

inside

HOKIE SPORTS

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WHAT'S INSIDE:

A position-by-position
preview of the 2014
Hokies' football squad

Official Publication of Virginia Tech Athletics

Kyshoen
Jarrett

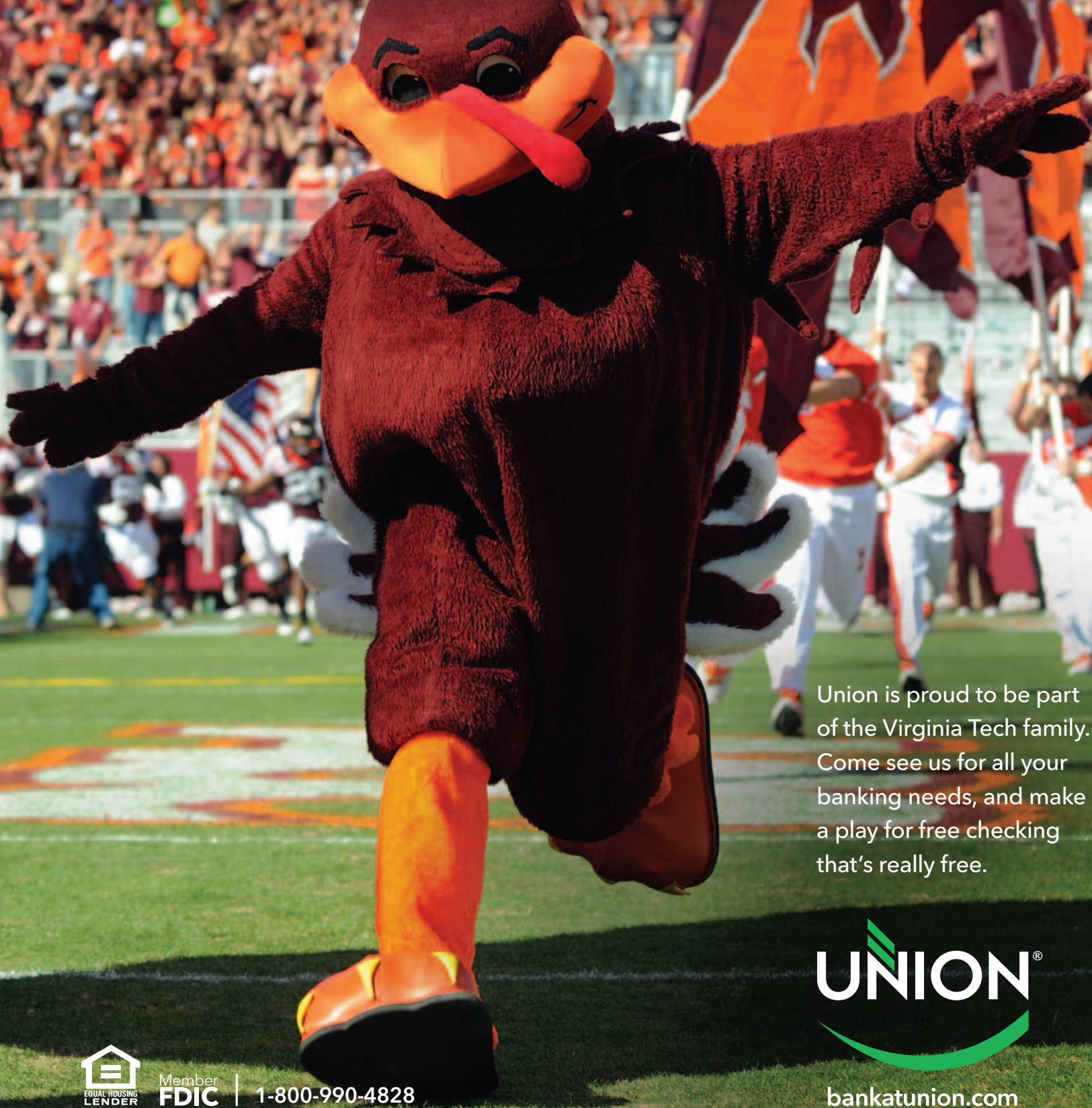
Willie
Byrn

Luther
Maddy

2014 FOOTBALL PREVIEW

Seniors Willie Byrn, Luther Maddy and Kyshoen Jarrett will be counted on to provide leadership and playmaking ability to a Tech team looking to contend in the ACC

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contents

Hokie Club News | 4

News & Notes | 8
Three players earn top honors in strength program

From the Editor's Desk | 11
Brewer excited about future at Tech

Kroger Roth Report | 12
Hokies have talent, but need to improve in trio of areas

Student-Athlete Development | 14
Two softball players attend NCAA Career in Sports Forum

Academic Spotlight - Courtney Dobbs | 16
Tech cross country runner sees a future involving business

Academic Spotlight - David Wang | 17
Tech football player working on a third degree

August Photospread - Indoor Practice Facility | 18
Work continues on the department's \$21 project

Football Position Previews | 21
A position-by-position look at the 2014 Hokies

50 Years of Lane Stadium - Mike Saunders | 40
Former Tech player talks about the first game at Lane

Women's Soccer Preview | 42
Hokies looking for another run at College Cup

Cross Country Preview | 45
Tech women with shot at ACC title, men are rebuilding

Volleyball Preview | 46
Experienced squad has sights set on NCAA bid

Men's Soccer Preview | 48
Tech searching for more offense in 2014



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TECH WOMEN'S HOOPS TAKE EXHIBITION TOUR TO ITALY

In late May, Virginia Tech women's basketball coaches, players and support staff embarked on a 10-day tour of Italy, mixing a little sightseeing with basketball. The group toured Rome, Vatican City, Florence, Venice and Lake Como among other stops. Their trip began in Rome, where they visited Altare della Patria (nicknamed "The Wedding Cake"), a monument dedicated to Victor

Emmanuel, who was the first king of unified Italy (1). They also took in St. Peter's Basilica (2), the largest Catholic church in the world, and the Colosseum (3), one of the greatest works of Roman architecture located in Rome. The team played three games while in Italy, losing a close game to Santa Marinella, 65-61, in Rome (4), beating La Spezia 87-41 in La Spezia

and falling 70-40 to the Israeli National Team in Castel San Pietro Terme. The trip concluded with visits to two of the most beautiful places in Italy. The group stayed in Padova, Italy, but went to Venice (5) to tour the legendary canals. The final leg of the trip was a stop at Lake Como, one of the most beautiful spots in the world (pictured below).





The Donor File

Tom & Diana Beam

HOKIE CLUB LEVEL: Golden Hokie

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WHAT YEAR DID YOU GRADUATE?
VTCC, 1973

FAMILY: Diana (wife), Emily (daughter)



Q&A

Q: A Hokie is ...
A: Anyone who embodies the spirit of *Ut Prosim*.

Q: The Hokie Nation is real because ...
A: All you have to do is look at how we handled the April 16 tragedy. That defines it, no question!

Q: What is your best memory of Virginia Tech athletics?
A: It's a toss up between the BC victory in 1999, the mauling of Miami in 2003 (what a beautiful day that was in Blacksburg), or the 2011 victory over Miami. So many good memories in Lane.

Q: How did you get involved with the Hokie Club?
A: After leaving Blacksburg, like all Hokies, I still wanted to be actively involved with Virginia Tech, and the Hokie Club allows me to do that.

Q: What caused you to become a fan of Virginia Tech?
A: From the very first moment I visited

Virginia Tech as a high school senior, I knew it was a special place, a place I belonged. Attending my first game as a member of the Corps, we played Alabama with Bear Bryant coaching. After that experience, I was a fan for life.

Q: Do you have any game-day superstitions? If so, what are they?
A: Turning my white Tahoe into a Hokie-mobile, decked out in magnets and flags, and playing the Marching Virginians' CD and then tailgating with friends.

Q: Describe your perfect day at Virginia Tech.
A: Any day back in the 'Burg is a perfect day. It has changed so much, but in many ways, it has stayed the same. There is still that "hometown feel." But football weekends in the fall are especially great. They bring out the best in Hokie fans, and even Mother Nature is sporting Chicago maroon and burnt orange.

Q: Do you have any tailgating traditions? If so, tell us your best.

A: Well, my tailgating group always tries to cater the menu to the game day and time. For example, for the UVa game in 2012, we decided to "Soup it up!" since it was going to be a "nooner" and cold. So we did chicken noodle soup, chili, taco soup, etc., all of which could be eaten out of a cup with gloves on. However, we always do two pig roasts per year - one at the spring game and one in the fall. They both are always big hits.

Q: What motivates you to give back to help Virginia Tech athletics?
A: I appreciate that I had a full scholarship from the Air Force for my last two years at Tech in the ROTC and ended up serving 20 years. I think giving to Tech athletics can and will help young student-athletes fulfill their dreams of an education and enhance their opportunities for success as they go forward in life.

Q: I am a Hokie Club member because ...
A: I feel it's important to support Tech athletics, and that it helps the university as a whole.

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Beyer to apply for Rhodes Scholarship

Virginia Tech basketball player Christian Beyer is in the process of applying for a Rhodes Scholarship, the oldest and most prestigious scholarship in the world. Only 32 Americans get selected each year, and chosen recipients will spend two years studying at Oxford University in Oxford, England.

Beyer, a senior from New Bern, North Carolina, is looking to become just the third Tech student to receive a Rhodes Scholarship (William W. Lewis, 1963, and Mark Embree, 1996).

“I wasn’t thinking about it at all, but Katie Cross [associate director in the student-athlete academic support services office] came up to me last January and told me that I fit the scholarship requirements very well,” Beyer said. “I believe it was her that basically nominated me as a potential candidate, and ever since then, I’ve been meeting with Mrs. [Christina] McIntyre [associate director of the university honors program], and she’s been helping me out with the application process.”

Beyer said he was one of four Virginia Tech students applying for the scholarship. The process is lengthy and detailed. An applicant needs eight letters of recommendation, with five of them coming from professors and three from outside sources. He or she also needs a curriculum vitae (basically a resumé of accomplishments), a personal statement not exceeding 1,000 words pertaining to the Rhodes Scholarship and why the applicant feels he or she is a good candidate, and a certified transcript.

