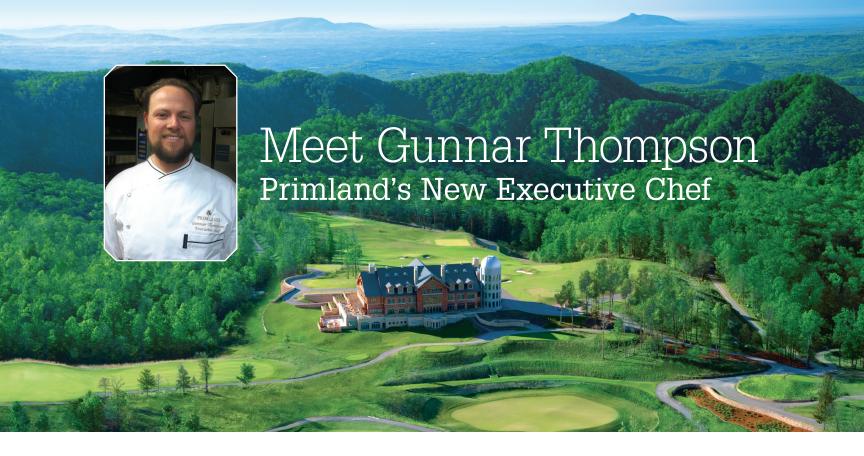
- 86 Zack McCray (6-4, 253, r-Jr.)
- 81 Duan Perez-Means (6-4, 239, r-Jr.)
- **33** Darius Redman (6-4, 258, r-So.)
- 49 Dakota Jackson (6-3, 269, r-Fr.)
- 95 Jack Willenbrock (6-3, 245, r-Fr.)

has a ways to go in terms of his technique, and Darius Redman started out the spring strongly, but leveled off. Dakota Jackson did some nice things. He's smart, with good hands, but needs to get quicker.

"After Ryan, we have a 'group," Stinespring said. "Each of them has certain strengths. Each of them does things a little bit better than the other, but we're still looking for a second tight end.

"As a group, I would have loved to have had 15 more practices. We really had a good spring game. We blocked well, and they were all effective in the passing game. We had no mental errors. I would have liked 15 more practices to build on it because I think they felt pretty good about where we were."





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A year ago, thanks largely to a very good defensive line, the Hokies finished second in the ACC with 35 sacks.

Given that all four starters return and given their performance this spring, the Hokies should finish near the top in sacks again this upcoming season.

Defensive line coach Charley Wiles came out of spring practice generally pleased with his group. Tech features a bevy of quality defensive ends with the ability to put heat on an opposing quarterback and/or change the complexion of a game. James Gayle, who decided to come back for his senior season, led the group after pacing Tech's defensive line with five sacks a year ago.

"Last year was his junior year, and you had people asking, 'Are you coming out?' and all that crap," Wiles said. "We don't have that this year, so he was very focused and determined. He made the decision to stay in school, and he realizes this is a special opportunity."

On the other side, J.R. Collins and Corey Marshall came out of spring tied for the top spot. Wiles saw a different player in Collins this spring, as the young man was focused following a season in which he recorded just 1.5 sacks and ended up losing his job.

In fact, Collins did not start the last four games of the regular season, and though he started in the bowl game, he did not record a tackle. It marked a sharp decline for a young man who received honorable mention All-ACC honors as a sophomore, but his play and leadership this spring showed he may be ready to return to form.

"He's really straightened out his life overall – just being on time, not missing stuff, not being sleepy," Wiles said. "It's hard to do things half butt off the field and then be really sharp on the

- 96 Corey Marshall (6-1, 260, Jr.)
- 66 Tyrel Wilson (6-1, 225, r-Sr.)
- 91 Matt Roth (64, 242, r-So.)
- 4 Ken Ekanem (6-3, 242, r-Fr.)

NOSE TACKLES

- 98 Derrick Hopkins (6-0, 312, Sr.)
- 60 Woody Baron (6-1, 260, Fr.)
- 94 Alston Smith (6-2, 299, r-Fr.)
- 53 Jarontay Jones (6-2, 241, r-Fr.)
- **50** Jeremy Haynes (6-3, 225, r-Fr.)

TACKLES

- 92 Luther Maddy (6-1, 295, Jr.)
- **97** Kris Harley (6-1, 286, r-So.)
- 95 Nigel Williams (6-3, 271, r-Fr.)
- 93 Justin Taylor (6-2, 268, r-So.)

field. He's tightened up his whole life.

"Now, he may not start this year. There is competition going on, and he knows that. They watch the video, too. But I think he realizes that this is his last year, and he wants to have a great year – and you can have a great year from a lot of different ways."

The Hokies also return Tyrel Wilson, who started three games a season ago. Tech coaches raved about his play last year, but Wilson missed much of spring practice with a foot injury. That left an opportunity for Dadi Nicolas, a rising redshirt sophomore who was arguably the star of Tech's defense this spring.

Nicolas shined in the second scrimmage, one in which Gayle and Wilson sat out, recording six tackles and a sack. He also had numerous quarterback hurries, as Tech's offensive line struggled with his speed off the edge.

Rest assured, his continued development will result in additional playing time this fall no matter how many experienced defensive ends are on Tech's roster.

"He made a lot of plays now," Wiles said. "He's very explosive and is dynamic in space. He needs to continue to improve overall, but he shows up. You'll see he and James working together on the field at the same time more as we go on."

Wiles' main concern coming out of spring was depth at the defensive tackle spot. Tech returns starters Luther Maddy and Derrick Hopkins, but backup Antoine Hopkins graduated and none of the backups distinguished themselves this spring.

The group of backups included rising redshirt sophomore Kris Harley and a few redshirt freshmen in Nigel Williams, Alston Smith and Jarontay Jones, whom Wiles moved from end to tackle. Also, Woody Baron, a true freshman who enrolled in January, worked his way into the mix.

"We just don't have any depth," Wiles said. "We've got some bodies. But if we were playing tomorrow, we'd have to make a move and get an end in there. I don't know who that would be right now. We lost a really good player in Hop (Antoine Hopkins), just a lot of experience.

"All those young kids right now are all inexperienced. It's a tough position to play as a redshirt freshman. I see those guys getting better, but that's an area of concern right now. We have two that we feel can play at a championship level (Hopkins and Maddy). We've got to get to five."

Wiles wanted to see Harley take a step forward this spring because he played in 10 games as a redshirt freshman a year ago. But coming out of

spring practice, Harley was listed third on the depth chart at one of the tackle spots. Heading into the summer, Wiles said the backups were Smith and Baron.

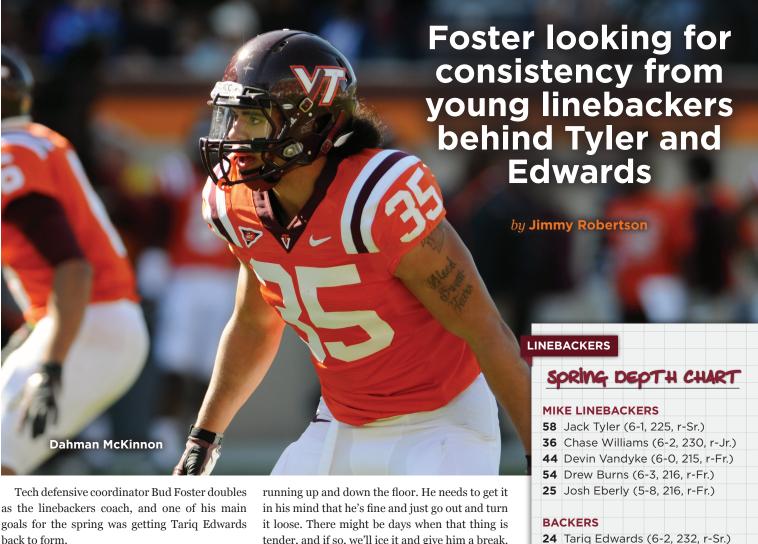
"I wish he (Harley) would play better," Wiles said. "He's on the ground too much. Alston Smith's on the ground too much, losing leverage too often. At times, he (Harley) looks quick enough to play the position, and at times, he doesn't. It's the same with Alston. I think Woody would be ahead of those two right now."