Beyer must go through an on-campus interview process, which will determine if Virginia Tech wants to sponsor him for the scholarship. That takes place Sept. 1. If selected, he then will participate in the Rhodes Scholarship interview process, which occurs in late November. Winners usually get announced shortly after that.

Beyer is studying human nutrition, foods and exercise, and plans on attending medical school once he graduates. He wants to become an orthopaedic surgeon.

Three Hokies earn Excalibur Awards

Tech offensive linemen Augie Conte, Wyatt Teller and Laurence Gibson earned Excalibur Awards, the top honor in Dr. Mike Gentry’s strength and conditioning program. The Excalibur Award is more comprehensive than the program’s other honors, looking at all relevant tested areas of football strength and conditioning from strength and power to acceleration, speed, flexibility and agility.

The trio became the first Tech football players to earn the award since former standouts Marcus Davis and Joey Phillips received the honor in 2012.

Conte led all Tech players in the bench press (440 pounds), front squat (460) and push jerk (385). Teller finished second behind Conte in the front squat (450) and push jerk (375), and he actually tied Conte in the bench press, but Conte is considered the leader because he weighs less than Teller (weight is the tiebreaker). Gibson led all Tech players in the power clean (385) and finished fourth in the bench press (430)

Here is a list of the top five in various categories tested:

Bench press	Front squat
Augie Conte (440)	Augie Conte (460)
Andrew Williams (440)	Wyatt Teller (450)
Wyatt Teller (440)	Adam Taraschke (445)
Laurence Gibson (430)	David Wang (435)
Luther Maddy (430)	J.C. Coleman (435)
Push jerk	Vertical jump
Augie Conte (385)	Dadi Nicolas (40.5)
Wyatt Teller (375)	Dahman McKinnon (38.5)
David Wang (360)	Corey Marshall (38)
Ken Ekanem (340)	Deon Newsome (37.5)
Laurence Gibson (340)	J.C. Coleman (37)

and fifth in the push jerk (340).

Three position records fell during testing. Gibson’s 385-pound power clean broke the record for an offensive tackle – one previous held by Conte (375). David Wang’s 435-pound front squat is now the new mark for centers, breaking Andrew Miller’s mark of 410 pounds set in 2011. Corey Marshall’s 38-inch vertical jump is the record for a defensive tackle, snapping his own record of 37.5 set in 2012.

In all, 44 players earned awards during the summer strength and conditioning testing. This included 12 who earned Super Iron Hokie status (Conte, Gibson, Teller, J.C. Coleman, Sam Rogers, Ken Ekanem, Derek Di Nardo, Ronny Vandyke, Chuck Clark, Jonathan Galante, Kyshoen Jarrett and Donovan Riley). Super Iron Hokie status differs from the Excalibur Award in that it takes into account only core exercises such as power clean, bench press, back or front squat and the overhead push jerk.

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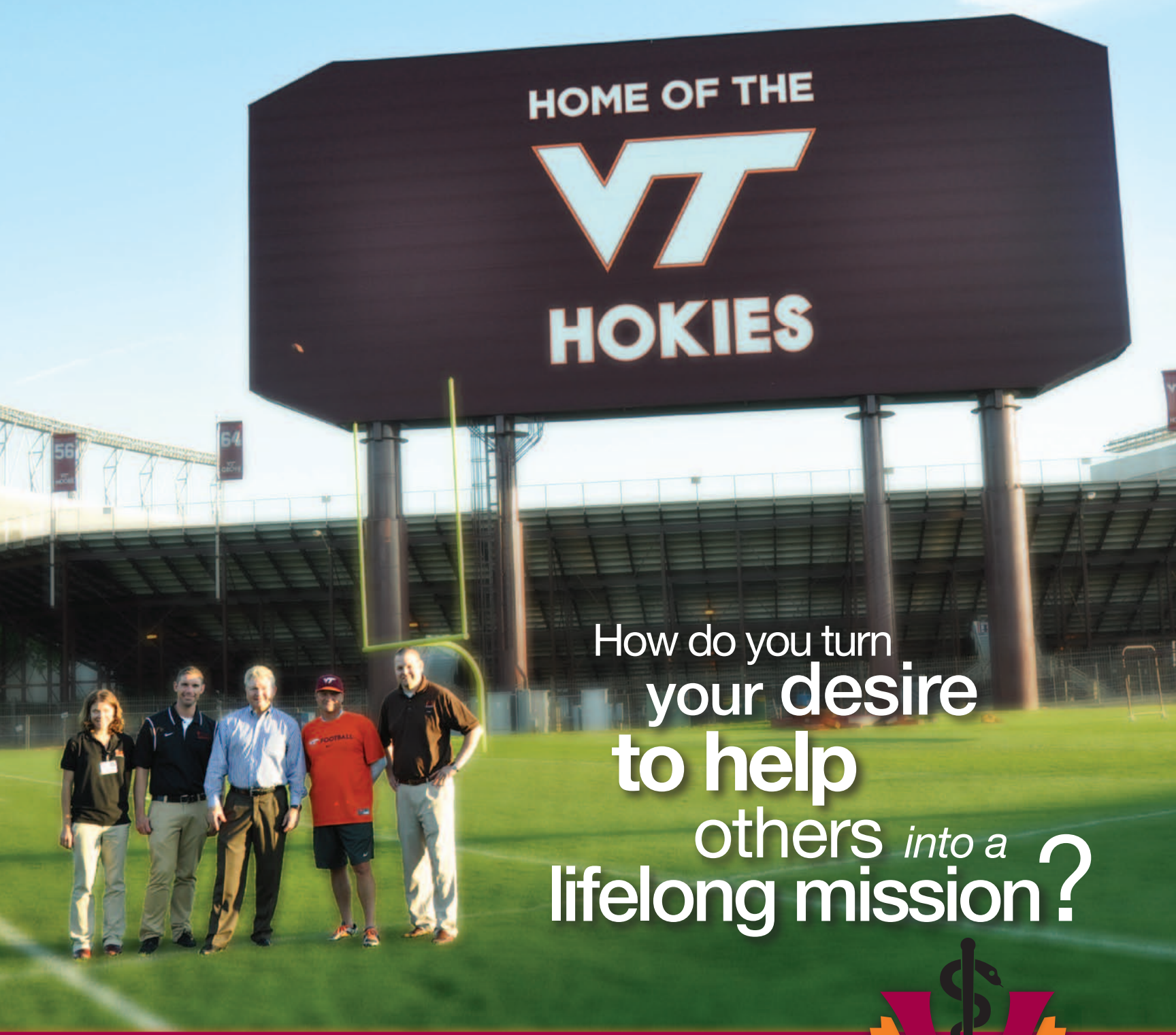
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VIRGINIA • CAROLINAS



editor's desk | by Jimmy Robertson

Change of scenery has Brewer excited about his future – and Tech's

Michael Brewer arrived in Blacksburg at the end of May, and it didn't take him long to make his first major purchase.

A fruitful trip to Dick's Sporting Goods in neighboring Christiansburg resulted in the purchase of a kayak, which he keeps tied down to the bed of his truck. Doing so saves precious time for those quick excursions to the New River in pursuit of elusive smallmouth bass.

The Texas native has been in Blacksburg for less than three months, and yet one would think he's from these parts.

"It's been great. Adjusting from moving from Texas to all the way up here has been really easy," he said. "The guys have been great. A lot of the guys and I will go fishing during our free time. Blacksburg is so awesome as far as all that goes, just the town and the people and the free time to go out and fish whenever I want with the guys. It's been really good."

Certainly, people in these parts appreciate his desire to lure in those New River lunkers. But the question is this – can he reel in victories as the Hokies' quarterback as well?

Of course, the answer depends on whether he actually wins the starting job. Tech's staff likes what Brenden Motley brings to the table. The coaches also like the experience of Mark Leal and the potential of freshmen Andrew Ford, Chris Durkin and Travon McMillian.

But Brewer is arguably the most intriguing of the group. Other than Leal, he is the only one with

game experience, and he played in an offense that threw it practically every down.

Brewer transferred to Tech from Texas Tech, where he played in 13 games (zero starts) the past two seasons after taking a redshirt year as a freshman. He graduated early, thus enabling him to transfer to another Division I school and be eligible immediately. He has two years of eligibility remaining.

Brewer expected to be the starter for Texas Tech last season, but a back injury sidelined him and allowed two freshmen to solidify themselves ahead of him on the Red Raiders depth chart.

"If I didn't hurt my back, I'd more than likely still be there playing," he admitted.

He decided to transfer after last season. He wanted to go to TCU or Texas, where his father and grandfather played and whose campus is not far from his Lake Travis, Texas, home. But Texas Tech denied his requests, refusing to let him transfer to another Big 12 school.

So he cast far and wide, searching for the perfect school and the perfect fit. He picked the Hokies for several reasons.

"I felt like, throughout the process, that Coach [Scot] Loeffler and I really clicked, and we could potentially accomplish some big things together," Brewer said. "I visited here and fell in love with the place. The guys were great, and having a chance to win every week was big for me. At the end of the day, that was the biggest deciding factor.

"It was important to go to a school where I was

going to fit in and enjoy playing, but also had the chance to win immediately and has a chance to win every game. With our defense, the way it's been and the way it's going to be ... if we continue to improve on offense, we've got a chance every week. That was important to me."

Brewer's biggest challenge will be making up the difference in schematic knowledge that Motley, Leal and Ford possess on him. Motley and Leal have been in Loeffler's meeting room for around 16 months, while Ford has been in the system since January. But Brewer did get to meet with Loeffler for two hours a week this offseason, as allowed by the NCAA.

Plus, talent can often overcome a lot of things. Tech's staff needs to find out quickly if he possesses the talent to do just that – and win games.

Brewer, though, is excited about the challenge.

"I think this might be the first time since my freshman year that I'm truly excited to go to camp," he said. "I've been through this whole deal for three and a half years now, and there are going to be certain things that are new, just being with a new team and a new system. But at the end of the day, I've been there and done that, and I'm sure after a couple of days, it's all going to feel 100 percent natural."

By the time Tech fans read this, a decision on the quarterback spot may have been made. Brewer could end up being the guy.

If that happens, then it will be Tech's staff that reeled in a big one. 

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kroger roth report | by Bill Roth



Trio of areas need improving, but team's talent should leave Tech fans feeling optimistic about 2014 season



There is nothing more exciting than the start of another college football season, especially at Virginia Tech, where the anticipation of the 2014 season has been growing since January.

It's a new era in college football – 2014 marks the first year of the College Football Playoff. This fall also ushers in a new era in Tech football, with fresh faces at quarterback and other key positions.

Now, if Tech is to have the season that Hokie fans want, it must improve in three key metrics over last year:

RUSHING: Tech averaged just 119.8 yards per game last season, which ranked 13th in the ACC and was the lowest mark ever during the Frank Beamer era. In fact, that's the lowest season average at Tech since 1972.

That's not a typo – 1972, as in President Richard Nixon, Watergate and Sammy Davis, Jr. belting out “The Candy Man” (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zRf1Ad_Txsg).

Injuries on the offensive line and at tight end were problematic last year. But Tech has more depth and experience on its offensive line heading into this fall, and the talent at running back – judging by what we saw during spring practice – is better. Many of Tech's problems last year (third-down conversions, red-zone

percentage, stalled drives, etc.) all come back to that running game. The rushing stats from last year hopefully were a once-in-a-40-year blip on what's otherwise been a remarkably consistent part of Tech's program.

PASSING EFFICIENCY: Tech quarterbacks have thrown 32 interceptions over the past two seasons, the most in a two-year period in Tech history. In fact, the passing efficiency numbers during this period have been the lowest at Tech since 1989. Regardless of who is playing the quarterback position, the Hokies need him to be more efficient, make better decisions and be more productive overall. Want a dramatically revealing metric? Since 2009, when the Hokies have thrown one interception or less in a game, they've compiled 27-2 record against ACC opponents. In that same span, when the Hokies have thrown two or more interceptions against ACC opponents, they are just 1-7.

KICKING: Tech kickers missed 11 field-goal attempts last season, tying for the most misses in a season in the Beamer era. Four different placekickers missed at least one field-goal attempt last season, and that's why Beamer has brought in new candidates for 2014. He has maintained that he has no qualms whatsoever

about using a true freshman as the principal kicker.

“We left too many points on the field last year. Sometimes, you just need the points and have to make a field goal,” the coach told me. “I think we have good kickers. I know we have good kickers. But like at quarterback, we need to find one guy who is going to stand out and be consistent for us all season long.”

So the takeaway is this: last year, Tech posted historic (or near-historic) lows in three key metrics: rushing, passing and kicking ... and yet finished 8-5.

Yeah, that's right. Despite struggling in some critical areas, Tech won eight games, which indicates the 2013 team did a lot of really good things, especially on defense.

You don't have to be a “Moneyball” expert or even an analytics junkie to believe that, if the 2014 team shows slight-to-even moderate improvement in each of those three metrics – which appears likely – this team will have a really nice season.

“I told the staff that we're going to have a lot of coaching to do,” Beamer said. “We have some young guys at key positions, but we have a lot of talented guys. What I'm interested in is getting better each week. I think when some of these guys get experience and get some real playing time, the talent is there to be really good.”

SOME NAMES TO WATCH

Most fans recognize that, in Kendall Fuller and Brandon Facyson, Tech has two of the most remarkable cornerbacks in college football. We saw what those two freshmen could do last year, and both should be even better this fall during their sophomore campaigns. In general, Tech's defense will be more athletic and faster than last year's group, which finished among the national leaders in total defense (fourth), pass efficiency defense (fifth), interceptions (tied for sixth), sacks per game (tied for seventh) and rushing defense (10th).

There are plenty of stars out there like Fuller and Facyson – and on both sides of the ball – but more will emerge this fall. Who might they be? Here are some potential candidates for stardom:

Joshua Stanford – Stanford played a bunch last year (707 plays) and had 40 receptions as a freshman. Consider this: only 11 receivers in Tech history have caught 100-plus passes in a career. Stanford is well on his way.

“He's uber-competitive. He's one of those guys who wants to win every drill,” receivers coach Aaron Morehead told me. “He's been

more consistent than he's ever been.”

If Stanford continues to improve – he was named the offense's MVP in the spring – he is going to have a great career for the Hokies.

Bucky Hodges – In many ways, Hodges was one of the most intriguing prospects to come out of any Virginia High School League program in recent years. At 6-foot-6, 245 pounds, he's an amazing athlete, and many assumed he'd follow in the footsteps of Logan Thomas or Florida State's E.J. Manuel (also a Virginia Beach product) and end up as a quarterback. But Hodges thrived at tight end in the spring. He was simply exceptional.

Michael Brewer – After graduating from Texas Tech in May, Brewer, a quarterback, came to Blacksburg, where he'll have two years of eligibility remaining for the Hokies. He's the first ever “free-agent signee” in the Beamer era, and how he adapts to Tech's system, particularly in making the right reads in the running game and in protection schemes, will be huge. We know the guy can sling the football – that's not a question. All the other intangibles will be the key to Brewer's tenure as a Hokie.

Deon Clarke – During the last two scrimmages in the spring, Clarke might have been Tech's best linebacker. He's very explosive and has sensational speed at the “backer” position. When you hear about the Hokies being faster on defense in 2014, well, this is one of the guys who delivers that speed.

Ken Ekanem – This is the year for the former two-time All-Met defensive end from Centreville, Virginia, to make it happen. Remember, Ekanem was one of Virginia's most highly recruited players when he signed with the Hokies back in 2012, picking Tech over 20 schools, including finalists Notre Dame, North Carolina and Oregon.

“He looks the part,” defensive coordinator Bud Foster told me. “He's been nicked up some since he's been here, as everyone knows, but he was outstanding this spring. He really looks the part.”

Ekanem is just a sophomore, and at 6-3, 245, he has three full seasons ahead of him.

“His time is now,” Foster told me.

The 2014 Hokies probably don't have the experience or depth they'd like at each position, but if they stay healthy, the Hokies have the talent to win a bunch of games.

It will be fun to watch this team develop over the next four months.



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Tech softball duo attends NCAA Career in Sports Forum

Most Hokie student-athletes have been training and competing in their respective sports since childhood, and it’s no wonder that many hope to pursue careers in intercollegiate athletics. In June, two Hokie softball players were provided with the opportunity to enhance their professional development skills and learn first hand what it takes to be a successful coach and athletic administrator at the collegiate level.

Jessica McNamara and Dani Anderson were chosen out of seven Tech student-athletes and more 1,100 student-athletes nationwide to attend the NCAA Career in Sports Forum held in Indianapolis, Indiana. This four-day event provided 200 NCAA student-athletes with the opportunity to network and gain experience from current athletics professionals from across all NCAA divisions. The event was organized by the NCAA Leadership Development department and was created to provide student-athletes with a “big-picture” view of the career tracks available within the sports business, with the primary focus on intercollegiate athletics.

McNamara, a junior communications major from Centerville, Virginia, was interested in attending the Career in Sports Forum because she would like to pursue a career in athletics after college, but hasn’t yet narrowed down her specific field of interest. The forum allowed her to explore the variety of careers in athletics, and she believes her experiences as a Virginia Tech student-athlete have shaped her professional goals.

“I love being around the student-athlete environment,” McNamara said. “The personalities of athletes are what intrigue me the most,

particularly the competitiveness. I want to share my insight and help young athletes succeed and reach their academic and athletic goals. I was able to experience this guidance as a Virginia Tech student-athlete, and that makes me want to pass it along.”

Anderson, a native of Rio Linda, California, graduated in May with a degree in human nutrition, foods and exercise, and she will begin her graduate studies in physical therapy at Sacramento State this September. She recently received the NCAA Women’s Enhancement Program Postgraduate Scholarship for Careers in Athletics and was required to attend the Career in Sports Forum as a scholarship recipient. An active member of the Physical Therapy Club and National Society of Collegiate Scholars during her time at Tech, Anderson gained many skills that helped her successfully balance the tremendous demands of being a Division I student-athlete and plans to use those same abilities to succeed in reaching her career goals.

“Being a student-athlete will help with my future career goals because I now know what it’s like to have a vision,” Anderson said. “I will continue to use the skills I have developed as a student-athlete, not only to improve the lives of my patients, but also to offer advice to younger athletes who remain unaware of the proper treatment of injuries.”

The NCAA covered all costs associated with the forum, including airfare, hotel accommodations, meals and program materials. During the first day of the event, participants were split into color teams, which were led by a group of 17 facilitators

comprised of athletics administrators and coaches from NCAA institutions. Day two focused on exploring careers in the sports industry, including those besides coaching or administration. Participants attended networking lunches and dinners as well. Day three provided more insight into each student-athletes’ area of interest. Participants were separated into coaching tracks based on their sport of interest as well as an administrative track. Participants also heard from professionals in sports information, marketing, student-athlete development and media relations and had the opportunity to gain knowledge about the similarities and differences involved at each of the NCAA divisions.

On the final day of the forum, former University of Tennessee women’s athletics director emeritus Joan Cronan provided a keynote speech where she discussed her journey as a female athletics director and shared personal stories of her interactions with Tennessee coaching legend Pat Summitt. Anderson and McNamara both deemed this to be the most memorable part of their experience.

“Her speech was inspirational and uplifting,” McNamara said. “I didn’t want it to end.”

Next summer, the Tech Department of Athletics plans to establish an internship program that will provide Hokie student-athletes interested in athletics administration a similar experience. The Virginia Tech Department of Athletics is committed to helping student-athletes achieve their goals beyond graduation, and nominating student-athletes to attend the NCAA Career in Sports Forum is clearly demonstrates that commitment. VT



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COURTNEY DOBBS

Cross Country | Glen Allen, Virginia

by **Jimmy Robertson**

Courtney Dobbs is a fifth-year senior on the Virginia Tech cross country and track and field teams. Last season, she earned All-ACC honors and finished in the top 15 of every meet. She graduated with a degree in accounting this past May and is working on a second undergraduate degree (finance). The All-ACC Academic Team member for cross country wants to work with a start-up business, perhaps even starting her own.