Wiles added that the Hokies may end up moving Marshall or Collins to tackle if none of the backup tackles develop. A year ago, he moved Collins to tackle, but said, "I'm not sure we got a lot done, to be honest."

Another option could be Wyatt Teller, an incoming freshman and one of the top recruits in the 2013 class. Teller was the Group AA defensive player of the year this past fall at Liberty High School in Bealeton, Va.

"He's going to get a lot of looks and see if he can do it," Wiles said. "He and I have been talking a bit. We'll see how quickly he can pick up stuff, but it's unfair to him. He'd have to be extra special. It'd be hard to count on him, but he's definitely going to get a look."





back to form.

As most know, Edwards basically missed last season because of a leg injury. Yes, he played in seven games, but he recorded just four tackles, and he wasn't close to the player who recorded 71 tackles, including 11.5 for a loss, as a redshirt sophomore.

But Edwards appeared to get his timing back at the backer spot this spring. He seemed more fluid and comfortable with his movements. He wasn't quite as fast as he was two years ago, but he made some plays. Now Foster wants him to get in top physical condition over the summer.

"He was pretty good," Foster said of Edwards' spring. "He wasn't as flashy as maybe he was in the past, but he was consistent. He didn't have as many plays come to him, but he took a lot of plays away, like screens and draws, things like that. He was fundamentally sound and good in coverage.

"My biggest thing for him was getting his timing back, and I think he's got that. He's a lot closer. Now, I want him to get in great shape. He needs to be full speed. Those guys in the NBA get that type of injury and they come back and are

tender, and if so, we'll ice it and give him a break.

"But I want him to come back in great shape. That's where I'm really going to challenge him. But he's done all the right things."

Edwards will team with Jack Tyler, the starting mike linebacker, next fall. Tyler got relatively little action this spring simply because Foster knows what he has in Tyler, one of the ACC's best linebackers. Instead, steady backup Chase Williams, whom Foster trusts, got a lot of firstteam reps, at least until an ankle injury in the last scrimmage shelved him.

Foster mostly spent his spring evaluating his younger linebackers, guys like backers Deon Clarke - who led all tacklers with nine in the spring game - and Dahman McKinnon and mike linebackers Devin Vandyke, Drew Burns and Josh Eberly. He likes the potential of the group as a whole, but he'd also like to see some more consistency.

"Deon Clarke does some really good things, but he's got to be consistent," Foster said. "I think moving Dahman McKinnon (from whip to backer) has been a great move for us. He's made more tackles in this spring than he did all last fall, including our camp scrimmages and our Monday scrimmages. That's (backer) a good position for him, and I think he'll be a good football player for us. He's physical, and he can run. He's just learning the position, just like Deon.

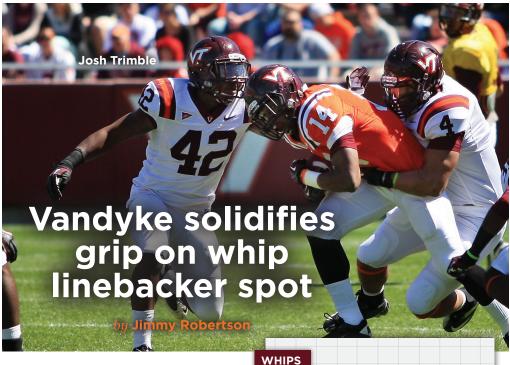
40 Deon Clarke (6-2, 215, r-Fr.) 35 Dahman McKinnon (6-0, 207, r-Fr.)

"Devin Vandyke has shown some things, but he was battling hamstring issues. He looked like me out there running - and that's not very good. But at the same time, he showed flashes.

"I'm coaching all those guys hard because they're only a play away. They've got to have a sense of urgency that they've got to learn and grow. It's important to those guys."

Coming out of this spring, Clarke was No. 2 on the depth chart behind Edwards, with McKinnon challenging him. At mike linebacker, Williams stood in the No. 2 spot, with Vandyke and Burns listed as co-No. 3's.

SPRING YT FOOTBALL >> REVIEW



Last season, defensive coordinator Bud Foster played nickel defense early in the season, but he readily admitted that his unit's fortunes changed when he went back to his base defense, which included a whip linebacker.

Whips coach Cornell Brown hopes that Foster does the same this upcoming season, even though the Hokies lost Alonzo Tweedy and Jeron Gouveia-Winslow from last season's team. That's because Brown feels confident that Ronny Vandyke can do everything the position requires and then some.

Vandyke started two games last season as a redshirt freshman and played in all 13. His onthe-job training a year ago really showed up this spring, as he played with a lot more confidence because he knew his position. In return, he made

"Ronny was great," Brown said. "The little bit of playing time he received last year really helped his progress going into this year. He was a lot more conscious of things (this spring). He got a better grasp of the overall defense and what was expected of him.

"You really like his overall 'want to' and desire. The success of this team is important to him. He wants to excel, but he wants this team to be good and the people around him to be good."

Tech's staff moved two players to whip before spring ball started - Josh Trimble and Derek DiNardo. Trimble and DiNardo both served as backups at backer last season, but got most of their action on special teams.

Both of their skill sets probably fit better at whip, particularly Trimble's. He made a lot of ring depth chart

WHIP LINEBACKERS

- **37** Ronny Vandyke (6-3, 211, r-So.)
- **49** Josh Trimble (5-11, 219, r-So.)
- 41 Derek DiNardo (6-0, 214, r-Jr.)
- **45** Quinton Taylor (6-1, 209, r-Fr.)
- 48 Tyler Brydge (6-2, 197, Fr.)

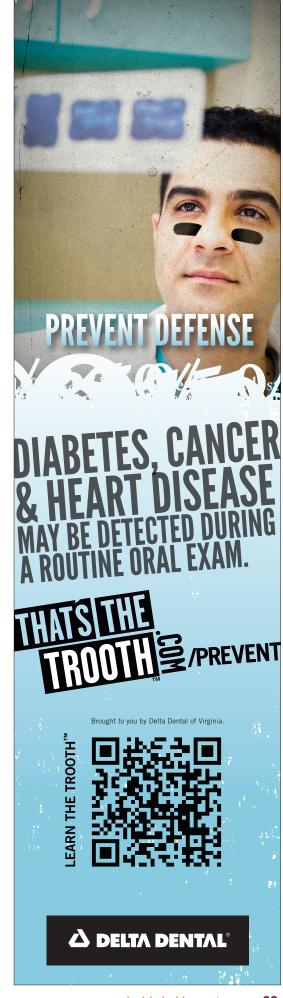
tackles in space on special teams last season, and the whip position requires that players be able to do that.

"He's a guy with a lot of knowledge about the game and understands how to play the game," Brown said. "He's shown that he can make plays when given the opportunity, and by being at whip now, that gives him an opportunity to get more reps, which is what all young guys need.

"Derek has been a utility player since he got here. He's moved around. Last year, he played backer, like Trimble. Any time you can get those guys some real live action, where they can see those mistakes and feel those mistakes and see what they've done wrong, that helps make them better players and makes us a better team."

Both of those players got noticed for their work on special teams, and Brown hopes that some of Tech's other young defensive players take notice of that. Special teams can lead to bigger things.

Brown also liked what he saw from two walkons this spring - Quinton Taylor and Tyler Brydge. Both showed flashes and could help the Hokies in some capacity down the road.





FIELD CORNERS

- **30** Donaldven Manning (5-9, 174, So.)
- **31** Donovan Riley (5-11, 202, So.)
- 13 Davion Tookes (5-10, 172, r-Fr.)
- **15** Nick Bush (5-10, 180, r-Jr.)