Why did you decide to get an accounting degree?

“I knew I was going to do some type of business major because my dad owns a business [an auto body shop in Fredericksburg]. He’s not a car or truck specialist, but he knows about business, and I like how he’s a leader and how he lives his life. It [her major] was always going to be business. I got here, and everybody hated the first accounting course, but I didn’t struggle, so I thought I’d stick with it, and that’s what I did. I like anything that’s challenging. The coursework was challenging, so I stuck with it.”

You’ve been working on an interesting project of your own. Please explain it to us.

“A developer and I have an application that integrates with building systems and allows you, as an employee or a tenant, to vote on a temperature request change. It will crowd-source all the requests within in certain zone within a certain period of time and send it to the building automation system. We found that temperature is a big problem in big buildings. The HVAC system doesn’t do what the tenants want it to do.

“We’re supposed to launch tests in the Rackspace building over in the Corporate Research Center. It’s taken a lot longer than I expected. I think in a month we’ll be in Rackspace and connected to their system and people will actually be getting to vote.

“I’d say it’s still in project phase right now, but we’ve got patents and things pending. We’ll see where it goes. It’s been a great ride. I’ve learned a lot, and that’s been the biggest thing so far.”

How did you get started with that particular project?

“I had a neighbor who is in the HVAC industry, and he asked me if I knew any developers. I brought on a developer and took it on as my own




project. First, I went the route of, ‘I’ll pay you if you build something,’ but you don’t find someone passionate about your project if you do that. So I basically sent out a job application through ‘Hokies for Hire’ and a couple of other things, and I got a couple of responses. Then I ended up just networking and finding two developers, and they didn’t even see my job application. They knew the constraints of a start-up, and they’d rather have ownership than get paid. So I’ve learned that’s the way to go if you’re trying to find someone to join your team early. Give them ownership and make sure they’re passionate about it.”

What do you want to do in the future?

“That’s a good question. I’m in that limbo phase

right now. People are pushing me to get my CPA [Certified Public Accountant] license and go work for an accounting firm and make connections there and then do something on my own. Then I have some friends who have started successful companies, and they’re like, ‘Go for the start-up thing. Do something big.’

“I think I’m just taking on opportunities and see where I end up by next year. I’d like to stay in the technology and start-up world. I like small groups of people working together to solve big problems instead of being in the corporate world auditing someone’s books. That doesn’t seem fulfilling to me. I see myself staying plugged in with the start-up scene.” 

DAVID WANG

Football | Ashburn, Virginia

by **Jimmy Robertson**

David Wang is in his sixth year with the Virginia Tech football program after missing the better parts of two seasons with injuries. He graduated in 2011 with a degree in management and earned a second undergraduate degree last year in marketing. Now, he is working on a master’s degree in curriculum and instruction.

Why did you decide to major in management and later get a degree in marketing?

“To be honest, I took a lot of business classes in high school. So when I got here, I applied to the business school and got in, which is easier than trying to transfer in after you want to declare a major. But after having taken those seven or eight business classes in high school, I knew I wanted to do something in business. I really liked it and stuck with it when I got here.

“I hadn’t planned on getting a second degree, but our academic advisers told me that marketing was so closely related to business management that I’d only have to take the upper-division classes. They [the two majors] work hand in hand. I wouldn’t have to take that many classes, and then in my final year, I’d have my marketing degree, so I did that and completed all that.”

Most student-athletes graduate with one degree, but you’re closing in on your third. How have you managed to do that?

“A lot of student-athletes take 12 credits a semester. I’ve taken 15 every semester since I’ve been here, and I’ve been here in the summer and I take at least nine credits during the summer. So I finished [his first degree] within three full years. I just wanted to get ahead so that, each fall, I could relax more and not worry about how far into the degree process I’m in and whether that was going to affect my eligibility. As it turned out, I never slowed down during the regular season.”


What is curriculum and instruction?

“It’s using technology to teach. We’re focusing on schools and integrating technology into lesson plans. In the past, it’s [teaching] been more handouts and textbooks and overheads. A lot of teachers are using, or need to use, smart-board technology. My master’s focuses on teaching that technology to the teachers.”



What do you hope to do in the future?

“I just like dealing with people and the idea of controlling from a managerial standpoint. You can set rules and take care of everyone who is under you. You’re in a leadership position, and that’s cool.

“I’m not sure exactly what I’ll do. Everyone keeps on telling me that I’ll be the most qualified athlete coming out of Tech, but I’m not sure yet. I knew that, as long as I was here, I wanted to get the most out of it, and after I graduate, if football doesn’t work out, I’ll have something to fall back on.” 

BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

Workers from W.M. Jordan Company continue to make progress on the construction of the foundation of Virginia Tech's new indoor practice facility. The \$21.3 million project will feature a building that will be 210 feet wide, 400 feet long and 85 feet high, and will have an artificial turf surface. Eight-foot padded walls, wide sidelines, a full scoreboard and 40-second clocks on each end will allow for a full-contact scrimmage.

With the building being constructed on one of the Steve Johnson Practice Fields, the Tech athletics department split the other practice field into two smaller fields. The Hokies are conducting the first part of their preseason practices on the two smaller fields and then conducting the latter part of practices at Lane Stadium.

"It's a little difficult, but it's worth it to get this indoor facility," Tech football coach Frank Beamer said. "Once we get that done, I told our donors I won't ask them for another dime because we'll have everything we need here."

Tech administrators expect the project to be completed by August of 2015. 



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2014
QUARTERBACKS
PREVIEW



AFTER TRANSFERRING FROM TEXAS TECH, BREWER EXCITED ABOUT ENTERING THE FRAY AT QUARTERBACK *by Jimmy Robertson*

Tech's players admittedly knew little about new quarterback Michael Brewer before he arrived on campus at the end of May. But once he started participating in seven-on-seven passing drills over the summer, he quickly won their admiration.

In summer workouts, the quarterbacks used a script to run passing plays that offensive coordinator Scot Loeffler wanted them to work on, and having seen those plays on numerous occasions, the defense started cheating on them. One occasion drew the ire of Brewer, who changed one of the plays and burned the defense for a big gain.

“It can get pretty competitive out there, but it's been great,” Brewer said days before Tech started August practices. “I've liked it [seven-on-seven drills] a lot. It's been big for me because I've been able to develop some timing with some of the receivers that I probably wouldn't have been able to develop if we weren't doing that. So I feel good going into fall camp with timing and all those aspects of the game with my receivers and running backs and offensive linemen.”

Brewer, a transfer from Texas Tech, is one of five quarterbacks on the depth chart vying to replace three-year starter Logan Thomas. The Hokies came out of spring practice without a clear No. 1, as Loeffler wanted to get an evaluation of Brewer and freshman Chris Durkin first before naming a starter. Both arrived on campus in late May.

Brewer is eligible to play right away because he graduated from Texas Tech in May. He missed the first part of last season for the Red Raiders because of a back injury, and by the time of his return, freshmen Davis Webb and Baker Mayfield had solidified their spots on the depth chart ahead of him. That played a role in his decision to transfer.

So what is the scouting report on Brewer? Tech's players refer frequently to his competitiveness. He gives a little more detailed account of his game.

“I went to Texas Tech and threw it around a lot, so I feel very comfortable standing in the pocket and throwing it around,” he said. “I feel like another big part of my game is being able to extend plays with my feet. Not necessarily tucking it and running it, but moving around the pocket and finding receivers down the field. If nothing is there, then I can pick up a first down with my feet.”

Brewer comes in as one of just two quarterbacks on Tech's depth chart with any game experience. He played in nine games as a redshirt freshman in 2012, completing 34 of 48 passes for 375 yards, with four touchdowns and no interceptions. As a redshirt sophomore last season, he completed 7 of 10 for 65 yards and a touchdown.

Mark Leal, who subbed in for an injured Logan Thomas during the Sun Bowl, is the only other Tech quarterback with any game action, having played sparingly over the past three years. He and Brenden Motley, last year's No. 3 signal caller, got

A QUICK GLANCE

Returning starter: none

Starter lost: Logan Thomas (40 career starts)

Projected new starter: Michael Brewer

Top reserves: Brenden Motley, Mark Leal

Newcomers: Brewer, Andrew Ford, Chris Durkin, Travon McMillian

Breakout candidate: Brewer

Notes: None of Tech's quarterbacks has started a college game ... Thomas started 40 games in his career and played in 47 ... Thomas set at least 11 school records during his career ... Prior to entering the Sun Bowl game in place of an injured Thomas, Leal had attempted just 24 passes in his career ... Motley has not played in a game at Tech, and Leal has played in just eight games.

2014 DEPTH CHART

- | | |
|----|----------------------------------|
| 9 | Brenden Motley (6-2, 218, r-So.) |
| 6 | Mark Leal (6-0, 206, r-Sr.) |
| 12 | Michael Brewer (6-0, 196, r-Jr.) |
| 17 | Andrew Ford (6-3, 205, Fr.) |
| 13 | Chris Durkin (6-4, 242, Fr.) |
| 19 | Travon McMillian (6-0, 201, Fr.) |

most of the reps with the first-team offense this spring, with mixed results coming from both.

That said, Brewer isn't assuming that he will be the starter.

“Anywhere you go at this level, there is going to be competition, especially at a big-time program like Virginia Tech,” he said. “It's been great so far. There have been no issues in the quarterback room or anything like that. We're all competing and making each other better, and at the end of the day, that is going to make the football team better.”

Brewer knows Tech's history. He knows the Hokies have struggled on offense of late. He also knows that the Hokies possess a strong defense each year. At Texas Tech, the offense needed to score 40 points for the Red Raiders to win. That's not the case in Blacksburg.

“At the end of the day, it was important to go to a school where I was going to fit in and I was going to enjoy playing, but also to a school that had the chance to win immediately and had a chance to win every game,” Brewer said. “With our defense, the way it's been and the way it's going to be, if we continue to improve on offense, we've got a chance every week. That was important to me in the decision, and I'm excited that it has all worked out, and I'm here in Blacksburg.”



2014 WIDE RECEIVERS DEPTH CHART

TAILBACKS

- 4 J.C. Coleman (5-7, 190, Jr.)
- 14 Trey Edmunds (6-1, 220, r-So.)
- 42 Marshawn Williams (5-11, 229, Fr.)
- 15 Joel Caleb (6-2, 203, r-So.)
- 39 Daniel Dyer (5-9, 208, r-Sr.)
- 25 Jerome Wright (5-11, 230, So.)
- 22 Shai McKenzie (5-10, 220, Fr.)

FULLBACKS

- 45 Sam Rogers (5-11, 220, So.)
- 47 Greg Gadell (5-10, 209, r-Sr.)
- 46 Griffin Hite (5-11, 230, r-Jr.)
- Mike Wandey (5-11, 242, r-Fr.)

EDMUNDS BACK TO HEADLINE DEEP AND TALENTED TAILBACK SPOT

by Jimmy Robertson

Early July saw an influx of Tech football players returning to Blacksburg to work out and to attend summer school. The team began strength and conditioning workouts on July 9, and on the first day, the skill players – quarterbacks, running backs, receivers and defensive backs – had to run 110-yard sprints in an allotted time of 15 seconds per sprint.

Coming off a broken leg last November that required surgery, Trey Edmunds ran every sprint. He also completed each one in the required time.

In other words, he’s back.

“I’m feeling good,” he said. “Eager for the season. I’m ready to get things started and get back rolling.”

Edmunds rolled along fairly well last season, considering it served as his first collegiate season. He led the Hokies with 675 yards rushing, averaged 4.1 yards per carry and scored a team-leading 10 rushing touchdowns. In the regular-season finale against Virginia, he was on pace for his third 100-yard rushing game, but he suffered that broken leg in the second half, and the injury ended his season.

Even getting a solid season from Edmunds, though, the Hokies struggled to run the ball. Tech rushed for 1,557 yards and averaged just 3.2 yards per carry. Tech’s 119.8 yards per game ranked a grim 109th nationally.

“He [offensive coordinator Scot Loeffler] brings it up a lot,” Edmunds said of the running game. “In order to be a great football team, you have to be able to run the ball and throw the ball. You can’t be one-dimensional, and that’s the thing we’re working on this year. I definitely think we’re going to correct that problem, and I’m eager to see how much we’re going to correct it.

“We had a couple of pieces that we were missing last year, and there are a couple of

things we need to correct. But just talking and looking over film and doing extra stuff this year, I feel like it’s going to get better. I’m just eager to see how much it is going to get better. I know it’s going to get better, and I can’t wait to see it.”

It figures to get better because of experience and an infusion of young talent at the tailback spot. Edmunds got better as the season went along a year ago, rushing for at least 60 yards in Tech’s final three regular-season games, and he and J.C. Coleman, who rushed for 284 yards despite being bothered with a sprained ankle early in the year, provide the experience.

After the season, Tech’s staff added young talent in the form of Marshawn Williams and Shai McKenzie, both of whom graduated from high school early and enrolled for the spring semester. McKenzie missed spring practice while recovering from a torn ACL suffered in a high school game last September and may take a redshirt year depending on how he progresses during the first few weeks of August practices. But Williams probably will be on the field.

Williams ranked third on the depth chart coming out of spring practice after an outstanding spring. A huge back at 229 pounds, Williams possesses outstanding footwork to make people miss in the open field, and more importantly, he picked up the offense rather quickly this spring. His potential is unlimited, but he missed the first part of August practices after undergoing surgery for a hernia. He is questionable for the season opener against William & Mary.

Other players stacked at the tailback spot include Joel Caleb, Daniel Dyer and Jerome Wright. Caleb scored the lone touchdown in the Maroon-White game this spring, while Wright ran for 27 yards on seven carries in the Sun Bowl. They all bring something to the table.

“I’m sure each and every one of the guys

A QUICK GLANCE

Returning starters: Trey Edmunds (10 career starts), Sam Rogers (two career starts)

Starters lost: none

Projected new starters: none

Top reserves: J.C. Coleman, Marshawn Williams, Joel Caleb, Greg Gadell

Newcomers: Williams, Shai McKenzie

Breakout candidate: Williams

Notes: Edmunds’ 12 total touchdowns last season ranked tied for fifth in the ACC ... Edmunds’ 10 rushing touchdowns ranked ninth in the league ... Tech averaged 119.8 yards rushing per game, a number that ranked 13th in the ACC ... Outside of Edmunds’ 77-yard touchdown run against Alabama and Chris Mangus’ 76-yard scoring run against Western Carolina, the longest run by a Tech tailback was 13 yards ... Tech’s running backs combined to catch 54 passes a year ago.

welcomes all comers,” Edmunds said. “Just to get out there and have a lot of guys with the talent and ability that we all have and to go and compete every single day really speaks to the talent on this football team and the players that the coaches are recruiting. Competition brings out the best in us, so I can’t wait.”

At the fullback spot, Sam Rogers – Mr. Versatility – returns. Tech’s staff uses Rogers in a variety of ways. He blocks, he runs, he catches and he even threw a pass last year as a true freshman. He also sees time on special teams. His versatility makes him invaluable.

But the attention will be on the tailbacks. Can someone emerge to become the next David Wilson or Ryan Williams? The list of candidates is lengthy.

“Each back brings different things to the table, and any given day, each guy can have a big day,” Edmunds said. “I’d tell people to keep their eyes on all of us.”



BYRN, RECEIVERS EXPECTING MORE BIG PLAYS OUT OF PASSING GAME THIS SEASON

by Jimmy Robertson

A year ago, every player in Tech’s offense spent pretty much the entire spring practice and the regular season learning the schemes of offensive coordinator Scot Loeffler.

After a second spring practice in Loeffler’s system, receiver Willie Byrn is ready for more advanced work.

“Coach [Aaron] Moorehead [Tech’s receivers coach] talks to me about some stuff, and it’s a little more advanced, just trying to pick my brain and see what I’m thinking,” Byrn said. “We call it ‘grad school’ work.”

Byrn thinks that two spring practices and a season in Loeffler’s offense will be extremely advantageous this season, especially considering that Tech returns its top three receivers from a year ago. The Hokies lose D.J. Coles, who specialized as a red-zone threat last season (six touchdown receptions), but Moorehead played mostly Byrn, Demitri Knowles and Josh Stanford anyway, with all three starting at least six games a year ago.

The trio played reasonably well, as all three caught at least 40 passes, marking the first time in Tech’s history that three players had caught at least 40 passes in a season. But the Hokies lacked big plays out of this group. In fact, Tech had just three passing plays of more than 50 yards last season.

Of course, a lot goes into making big plays. The line needs to protect, and the quarterback needs to make an accurate throw. But the receivers need to get separation and make the catch.

With five receivers back from last season, the Hokies figure to make more plays this season just on experience alone.

“I would say definitely,” Byrn said when asked

if fans could expect to see more big plays in the passing game. “That’s the goal. I think we made some good plays last year, and we had a chance to make a lot more.

“It just comes down to execution and getting comfortable. Once you don’t have to think so much about where to line up and what your exact job is, that’s when you can look at the guy in front of you and play a chess game. You can beat them with your craft. I think we’re heading in that direction. We’ve got to keep improving.”

Surprisingly, Byrn, a former walk-on, led all Tech receivers with 51 catches last season. In fact, going into last season, he had caught just one pass in his career.

He also led the Hokies in yardage with 660 yards. Despite being less than 6 feet tall and weighing around 185 pounds, he emerged as the Hokies’ most dependable receiver.

Stanford and Knowles have similar aspirations. Stanford caught 40 passes for 640 yards last season, and Moorehead really liked what he saw out of Stanford this spring and expects him to emerge as a big-time player this season.

Knowles finished second on the team with 45 catches for 641 yards and three touchdowns. He provides the speed element that the Hokies desperately need, but he needs to be more consistent.

The trio of Deon Newsome, Carlis Parker and Charley Meyer showed promise this spring. Newsome brings speed, while Parker does a lot of things naturally as a receiver. Meyer is a bigger version of Byrn, and he was the only one of this trio to catch a pass last season – he hauled in one.

A QUICK GLANCE

Returning starters: Josh Stanford (12 career starts), Willie Byrn (seven career starts)

Starter lost: D.J. Coles (11 career starts, eight last year)

Projected new starter: Demitri Knowles (nine career starts)

Top reserves: Carlis Parker, Deon Newsome, Charley Meyer

Newcomers: Cam Phillips, Isaiah Ford, Kendrick Holland, Jaylen Bradshaw

Breakout candidate: Stanford

Notes: Tech’s receivers caught just four passes of more than 30 yards last season ... Coles led Tech a year ago with six touchdown receptions ... Knowles started six games last season, but only one of the final six ... Stanford has caught one touchdown pass in his career ... Byrn’s 51 catches last season ranked fifth on Tech’s single-season list for receptions ... Kevin Asante, who played 10 games in 2012, was not with the Tech program last season, but has returned to the team.

Tech’s staff also brought in a quartet of talented and fast receivers in Isaiah Ford, Cam Phillips, Jaylen Bradshaw and Kendrick Holland to create competition and to get some playmakers on the field. They will have every opportunity to create an impact.

The Hokies have a lot of candidates to make plays. It will be interesting to see who emerges.

“We were balanced last year. Hopefully, we’ll have some more playmakers,” Byrn said. “In the receiving room, we always talk about who is going to be in the lead for receptions at the end of the year, but it was more like a competition thing. We’d talk about it during the week, and then once game day came around, we were all unselfish. When you do that, you end up getting the best results for yourself.”