ROVERS

- 34 Kyshoen Jarrett (5-11, 194, Jr.)
- 26 Desmond Frye (6-2, 184, So.)
- **6** Zach Snell (5-10, 189, r-Fr.)

FREE SAFETIES

- 8 Detrick Bonner (6-0, 189, r-Jr.)
- 23 Der'Woun Greene (5-10, 187, r-Fr.)
- **14** T.J. Shaw (5-10, 180, r-So.)

(Note: Antone Exum sat out the spring while rehabbing a torn ACL and Greg Jones missed most of spring practice with a shoulder injury)

Torrian Gray came out of spring practice with pretty much the same thoughts as the Hokies' other assistant coaches. He got what he expected from certain players, he liked what he saw from some of his younger guys, and he's concerned about the slow development of a couple of guys.

He's also fully aware that the Hokies played this spring without the group's leader, Antone Exum, who is rehabbing from a torn ACL. Exum will be back, though, perhaps for the season opener.

Given all that, Gray felt okay about the secondary's work this spring.

"I was pleased with the guys I was expecting to be very good, which was (Detrick) Bonner, (Kyshoen) Jarrett and (Kyle) Fuller," Gray said in giving his overall synopsis of the spring. "I'm pleased with Brandon Facyson's upside, and I'm pleased with Desmond Frye coming along and giving us depth at safety. I'm pleased with Der'Woun Greene that, once he knows what he's doing, he's going to give us another guy.

"I'm not pleased with the field corner spot overall. That's the one thing that's gnawing at me. That's keeping me from coming out of this spring smiling."

Fuller anchored the boundary corner spot this spring. Coming off a subpar year for his elite standards, he built on an impressive showing in the strength and conditioning program this winter with an outstanding spring. He not only played well on the field, but he also displayed solid leadership skills toward

the group's many young players.

"Kyle was excellent," Gray said. "I thought, last year, Kyle got complacent at times from a practice standpoint, which may have carried over into the season. Then he had some injuries, and it wasn't a great mix for him.

"He came out with a focus and an intent this spring to make sure he didn't have that type of drop off. He had a purpose, and I liked the way he approached practice and was a leader as a defensive back. He was excellent this winter and this spring."

But two unproven players got most of the reps at the field corner spot - Donovan Riley and Donaldven Manning - and both suffered their ups and downs. Riley played well at the first part of spring practice and then tailed off, but he made a huge play in the spring game with a 53-yard interception return for a touchdown. Manning started slowly, but he got better as practice went along, and Gray liked his progression.

Manning probably came out of spring ball slightly ahead on the depth chart, though the battle will continue in August - or until Exum returns.

"Manning started off a little slower than Riley, but from a technique and fundamental standpoint, he was very consistent and sound," Gray said. "He didn't make as many plays on the ball as I would have liked, whereas Riley made some great, great plays on the ball. But Riley gave up some things mentally, whereas Manning didn't give up the things mentally and technique wise. So that's where we're at with those two."

At the safety spots, Gray got exactly what he expected from upperclassmen Bonner and Jarrett. The two of them know what to do and both make plays.

Behind them, Frye enjoyed a great spring, and Greene caught Gray's eye with his ability to make plays. In fact, Greene electrified the crowd at the spring game when he stepped in front of a Logan Thomas pass near the goal line early in the game and returned an interception 98 yards for a touchdown.

Greene's emergence eased the pain of losing Greg Jones, who injured his shoulder early on and missed the rest of spring practice.

"I was impressed with how Desmond Frye picked up the safety position," Gray said. "We moved him to rover, and then Greg Jones got injured and Der'Woun Greene was new to the position (free safety), so we played Desmond both ways. He picked it up and didn't have

many mental errors, if any. He made me feel good about having another safety guy.

"Der'Woun showed me that he's a tough kid. He showed that he has the ability to make plays, which is important, but mentally, he has to still learn it. He's a long way off from a technique and fundamentals standpoint. At the least, I think we've got a guy there who will be good enough for us.

"I didn't know if we had anyone behind Kyshoen (Jarrett) and Detrick (Bonner). But we ended spring ball with two guys who will give us a chance as they continue to get better."

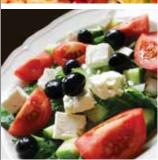
Of all the young players, the one to watch may be Facyson, a freshman who enrolled in January. He played well backing up Fuller at the boundary corner spot and may play next fall.

"He's still a freshman," Gray said. "He still makes mistakes, but I like his learning curve. At least he made a lot of plays on the ball, which is the first thing because you can coach up the other stuff as he gets more reps. I was really impressed with what he did.

"Right now, he's in the two-deep. If he keeps progressing, he's going to stay in the two-deep. I think his upside is such that he's only going to get better with practices." VV







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Kickers' experience showed this spring

by Jimmy Robertson

There wasn't too much to report on the kicking positions coming out of spring practice, as the Hokies returned both kicker Cody Journell and punter A.J. Hughes from last season's team.

Journell and Brooks Abbott, who was the backup field-goal kicker last season as a true freshman, kicked well this spring. Journell got off to a bit of a slow start. He made a 35-yard and a 36-yard field goal in the first scrimmage, but in the second scrimmage, he missed twice from 47 yards. Yet in the final scrimmage, he drilled one from 55 yards, which easily would have been a career long.

Abbott made a 23-yarder in the second scrimmage and then connected on three field goals in the final scrimmage, making them from 27, 41 and 45 yards out. He'll push Journell in the fall, and he may be the kickoff guy.

"I've always said if we've got good kickers, we're going to be good on special teams, and I think that's the case," Tech coach Frank Beamer said. "Having Cody back gives us confidence, and Brooks continues to improve his consistency.

"I think we've got good competition, and I think everybody gets better with more competition. So I like where we are."

The kickoff job remains a bit up in the air. Beamer used three of them last year - Michael Branthover, Abbott and Journell - with varying degrees of success.

Hughes enjoyed an impressive final scrimmage, averaging 47.8 yards per punt in that one, and he averaged 41 yards per punt on six punts in the spring game. He goes into next fall as the leader for the punting job. Hunter Windmuller missed a chunk of spring practice, including the spring game, with a right quad

Joe St. Germain handled the snapping chores a year ago, but is being challenged by Eddie D'Antuano, a redshirt freshman, Also, Kyshoen Jarrett and Michael Holmes returned a lot of punts this spring, and one or both of them will probably be the punt returners next fall, though that depends on when Holmes gets his off-thefield issue settled.

S	oring depth chart
KIC	CKERS
89	Cody Journell (6-0, 191, r-Sr.)
45	Brooks Abbott (6-2, 185, So.)
93	Ethan Keyserling (6-2, 199, r-Jr.)
PU	NTERS
27	A.J. Hughes (6-1, 201, So.)
48	Hunter Windmuller (6-3, 177, r-Fr.)
38	Michael Branthover (5-9, 193, Jr.)
SN	APPERS
65	Joe St. Germain (6-0, 217, r-Jr.)
59	Eddie D'Antuano (6-6, 271, r-Fr.)
41	Joshua Moore (6-2, 195, Fr.)
47	Colton Taylor (6-0, 205, Fr.)

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Tech men's track and field team just misses another ACC title

The men's team finishes second at the league's outdoor meet, while the women come in seventh

by Jimmy Robertson

The Virginia Tech men's track and field team came up just short of winning its fourth straight ACC title, finishing second at the ACC Outdoor Track and Field Championships held April 18-20 in Raleigh, N.C.

The Hokies, who won last year's outdoor crown and also won this fall's cross country championship and this winter's indoor title, came just 12 points short of adding another championship trophy to their collection. Florida State won the event with 149 points, while Tech finished with 138. Clemson came in third with 114 points.