2014 DEPTH CHART

FLANKERS

- 5 Josh Stanford (6-0, 202, r-So.)
- 82 Willie Byrn (5-11, 187, r-Sr.)
- 20 Deon Newsome (5-11, 198, r-Fr.)
- 81 Kevin Asante (6-1, 189, r-Jr.)

SPLIT ENDS

- 80 Demitri Knowles (6-1, 182, r-Jr.)
- 16 Carlis Parker (6-3, 193, So.)
- 83 Charley Meyer (6-1, 211, r-So.)
- 18 David Prince (6-1, 178, r-Fr.)
- 17 Michael Brainard (6-0, 193, r-Jr.)



Ryan Malleck

MALLECK’S RETURN ADDS TO A TALENTED GROUP OF TIGHT ENDS

by Jimmy Robertson

Other than perhaps Ronny Vandyke, no other player on Tech’s squad welcomed the start of August practices more than Ryan Malleck.

Like Vandyke, Malleck missed all of last season because of an injury. Two weeks after Vandyke tore the labrum in his shoulder, Malleck tore the labrum in his left shoulder while diving for a pass in practice. He also partially tore his rotator cuff, and the subsequent surgery to repair those injuries cost him the season. Since he played as a true freshman, he simply took last season as a redshirt year.

Malleck, though, is back to 100 percent and primed for a big season.

“In spring ball, I wasn’t 100 percent. I was more like 80 percent,” he said days before starting August practices. “But in the summer during workouts, I was doing full lifting and everything. I feel great. I’m ready to go.

“I don’t think I’ll be that rusty. Maybe hitting-wise, the first couple of practices, I’ll be rusty, but other than that, I don’t think I will. We did seven-on-seven stuff all summer, so I feel like I’m good. I just need one good pop in the shoulder, and I’ll be like, ‘All right, it’s good.’”

Malleck’s injury really hobbled Tech’s offense a year ago, as coordinator Scot Loeffler planned a good chunk of his passing game around Malleck’s receiving skills. Tight ends coach Bryan Stinespring tried combinations of Duan Perez-Means and Zack McCray, but neither played with any consistency. Midway through the season, Stinespring elected to go with freshman Calvin Cline, who started seven of the

final nine games of the season.

The lightly recruited Cline enjoyed a terrific year. He caught 26 passes for 321 yards and two touchdowns. The 26 receptions were tied for the second-most catches by a Tech tight end in Frank Beamer’s tenure.

Malleck and Cline bring athleticism and experience to the position, but the player with the most potential is redshirt freshman Bucky Hodges. The Virginia Beach, Virginia, native moved from quarterback to tight end midway through last season to simulate North Carolina’s Eric Ebron on Tech’s scout team, and Tech’s coaches liked what they saw from him so much that they kept him at the spot.

Hodges, who ran a 4.46 in the 40-yard dash last winter, got a ton of reps during spring practice, with Malleck being held out of contact drills and Cline nursing a sore knee. He is a big target and a smooth athlete, and the knowledge he gained this spring figures to make him a formidable weapon this fall.

In fact, Tech’s talent at the tight end position should open things up for everyone in the passing game. One can expect to see multiple tight-end sets.

“I like how Loeffler utilizes the tight ends,” Malleck said. “He’ll have one tight end in sometimes, but he’ll also have three tight ends in sometimes. I think we can stretch the field and do some things in the running game with three tight ends.”

Tech’s needed improvement in the running game centers not just on the backs and the

A QUICK GLANCE

Returning starters: Calvin Cline (seven career starts), Ryan Malleck (seven starts)

Starter lost: none

Projected new starter: none

Top reserves: Ryan Malleck, Bucky Hodges, Darius Redman

Newcomer: Hodges


Breakout candidate: Malleck

Notes: Malleck started seven games as a sophomore and caught 17 passes for 174 yards in a reserve role ... Cline caught four passes of more than 20 yards last season ... Redman has not caught a pass in his career ... Redman played 165 snaps on special teams last season – the most by a Tech player ... Jackson played in just one game a year ago, seeing action on two plays in the Hokies’ win over Western Carolina.

offensive line, but also the blocking of the tight ends. Darius Redman is the biggest tight end and figures to help extensively in the running game, but the others need to help as well.

That was a point of emphasis this spring from Stinespring, who worked his troops on that part of the game.

“I think we’ll be able to run it better,” Malleck said. “We’ve been working a lot on footwork because Bucky didn’t play tight end, and Calvin hasn’t played tight end that long. We’ve been working on technique and footwork, and I think that has really helped us. We’ve been doing that since the spring, so every day, we’re emphasizing footwork, and that’s huge in blocking. Having good technique gives you the confidence to block well.”

Tech fans probably didn’t see the true Loeffler offense a year ago. Given what returns at the tight end position for the 2014, they hope to see a much different – and improved – unit in year No. 2 under Loeffler. At the very least, it will be interesting to see the impact of this group of tight ends going forward. 

2014 DEPTH CHART

- 88 Ryan Malleck (6-5, 243, r-Jr.)
- 89 Calvin Cline (6-5, 245, So.)
- 33 Darius Redman (6-4, 273, r-Jr.)
- 7 Bucky Hodges (6-6, 241, r-Fr.)
- 49 Dakota Jackson (6-2, 259, r-So.)

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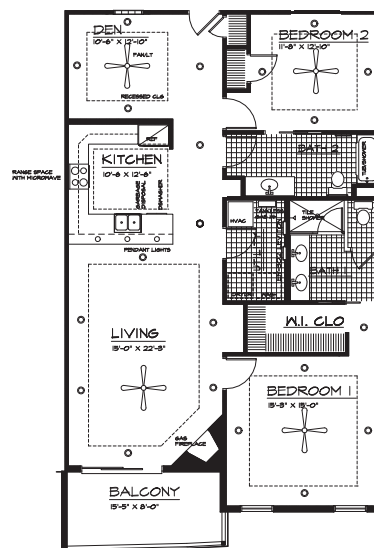
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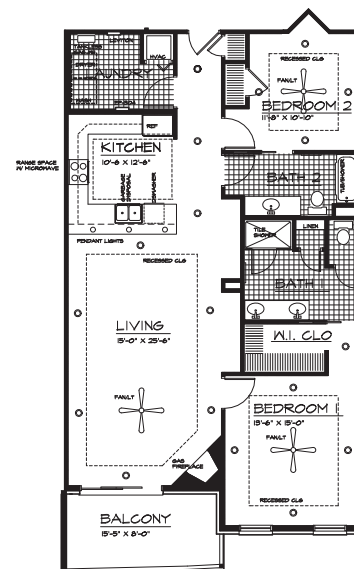
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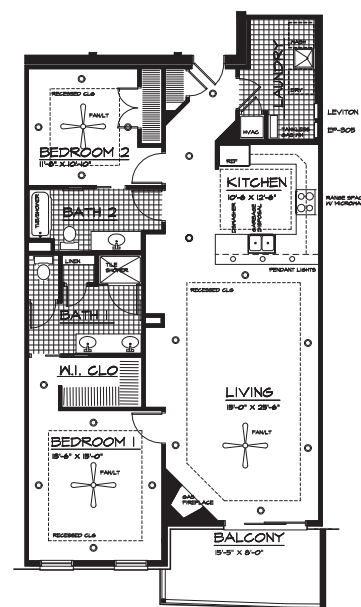
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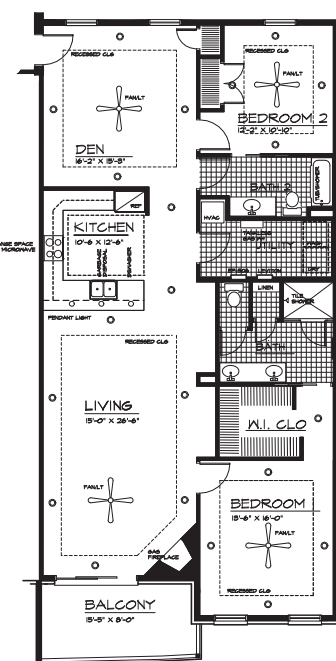
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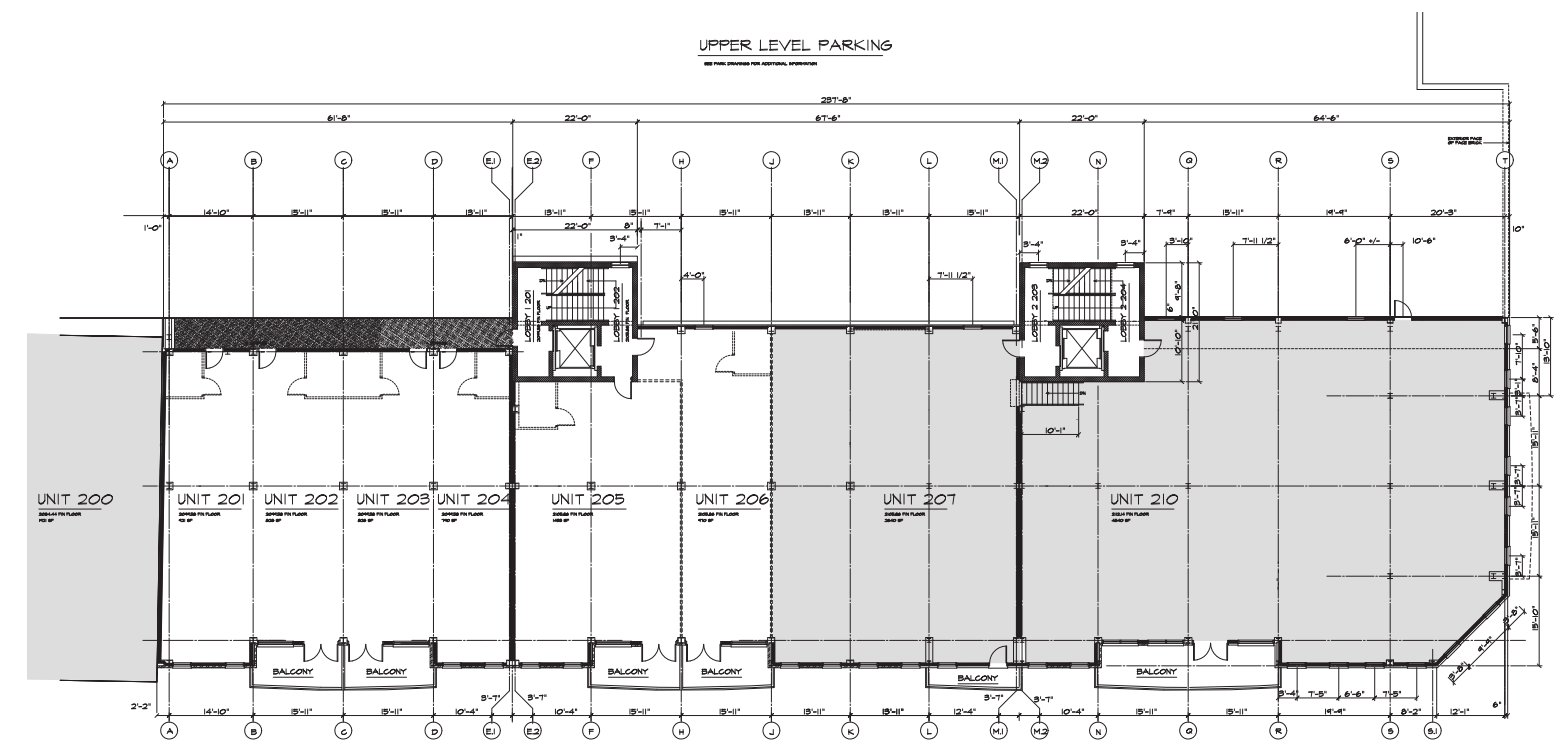
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1,419 s.f.