Still, it was a remarkable accomplishment for the Hokies, who lost standouts Alexander Ziegler (thrower), Will Mulherin (distance runner) and Michael Hammond (distance runner) after the indoor season. The eligibility for all three expired at the conclusion of the indoor season.

"I knew it could be close, but I knew we were thinner than we were indoors," said Dave Cianelli said, Tech's director of track and field and cross country. "I thought we had pretty much a perfect meet. Florida State just had a little more depth than we had.

"I'm really proud of our team and the way they competed and all of the outstanding performances that we had. Even though we came up short, that's just the way it is. We had a couple of people who were dinged up and not here, but that's the sport. You can say that for pretty much any team. For the guys whom we had here, we really had an outstanding meet.

"We had a great run here, and we're leaving after giving everything we had. I just don't feel like we could have done much more than we did."

The men's team won five individual titles, with arguably none more impressive than Matthias Treff's victory in the javelin. On his first attempt, he broke his own ACC record with a throw 249 feet, 1 inch (75.92 meters), and no one came

close to that, as Treff won the javelin title for the fourth straight year. He became the first ACC male javelin thrower ever to win four titles.

Tomas Kruzliak continued Tech's domination in the hammer throw, winning with a toss of 232 feet, 5 inches (70.84 meters). This year marked the fifth straight time that a Tech hammer thrower has won the event. Kruzliak's teammate, Denis Mahmic, finished second seven meters back.

The Hokies' sprinters and jumpers aided the cause, too, as Darrell Wesh and Ronnie Black took home titles. Wesh sizzled in the 200-meter dash, winning in a time of 20.70 seconds, and he nearly won the 100, falling by two-hundredths of a second to Florida State's Dentarius Locke. Black carried the crown in the high jump, winning in a jump-off against Maryland's John Hill. The two tied with jumps of 7 feet, 3.75 inches (2.23 meters), but in the jump-off, Hill missed at 7 feet, 2.5 inches, and Black cleared it to win.



Also, Tech got wins from Grant Pollock and Thomas Curtin, Pollock won the 1,500-meter run in a time of 3:44.18, while Curtin won the 5,000 in a time of 13:58.77.

Jeff Artis-Gray, a senior and the Hokies' leader, scored in two events, coming in second in the long jump with a leap of 26 feet, .5 inch (7.94 meters) and finishing third in the 110-meter hurdles with a time of 14.21 seconds. Chris Uhle came in second in the pole vault with a vault of 16 feet, 8.75 inches (5.10 meters), and Tihut Degfae came in third in the 800 with a time of 1:49.40.

On the women's side, the Hokies finished in seventh place with 56 points. Clemson edged out Florida State for the title, accumulating 151 points to the Seminoles' 146 points. NC State came in

third with 82 points, followed by Virginia (76) and Duke (76), and North Carolina (66).

Tech won two championships on the women's side. Annjulie Vester, a sophomore thrower from Homburg, Germany, won the hammer throw with a toss of 202 feet, 1 inch (61.61 meters). Vester, the defending champion in the event, set a new personal record with her winning throw.

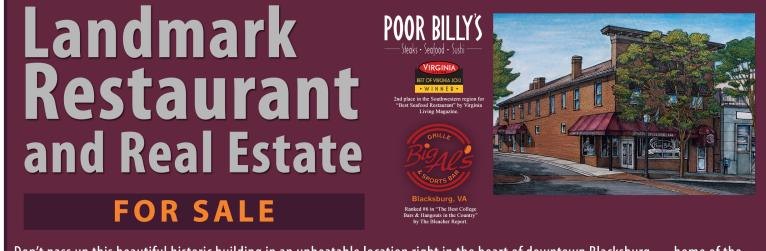
Also, Martina Schultze won another ACC title. The sophomore from Uhingen, Germany, claimed the pole vault crown with a vault of 13 feet, 5.25 inches. The win marked her third straight ACC title in the pole vault and her second one outdoors.

Four other Tech women's performers finished in the top five of their respective events. Leah Nugent finished third in the 400-meter hurdles and fifth in the 100-meter hurdles, Shannon Morton came in fifth in the 1,500, Amanda Smith finished fifth in the 800, and Yvonne Amegashie was fourth in the 400.

"There were great performances all around, both from the men and women," Cianelli said. "Everyone who won titles this weekend really had to work for them because this conference is so good, and it's getting better.

"To get eight conference titles, I'm really happy about that. Now we'll regroup here and get ready for the regional meet next month."

The NCAA East Regionals will be held May 23-25 in Greensboro, N.C. The NCAA Outdoor Track and Field Championships will run from June 5-8 in Eugene, Ore. VZZ



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by Jimmy Robertson

rack athletes tend to do everything fast. It's simply part of their DNA, rushing to a finish line regardless of whether they're actually on a track. They live life based on a stopwatch and every second matters. Every lane is the fast lane for them.

Britani Myers is no different.

She isn't a household name in Tech's track and field program mainly because she just arrived in Blacksburg last August. She came to Tech as a middle distance runner from Winchester, Va., a town best known for being the home of the Apple Blossom Festival and Tech's superb basketball star, Erick Green. She boasts some pretty impressive athletic chops of her own, having won three state championships in high school and adding two others as part of relay teams.

But her career at Tech is ending almost as quickly as it began.

Things have been happening quickly off the track for Myers. Opportunities have presented themselves. Decisions have needed to be made. Her world has turned into a whirlwind.

Being a track athlete, she understands that, the breakneck pace at which life can happen. A recent opportunity promises to change her life, and it required a hair-trigger decision.

She's already made it. She's sprinting for it.

Mommas love to hear their babies sing. It's one of life's truisms. That sweet crooning of a mother's child just needs to be bottled and preserved. Forever.

This is how Britani Myers' singing career got started. Debbie Myers loved hearing her daughter sing, from her toddler years until she reached high school. That never changed. She even tried to get her daughter to sing in front of relatives, but the ultra-shy Britani refused. She preferred solo acts in front of one-person audiences - her mom.

That began to change during Britani's senior year at Handley High School. A terrific high school runner, she committed to Ole Miss for track and appeared destined for a future in that sport. Though disappointed that her daughter would be going so far away for college, Debbie supported her. Her only request was that Britani visit a friend of hers who had a recording studio, just so that Britani could record a song for her mom to listen to while her daughter attended college.

So Britani – a country music fan – recorded a cover of "I Wonder," a song by Kellie Pickler that talks about the personal experiences of Pickler's childhood, and gave it to her mom. A short time later, Britani's dad, Kevin Myers, took the recording to Q-102 FM, a local country music station in Winchester. Someone there

track & field spotlight | britani myers

knew someone in Nashville and decided to send the recording just to gauge any possible interest.

"That normally never works," Britani said. "But the CEO of Curb Records came over while that lady was listening to it and heard it.

"The next thing I knew, I was getting a call, and I was in a meeting with him. It was kind of lucky."

Wayne Fricks, the CEO of Curb Records, first called Kevin Myers, who in turn, called his daughter. She was at track practice. When she got home that night and returned the call, she nearly "freaked out."

The family ended up meeting with Fricks in Nashville in February of last year. But Britani kept her expectations low, preferring cautious optimism over unbridled hope. After all, she had surprising many in Winchester who still thought she was going to Ole Miss.

She still planned on running for titles - and recording songs on the side.

Myers said she received her record deal from Sidewalk Records, a sister company of Curb, last October, and her first public performance came last November when she went back to Winchester for the Patsy Cline Classic. She said that her manager, Handley High alternative education teacher Ben Swartz, who also works in the school's audio visual department, managed to swing her a gig opening for country music superstar LeAnn Rimes at the event, which is held in the Patsy Cline Theater at the high school. Cline was a Winchester

needed a start.

"I would always go to the concerts at my school that they would hold, and I'd be like, 'I wish someone would help me get to where I could perform in front of people," she said. "But I never really thought that it would happen for me. I always was a runner and thought I needed to stick with that. I didn't have time for other stuff.

"But then my senior year ... it seemed like overnight my life changed. I went from being focused on running to having a music career that could actually happen."

This year at Tech, her days consisted of



66 As time went on, I went back and back and had more meetings and then eventually he (Wayne Fricks) did offer me (a deal). It's all crazy because it happened in such a short amount of time.

-Britani Myers on being offered a record contract

never taken a voice lesson and never performed on a stage. How serious could this be?

"At first, I thought it was a scam, you know, one of those record companies who is like, 'Oh, you pay us this amount of money, and we'll produce CD's for you," she said. "I went anyway, and I sat in the meeting with my mom and my dad. As the meeting went on, he (Fricks) sounded serious, and I thought, 'This is crazy.' There are people who literally work their whole lives, going from door to door in Nashville to each record company just trying to get a deal.

"As time went on, I went back and back and had more meetings and then eventually he (Fricks) did offer me (a deal). It's all crazy because it happened in such a short amount of time."

The second meeting with Fricks consisted of her bringing someone to play the guitar for her while she sang. Then, before the third meeting, which occurred this past October, Fricks wanted her to learn to play the guitar, so she taught herself over the span of just a few months.

After that second meeting, Britani started to have reservations about going to Ole Miss for college. After all, it was an 11- to 12-hour haul from Winchester just to Nashville. Oxford, Miss., was even farther.

So coming back from that second meeting, the family stopped in Blacksburg to take a peak at Virginia Tech. She later signed with the Hokies,

native and a country music singer before dying in a plane crash in 1963.

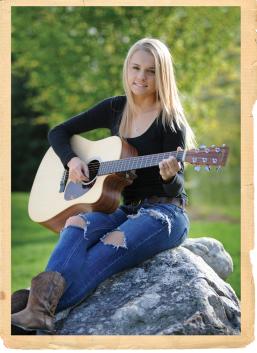
Curb artists normally headline the event – for example, Willie Nelson, the Beach Boys, Wynonna Judd and Rimes are all Curb clients and have headlined the Classic - but there never had been an opening act until last November when Myers took the stage before Rimes and sang a variety of cover songs.

"It was crazy," Myers said. "It's the biggest crowd I've ever performed in front of. It was well over 1,000 (people). She (Rimes) was really nice, and her voice was amazing. It was a good experience for me, especially since most people knew me as a runner. They heard I was singing, and they were like, 'What, Britani sings?' They were surprised. I got a standing ovation, which was good.

"That's the most nervous I've ever been in my life. Once the music starting playing and I loosened up, it just became natural."

According to her, she performed well, and that alone is quite the accomplishment considering her lack of experience. Myers had no public singing experience - none. She never sang in a church choir. She never took music lessons in high school. Her only music experience came in the school's band, where she played the drums, and of course, from her solo performances before her mom.

But she loves singing and loves music. She only



practices, classes, studying and then finding time to write songs - the next step in her evolution as a music entertainer. She said she has written about 10 songs so far, but admits the lack of time hinders her ability to put as much into her music as she would like.

That problem, however, will be going away once the semester ends.

A few weeks ago, Myers walked into Tech cross country and distance coach Ben Thomas' office a little nervously. She had made her decision.

Myers, who ran the 400 leg of the distance medley relay event at the ACC Indoor Track and Field Championships, told Thomas that this semester would be her last. She plans on moving to Nashville in July to pursue a career in music.

"He said he expected it," Myers said. "He wasn't as shocked as I thought he'd be."

Myers gave the decision a lot of thought. After

all, she loves running, having done so since the eighth grade. She also loves her Tech teammates, making lifetime bonds with many of them, and she considers many of them sisters.

But she knows opportunities like this one rarely present themselves. She said Curb Records wants to put her with the same voice people who work with Rimes. She also needs to get in the studio and record, and she added that Curb wants to send her out to do some radio tours, which means traveling around to different stations and performing as a way to get her name out there. A possibility exists to go on USO Tours overseas and perform in front of military personnel.

All these things are done easier if based in Nashville. Right now, her father plans on living with her for the first month. After that, she will be on her own, a 19-year-old trying to make it in a highly competitive industry in which only the very best turn out to be successful.

"There is always that fear of, 'What if I don't make it?" she said. "It is a scary industry, and my manager always reminds me of that. My dad is going to move down there with me for the first month, and then I am going to be on my own, which is really scary.

"But I'm prepared for anything. I'm still going to take online classes just so I'll have a backup

plan because I think that is important. There is a big chance that I'll get down there, and it doesn't happen for a few years and I'm waiting around. We'll see how it goes. I've been lucky so far, so I'm crossing my fingers."

Her venture to this point has been a combination of things - talent, hard work, fate, and arguably, mostly luck. But good things tend to happen to those who do things the right way and with the right perspective.

She grew up in a small town, a shy girl with the ability to run fast. She came to Tech like so many others, pursuing a dream. But dreams can change.

Someone important thinks her unaltered voice possesses the ability to be special, the ability to produce something that could move so many people. She's decided to change course, switching into a lane that will take her in a direction in which she had never dreamed.

"It's not the typical country music story," she admitted.

It doesn't matter. Destiny is rarely a charted course.

Just remember Britani Myers is going places - fast. Just like she always has. Don't bet against her. After all, luck has been on her side.

Britani Myers

Hometown: Winchester, Va.