unit 305
2 bedroom
1,458 s.f.



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2 bedroom w/ den
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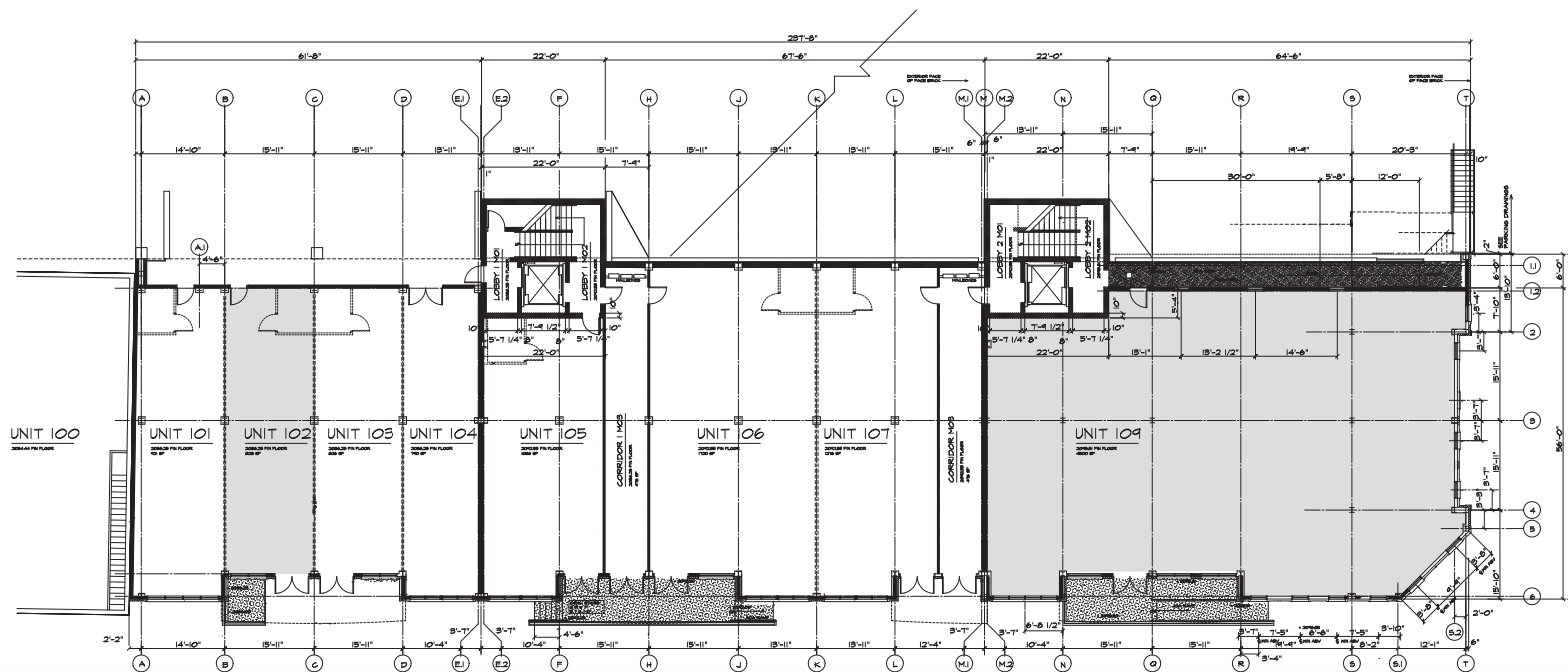


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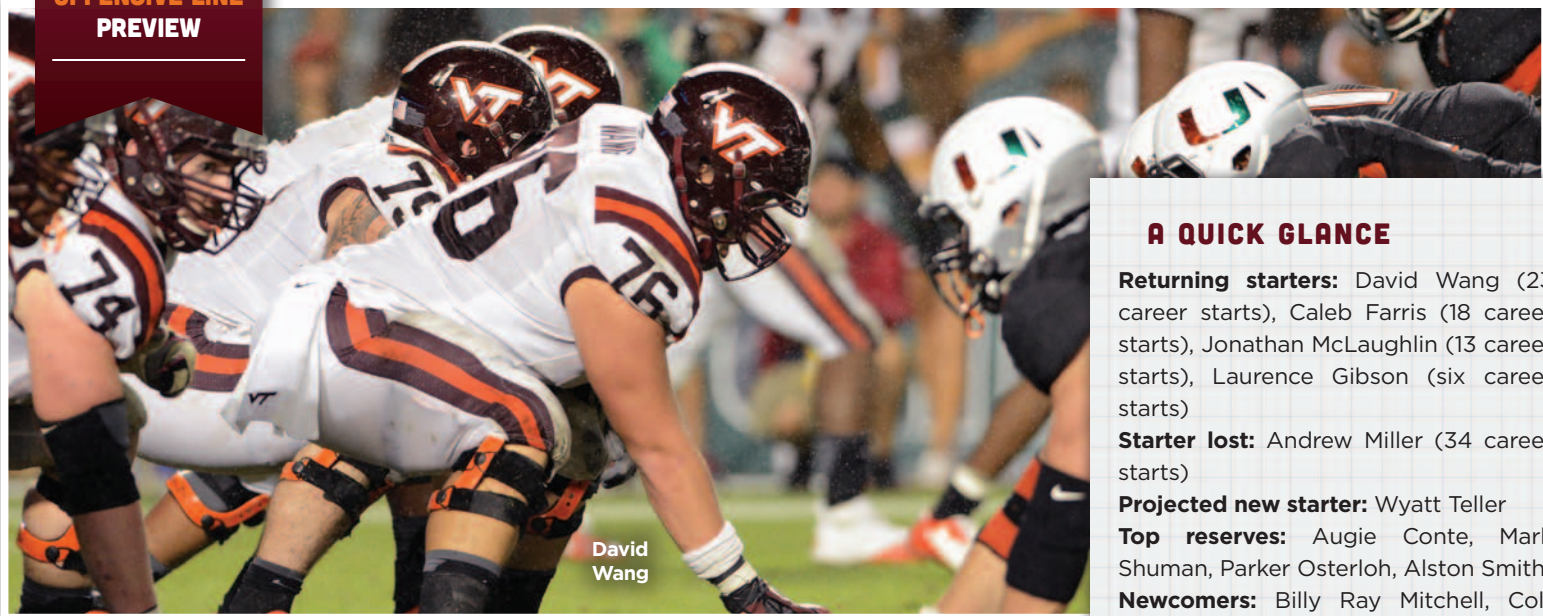
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David Wang

WANG AND FARRIS LEAD AN EXPERIENCED OFFENSIVE LINE

by Jimmy Robertson

David Wang already owns degrees in management and marketing, so he knows a little bit about numbers.

He knows that rushing for 146 yards per game, as the Hokies did in 2012, isn’t particularly great. And he knows that rushing for 119.8 yards per game, as the Hokies did a year ago, is even worse. The 33 sacks allowed last season weren’t great either. Perhaps not coincidentally, Tech went 7-6 and 8-5, respectively, the two years.

Any improvement in those numbers for 2014 probably hinges on whether Wang and a veteran offensive line dominate up front. The Hokies return four linemen with starting experience, led by Wang with 23 career starts. Outside of the secondary, the offensive line is the most experienced unit on Tech’s team.

Thus, the staff expects improvement from this group. Like the rest of Tech’s positions on offense, the offensive line took a while to become adjusted to coordinator Scot Loeffler’s scheme a year ago. Tech ran the ball well in spots – late-season games against Miami and Virginia come to mind – but not well enough on a consistent basis.

The players, though, now know the scheme – and the importance of executing it. They say there are no excuses for not being able to run the ball this season.

“We take responsibility for it because, if we can’t make holes or block well, the running backs have no chance at running the ball,” Wang said. “We’ve put in so much work on that because

that’s what Tech has been known for.

“We’ve always had great running backs, and we still do. It’s our job to get them in the open field, and they take care of the rest. We did it a couple of times last year, but we need to be more consistent about it.”

Wang and senior Caleb Farris anchor the group. The two of them combined have 41 career starts.

Wang, a center, needs to stay healthy, something that has been problematic over the years. A year ago, though, he started every game. He feels fortunate to have received a sixth year from the NCAA to be able to play this season.

Farris – who has started 18 straight games in his career – played left guard a year ago, but moved over to right guard this spring to replace Andrew Miller, who graduated. Miller started 34 games in his career and earned second-team All-ACC honors (from the coaches) last season, so his departure hurts.