Age: 19

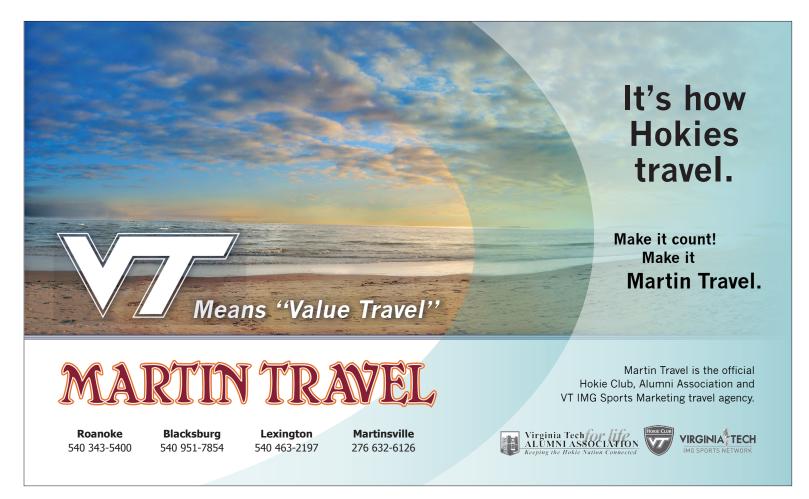
Favorite music: Country

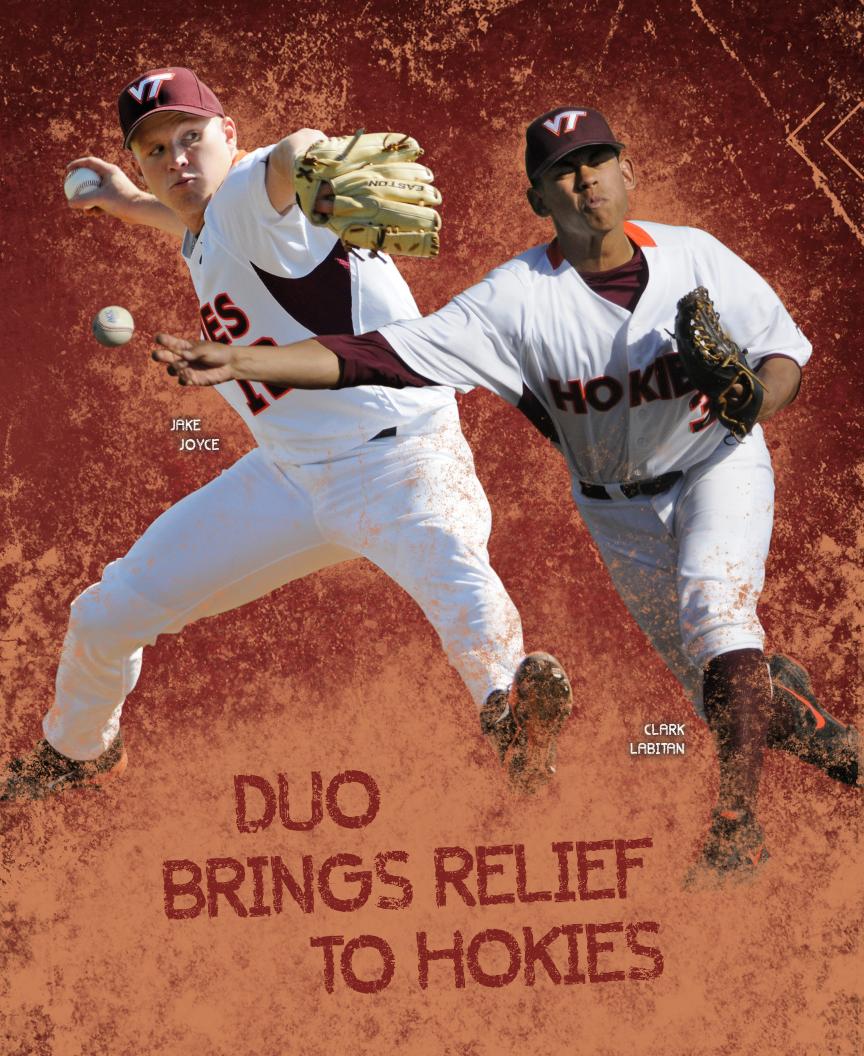
Favorite artists: Lee Brice, Jason Aldean, Carrie Underwood,

Travis Tritt, Dolly Parton, and Tammy Wynette

Twitter: @BritaniMyers

Website: www.britanimyers.com







Clark Labitan and Jake Joyce are polar opposites and the best of friends, and they continue to get it done out of the bullpen for Tech

by Marc Mullen

They call themselves "yin and yang." In fact, they have those monikers programmed into their cell phones when each other calls - and yet they have described themselves as polar opposites.

But they can agree on one thing. When the final pitch is thrown by a Hokie pitcher this baseball season, it will probably be tossed by one of these two young men - and neither would have it any other way.

Clark Labitan, a redshirt senior from San Diego, Calif., and of mostly Filipino decent, and Jake Joyce, a senior from Collinsville, Va., and of mostly Irish decent, have been Virginia Tech's top two relievers this year and have been best friends since the younger Joyce stepped on campus more than three years ago. The duo wants nothing more than the opportunity to pitch in the 2013 ACC Baseball Championship and beyond.

"The big picture we always preach is Omaha, but that starts with our first goal of making it to the ACC tournament," Joyce said. "That's usually when teams are really bearing down and locking in and trying to get ready for the postseason.

"So going into an ACC tournament game and facing that level of competition on that stage is something I really can't imagine. I experienced it a little my freshman year. I didn't get to pitch, but just being in the dugout, my energy and excitement in the dugout was unreal. I think it would be an awesome experience to get to pitch in it."

During that 2010 season, Labitan - the older of the two and the "yin" of the duo - was sitting out the year because of an injury. So neither of them has pitched in an ACC tournament game.

"I was unfortunate to miss probably one of the better teams Virginia Tech has had in its history, when we went to the ACCs and the regional in South Carolina," Labitan said. "I remember watching it on TV and how jealous I was. I know we feel pressure when we pitch at Florida State or against UNC, but I just can't imagine how awesome that (the NCAAs) would be.

"The ACC is probably the best conference in the nation right now, so if we can do well in that, why can't we do well in the NCAA tournament? It's (the ACC tournament) almost like a national tournament in itself."

Their paths to get to Blacksburg were - as stated earlier – polar opposites. For Joyce – the "yang" of the twosome - Tech was his dream school. His whole family loves Tech, and his cousin is Bryan Stinespring, the recruiting coordinator and tight ends coach on the Hokies' football team. So coming to Tech was not a hard decision for Jovce.

Labitan, on the other hand, wasn't recruited heavily out of high school and was just trying to get some schools interested in him. So he decided to attend a camp in Georgia, where he caught the eye of Dave Turgeon, the former pitching coach for the Hokies. Turgeon invited him to a baseball camp in Blacksburg.

"So I came out here all by myself without any parents or anything and started one of the scrimmages and hit - at the time, I was a hitter - and they (Tech's coaches) offered me that Sunday," Labitan said. "I acted like I was going to think about it, but as soon as they offered me, in my head, I was thinking 'This is awesome', because no other schools wanted me as a pitcher.

"So I flew back home, and a couple days later, called them and accepted, and they sent me the papers. But that's (the camp) where Joyce first saw me."

"Yeah, it was funny because we were at the same camp," Joyce said. "I remember Coach Hughes had a meeting with the whole camp, parents and players, and he was talking about how he was going to offer a scholarship today to one of the players and that was Clark."

More than a year later, the two of them were reunited on the Tech campus. Labitan arrived in the fall of 2008, while Joyce started a bit oddly in the spring semester of 2010 because of a number of complicated factors. But they love to share the anecdote about Joyce's arrival to campus.

"I remember when Jake first came in here, he thought everyone hated him," Labitan said. "He was always picked on."

"I was a freshman, and the freshmen here were picking on me," Joyce added.

"Our roommates now came in when he did, and I remember everyone picked on him. It didn't matter who it was. He was the youngest one, and he had to wear it," Labitan said. "I don't even

remember what it was. It was something about the Matrix or something, and ever since then, we had this stupid handshake and I never picked on

"I didn't even know him. He was country, but people made fun of me because I was from California. We were like polar opposites. I didn't like country. I thought they were weird, and then look at me – I end up going to live with him after every season and spend time with his family. I probably hung out and spend more time with his family than my family the past four years. And I actually call his parents 'mom' and 'dad."

"The first time we met, I was a freshman, and eventually I warmed up to everyone after they all got in their jabs at me, but I do remember him taking me in," Joyce said. "As an upperclassman, I thought it was awesome he did that. And we would go get lunch together and just talked about everything. Like he said, we were polar opposites, which made it interesting."

Speaking of opposites and parents, Joyce said that his parents may have missed two games in his career at Tech, "and I think both of them were midweek games at ETSU."

On the other hand, the Labitans have made just a handful, and just one in Blacksburg – last season's Miami series.

"My mom and sister made it out here for the first time since moving me in, but it was a good one to make," Labitan said. In that series, the Hokies won two games in walk-off fashion over the then sixth-ranked team in the country.

Joyce's parents have accepted Labitan as one of their own, though. They even refer to him by his own nickname.

"My dad (Kenny) calls him 'Kobe,' as in (Takeru) Kobayashi (the famous Japanese competitive eater), because he always makes fun of how much food Clark eats," Joyce said. "My dad is like 6-foot-7, 285 and Clark's like 5-7, 170, but they both crush food. They could both eat a lot, so they always just rag on each other about that."

But, as Labitan chimed in, Joyce's nickname tops everyone else's.

"It's 'Gerb," Joyce admitted. "When I came in my freshman year, I came in a semester late,

baseball spotlight | clark labitan & jake joyce

so I was already the youngest kid on the team. Everyone already had their nicknames, and they were really trying to give me one, and they had a couple, but they ended up going with Gerb, because of the Gerber baby.

"They say I look like a 2 year old in the face, and that has stuck with me. Even with my summer ball teams, by a week or two, the guys on the summer team are calling me Gerb. So it's stuck with me the past four years. I still kind of think I look young, so it will probably stick with me even longer."

Labitan has another nickname as well, but that's saved for the field.

"My nickname started when I was at Coach Hughes' house for Thanksgiving dinner," Labitan said. "We were at the dinner table and his sisterin-law started calling me 'Chuck.'

"She said, 'You look like this friend of mine named Chuck Kim.' So everyone just lost it. But Coach started using it as a joke, calling me Chuck Kim, and now that's kind of become my persona. When I get on the mound and I'm in the zone, I'm Chuck Kim, not Clark Labitan."

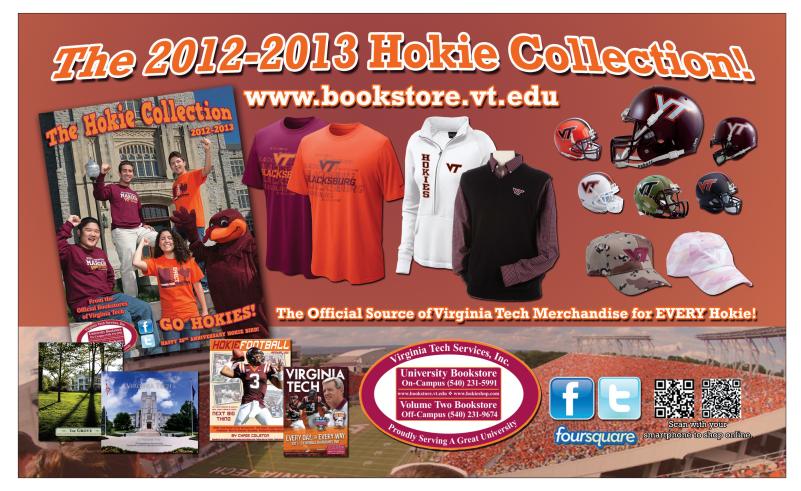
Maybe part of Chuck Kim's persona is a Mohawk because Labitan grows his hair out every season and then shaves it into a Mohawk. This year, he urged Joyce to do the same – as a graduation present.



"I started growing mine probably over a month ago before the Miami series," Labitan said. "I usually do it every season, especially when I'm playing. I wanted to grow my hair out, but I don't

really have the best hair on the team, so I just go with the Mohawk and just grew it out.

"I did well at Miami, so it's kind of a superstition, like with any baseball player, and



I'm still growing it out and I said until the very last game of the year. I've always told Jake to grow out his hair in general because he's afraid to show off his red hair that he thought he had. But I told him to grow it out for me for my graduation present."

"You can ask anyone on the team. I literally cut my hair about once a week, and I go as low you can go on a set of clippers," Joyce said. "I don't think anyone has ever seen my hair longer than one week's growth. So Clark said for his graduation to cut a Mohawk.

"I probably cut mine for the NC State series, and I told him I would do it for his graduation present - not really certain if I could grow it out. So I'm three weeks into it and it's the longest my hair's been since probably first grade. I'm going to keep it going until the last game as well."

They describe each other with having the same mental toughness and having a bulldog mentality when on the mound. But each would love to have one thing from the other's pitching repertoire.

Joyce said, "I would love to have a sidearm fastball at 90 miles an hour that sinks a foot. I wouldn't mind having that and his attitude on the mound."

Labitan countered with, "He's probably got one of the best sliders in college baseball. It's bigleague velocity in the high 8os. And his velocity in general, it's better than mine, and I'd love to have that strikeout pitch."

Ironically, the interview with the two men was conducted just before the weekend series in Blacksburg against No. 5 Virginia. When asked what is it like coming into a game mid-inning and what does Coach Hughes say to them, here were their responses:

"When I come into a situation in mid-inning, I'm not a strikeout guy. I'm more of a ground-ball guy," Labitan said. "So, he'll say, 'All right, we got



a guy on. Let's get this double play, and then we'll get you that win or that save."

Labitan earned a save in the first game on Saturday against the Cavaliers after being called upon with two runners on and one out in a 5-3 game in the eighth. The result? He ended the threat by rolling a double play to end the frame and then worked a perfect ninth.

"I know a lot of times I come into some pretty sticky situations, and a lot of the times, it's a situation where we need a strikeout," Joyce said. "So when I come to the mound, he'll ask me how my stuff is, and whether it's good or not, I'll always tell him my stuff's on. Then he'll give me the ball and say, 'We need a huge punch out here."

Joyce closed the second game on Saturday, recording five outs, three via strikeout, as the Hokies swept UVa in a doubleheader and won a series over their in-state rival for the first time since 2009.

If all goes well in the final two conference regular-season weekends of the year, the Hokies should be preparing for their second trip to the ACC Baseball Championship under Hughes, and in turn, making their second NCAA Baseball Championship.

And there is no doubt, when the situation arises, either yin or yang will be called upon.

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STANDING TALL

Tim Buheller wasn't the biggest guy in the world when he played baseball at Tech, but his career numbers ended up being rather large

by Jimmy Robertson

When asked what was his greatest memory while playing baseball and going to school at Virginia Tech, Tim Buheller maybe gave the best answer ever.

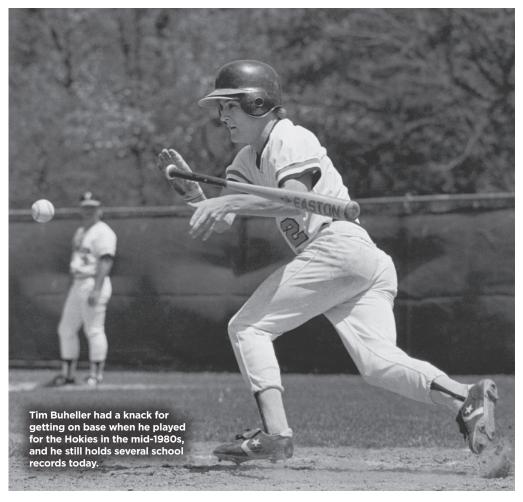
"My favorite memory was every day at Tech," he said.

Buheller, who played baseball at well-known Varina High School in Richmond, wound up at Tech almost by accident. He was getting ready to sign a letter-of-intent with Richmond or ODU or JMU - schools that were recruiting him pretty heavily - following his senior year, but he decided to attend a Cincinnati Reds tryout camp in Colonial Heights, Va., and it was there where a short man with an orange jacket took notice. This man started asking questions of a Cincinnati scout, particularly after Buheller blazed through the 60-yard dash. Buheller also hit a little, pitched some and played in the outfield, and he noticed the guy in the orange jacket watching him closely.

"There were only about seven or eight guys there, and I asked one of the guys, 'Who is that guy in the orange jacket?" Buheller said. "He said, 'That's the Virginia Tech coach, Coach Hartman.' Then I got nervous, but fortunately, I had done all my drills."

Chuck Hartman, Tech's longtime Hall of Fame coach, had never seen Buheller play in a game, but he offered the young man a scholarship on the spot. Buheller, who had never visited the Tech campus, talked things over with his parents for a couple of days before deciding to sign with the

Buheller's first visit to Blacksburg was a memorable one. It occurred in July of 1982 when



he rolled into town to participate in the state's all-star game. In his future home – which, at that time, was between Cassell Coliseum and Lane Stadium, where the football practice fields are currently located - he went 3-for-3 and scored five runs. He also stole two bases in leading the East team to a victory over the West.

It was the start of many wonderful memories, as Buheller went on to become one of the greatest players in Tech history during a career that spanned from 1983-1986.

Though he only stands 5-foot-7, Buheller certainly doesn't lack physical skills - or at least didn't back then. The left-handed hitting outfielder's name is splashed all over the Tech record books, and many of those Tech records stand today. His 32-game hitting streak in 1985 still ranks as the program's best, and he also holds the career record for stolen bases (140), walks (170) and runs (267). In addition, he holds single-season marks for stolen bases (40 in 1985) and at bats (254 in 1985) and is tied for first in hits (92 in 1985) and runs (82 in 1985).

"I was always confident. I always had the 'short-man's disease,' kind of," Buheller laughed. "I thought I could do anything that anyone else did. I could dunk a tennis ball when I played basketball at Varina. I remember leading the team in rebounds one game, and I said, 'I told you guys that I could out-rebound you.' I always wanted to prove myself.

"I didn't doubt my talent. I did wonder when I signed with them, when they had (Franklin) Stubbs and all those guys, what my competition was going to be. But they were losing outfielders, so it was a good transition for me. I platooned a couple of games early and started hitting well, and Coach kept me in there for lefties, too. I became the MVP as a freshman."

Buheller won team MVP honors twice in his career during a time period in which Tech baseball may have been at its all-time best. In 1985, the Hokies, who also featured slugger George Canale, won a program-best 50 games.

Buheller won team MVP honors during his junior year when he recorded the 32-game hitting streak. His streak ended after a dislocated pinkie finger suffered during a headfirst slide forced him to change his grip on the bat. He went o-for-4 in a game against George Mason, though he still hit two line drives that were plucked by infielders.

"I'd say my hitting streak was probably my greatest memory, but I really had so many great memories," Buheller said. "You can't pinpoint one. I love Tech. I'm the biggest Hokie there is around Richmond."

Following his career, Buheller attempted to make a go of it in professional baseball. The Boston Red Sox drafted him in the 19th round, and he spent four seasons in Boston's minor league system, with stops in Elmira, N.Y., Lynchburg, Va., and Winter Haven, Fla.

While playing minor league baseball, Buheller became good friends with Curt Schilling, who went on to become a six-time All-Star and a part of three World Series-winning teams. The two of them roomed together, and even today, remain friends, though mostly through Facebook. Buheller also played tennis with Wade Boggs (a 12-time All-Star third baseman, mostly with the Red Sox) and Roger Clemens (a seven-time Cy Young Award winner, mostly with the Red Sox) during spring training, and he got a hit off of Ramon Martinez (former Los Angeles Dodgers All-Star pitcher) in a spring training game.

But in 1990, Buheller's baseball career came to an end, as the Red Sox released him.

"You kind of know," Buheller said. "I was a great defensive outfielder with a great arm, but if you don't hit .270, .280, .290 in the minors - I was hitting .220, .230, .240 every year - they're not going to keep you around, especially when

you're 28, 29 years old.

"It's tougher 10 years down the road when you think about what you could have changed, thinking if you would have worked a little harder here, a little harder there, that sort of thing. But when you're playing, you don't think about that. I met Ted Williams (a 19-time All-Star with the Red Sox) and didn't even ask for his autograph. Same with Carl Yastrzemski (an 18-time All-Star with the Red Sox). You see all the kids asking for autographs, but as a player, you feel embarrassed to ask."

After being released, he returned to Tech and finished the last 20 or so hours left toward his degree in sports management. An internship in the athletics communications office under current assistant AD Dave Smith marked Buheller's last task before getting that degree.

After that, he managed a health club in the Richmond area called American Family Fitness for nearly eight years. He worked in medical sales for five years, but in 2006, he decided to take a totally different route and work with a good friend at New Millennium Auto Sales in Glen Allen, Va., selling vehicles. He's been doing that ever since.

"We were on the golf course one day, and I told him, 'Man, I'm getting tired of this traveling,' and

he said, 'Well, I've got an internet manager's job open and you'd be good at it. You know everyone in Richmond," Buheller said. "So I took him up on it, and I didn't have to travel any more. Travel was beating me down. I traveled all around Virginia and West Virginia.

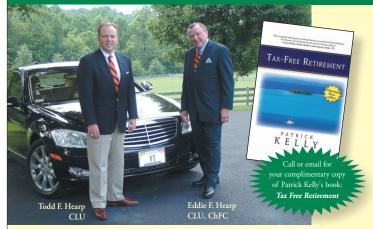
"I like working with people, and that's what this (his current job) is. I enjoy it. You meet someone new every day, and you get a call from someone new every day. You've just got to find that common ground with them, that rapport, and go from there."

Buheller and his ex-wife have two kids, and they take up most of his free time these days. His 16-year-old son, Davis, plays ice hockey and lacrosse, and his 12-year-old daughter, Sydney, is a dancer. But he still manages to make it to a couple of football games each season.

"I love going back to Tech," he admitted. "I still get goose bumps. My kids always laugh at me and ask, 'Dad, do you have goose bumps now?' I'm like, 'Yeah, they're on me.' Happens every time I drive back."

He feels so strongly about his school that he calls himself "Hokie Tim." He even answers his phone that way. He may very well be the biggest Tech fan around, and after talking with him, you'll learn quickly – he's not apologizing for it.

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Smirniotopoulos and Dobbs receive prestigious Skelton Award

by Jimmy Robertson

Men's Nick soccer player Smirniotopoulos and women's track and field and cross country runner Courtney Dobbs received the Skelton Award for Academic Excellence in Athletics - the highest designation handed out by the Tech athletics department - at the annual Athletics Director's Honors Breakfast held April 21 at the Inn at Virginia Tech.

The Skelton Award, named after the late Dr. Bill and Peggy Skelton, is presented each year to a rising junior, senior or fifth-year male and female student-athlete who has participated in intercollegiate athletics for at least two seasons at Tech. Each recipient receives a scholarship of \$5,000 for the upcoming academic year.

Smirniotopoulos, a junior from Falls Church, Va., is a communications major, while Dobbs, a redshirt sophomore from Glen Allen, Va., is an accounting major.

In addition to the Skelton Award recipients, the members of the 2013 Athletic Director's Honor Roll were

also recognized. The AD Honor Roll is designed to pay tribute to student-athletes who have achieved a grade-point average of 3.0 or better during one or both semesters in the preceding calendar year. Since its inception in 1988, the Honor Roll has recognized an average of more than 200 studentathletes each semester. This year, 395 studentathletes made the AD Honor Roll.

Also, three student-athletes received recognition for being honored by the ACC as three of 41 ACC student-athletes who were selected for the Weaver-James-Corrigan Award. The Weaver-James-Corrigan and Jim and Pat Thacker scholarships are awarded to selected student-athletes - three from each league institution - who intend to pursue a graduate degree following completion of their undergraduate requirements. Each recipient receives \$5,000 toward his or her graduate education. Those honored have performed with



distinction in both the classroom and their respective sport, while demonstrating exemplary conduct in the community.

Tech swimmer Laura Simon, track and field thrower Alexander Ziegler and javelin thrower Matthias Treff were the Hokies honored.

Simon, a senior from Simpsonville, S.C., scored in every ACC Championship throughout her career, including back-to-back top-10 finishes in the 1650 freestyle her sophomore and junior campaigns. A biochemistry major, she earned the Skelton Award for Academic Excellence in 2011, along with making the Dean's List every semester.

Treff, a native of Nuremberg, Germany, has finished second and third in his two trips to the NCAA Outdoor Track & Field Championships. His throw of 255 feet, 6 inches (77.88m) at the 2011 NCAA Championships in Des Moines, Iowa, broke both the school and ACC record, and earned him a runner-up finish. He later broke his school record when he won his fourth ACC title in mid-April. He is a three-time selection to ACC All-Academic Team and the USTFCCCA Division I All-Academic Team.

Ziegler, a back-to-back NCAA champion in the hammer throw and the 2013 weight throw national champion, earned All-America honors in each of his seven seasons, finishing no lower than third at any NCAA Championship. The Dischingen, Germany native was named to the USTFCCCA All-Academic Team during each of his three years at Tech, while earning a spot on the ACC All-Academic Team during six of his seasons. In 2011, he was named USTFCCCA's Outdoor Field Scholar Athlete of the Year. He is currently working on his MBA (master's of business administration) at Tech.

Simon, Treff and Ziegler were among 41 student-athletes from around the ACC honored at the annual ACC Postgraduate Luncheon presented by ESPN on April 17 in the Guilford Ballroom at the Sheraton Greensboro at the Four Seasons.

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