But Farris certainly is capable and gives Tech much-needed versatility, with the ability to play both guard spots and the center position. He serves as Tech’s backup center behind Wang.

“We get along really well,” Wang said. “He played at left guard last season, and we really got comfortable with each other. We know how each other’s body is going to be placed on each block and how well we fit together. Caleb and me get along great, and it shows on the field. We know what each other is thinking.”

Laurence Gibson, a fifth-year senior, started

A QUICK GLANCE

Returning starters: David Wang (23 career starts), Caleb Farris (18 career starts), Jonathan McLaughlin (13 career starts), Laurence Gibson (six career starts)

Starter lost: Andrew Miller (34 career starts)

Projected new starter: Wyatt Teller

Top reserves: Augie Conte, Mark Shuman, Parker Osterloh, Alston Smith
Newcomers: Billy Ray Mitchell, Colt Pettit, Eric Gallo

Breakout candidate: Conte

Notes: Tech returns 73 career starts on the offensive line, a number that ranks sixth in the ACC ... Seven of Tech’s offensive linemen weigh 300 pounds or more, with Osterloh being the biggest player on the team at 325 pounds and Shuman second at 317 ... Shuman played just 22 snaps from scrimmage a year ago, but came out of spring practice in the top spot on the depth chart at left tackle ... Smith played in all 13 games a year ago, but only saw nine snaps on offense ... Chung may be limited early on this season after undergoing shoulder surgery during spring practice.

six games at right tackle last season, including the final four games. Tech’s staff moved him to left tackle at the start of August practices, and he figures to be the starter for the opener.

On the other side, Jonathan McLaughlin started all 13 games at left tackle as a true freshman last season before being moved to right tackle in August, and he played well, earning second-team freshman All-America honors by College Football News. At 6-foot-5, 304 pounds, and with quick feet and long arms, he possesses prototypical size and attributes for the position.

McLaughlin, though, finds himself being pushed by fifth-year senior Mark Shuman, who actually entered August at the top spot on the depth chart at right tackle. Shuman possesses a lot of potential, but hasn’t put it together – yet. He played in just five games a year ago (just 10 in his career), but could this be his year? Time will tell.

The moving of Farris to right guard opened the left guard spot, one currently being filled by redshirt freshman Wyatt Teller. Arguably the top recruit in the Hokies’ 2013 class, Teller took advantage of an ankle injury to Alston Smith this spring and came out of spring practice in the top spot on the depth chart.

Smith and Augie Conte are the only backups (at least coming out of spring practice) with any playing experience, which remains a slight concern for the staff. Smith played in all 13 games last season, but most of his reps came on special teams as part of the field-goal and extra-point teams.

Conte participated in just five games a year ago, but he played impressive football this spring, earning the Dr. Richard Bullock Award for the player (on offense) who showed the most improvement during the spring. Though slated at right guard behind Farris, Conte could work his way into a starting spot, challenging at any number of positions.

“He and Wyatt are both great in the weight room,” Wang said. “I believe Augie has what it takes because he’s been here an extra year. Wyatt’s still learning, and he’s proving himself. I think those two guys mirror each other. They push each other, and it makes both of them better.”

The rest of the backups include redshirt sophomore Adam Taraschke, who took last season off and rejoined the team in the offseason, redshirt


freshmen Kyle Chung and Parker Osterloh, and true freshman Braxton Pfaff, who enrolled last January and may take a redshirt year. This quartet possesses some talent, but may need a year of seasoning before being able to contribute on a full-time basis.

New offensive line coach Stacy Searels has been tasked with making this entire unit a cohesive and productive one. He came from Texas this spring after Jeff Grimes left Tech to become the offensive line coach at LSU. He becomes the Hokies’ third line coach in the past three years, perhaps leaving some to be concerned about continuity.

But the players have no worries.

“He’s a good fit,” Wang said. “He’s an intense guy. He’s more in your face than Grimes. Grimes would yell at you, but he would back off of you a little bit. Grimes wanted us to learn the offense. Now that we know the offense, Coach Searels expects us to be perfect at it, which we should be.”

Perfection is probably impossible to achieve, but the Hokies should be much improved, particularly in the running game. Tech ran for 183 yards against the then-No. 14 ‘Canes, and Trey Edmunds ran for 93 yards on 11 carries against Virginia. Games like those are expected – and needed – in 2014.

“The games we were successful in, like Miami, everybody was on the same page the entire game, and we had minimal mistakes across the board,” Wang said. “That’s the way it needs to be this year.” 

2014 OFFENSIVE LINE DEPTH CHART

LEFT TACKLES

- 63** Laurence Gibson (6-6, 293, r-Sr.)
- 67** Parker Osterloh (6-8, 325, r-Fr.)
- 66** Billy Ray Mitchell (6-3, 277, Fr.)

LEFT GUARDS

- 57** Wyatt Teller (6-5, 303, r-Fr.)
- 75** Alston Smith (6-1, 279, r-So.)
- 53** Andrew Williams (6-0, 265, r-Fr.)

CENTERS

- 76** David Wang (6-2, 308, r-Sr.)
- 70** Adam Taraschke (6-5, 298, r-So.)
- 61** Kyle Chung (6-3, 285, r-Fr.)

RIGHT GUARDS

- 79** Caleb Farris (6-4, 300, Sr.)
- 72** Augie Conte (6-5, 295, r-So.)
- 74** Braxton Pfaff (6-5, 305, Fr.)
- 86** Jack Willenbrock (6-3, 244, r-So.)
- 62** Ross Ward (6-3, 304, r-Fr.)

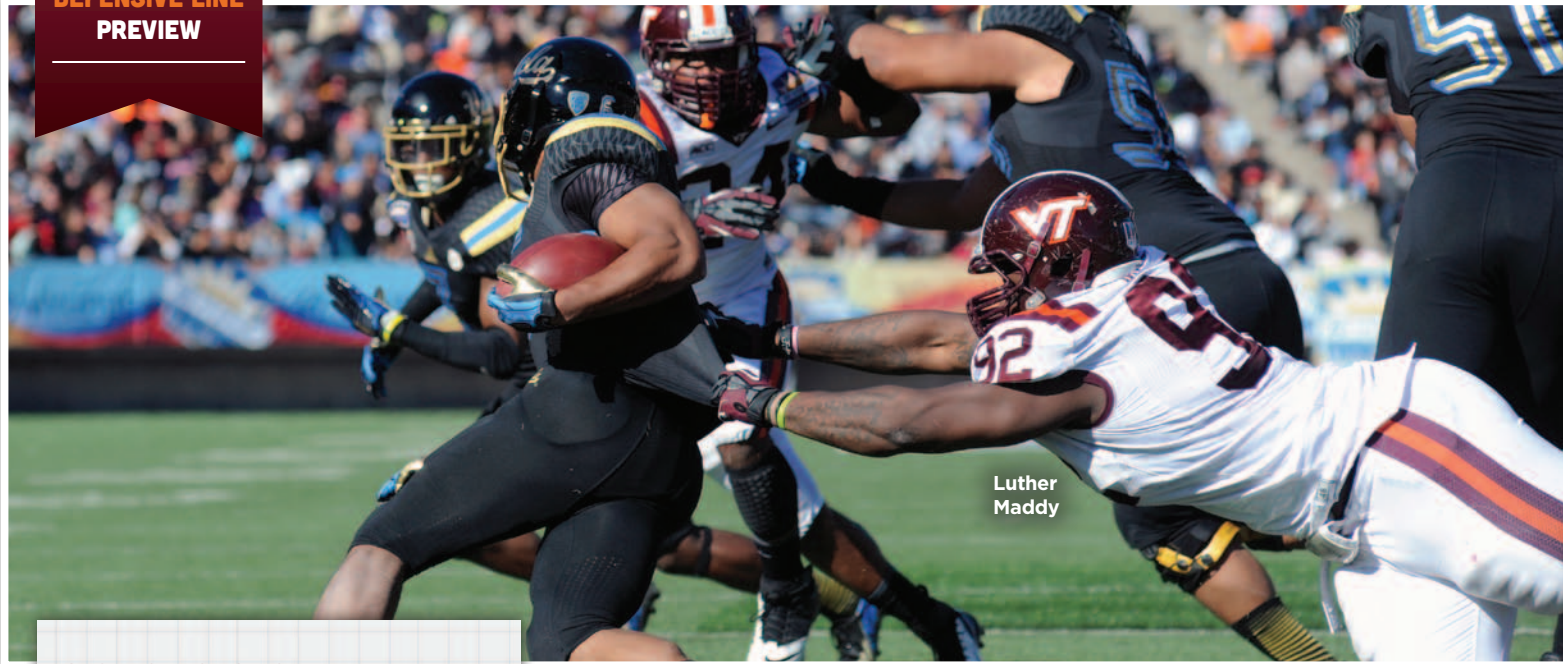
RIGHT TACKLES

- 69** Mark Shuman (6-7, 317, r-Sr.)
- 71** Jonathan McLaughlin (6-5, 304, So.)
- 58** Colt Pettit (6-3, 266, Fr.)

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Luther
Maddy

A QUICK GLANCE

Starter returning: Luther Maddy (29 career starts)
Starters lost: James Gayle (39 career starts), Derrick Hopkins (40 career starts), J.R. Collins (35 career starts)
Projected new starters: Dadi Nicolas, Ken Ekanem, Corey Marshall
Top reserves: Seth Dooley, Dewayne Alford, Wade Hansen, Nigel Williams
Newcomers: Vinny Mihota, Ricky Walker, Steve Sobczak
Breakout candidate: Nicolas
Notes: Maddy is on the “watch list” for the Bednarik Award (nation’s top defensive player), the Nagurski Award (defensive player of the year), the Outland Trophy (top interior lineman) and the Lombardi Trophy (top lineman or linebacker) ... Tech ranked tied for seventh nationally a year ago with 39 sacks ... Gayle, Collins and Hopkins combined for 16 of those sacks ... Tech’s returning defensive linemen recorded 12.5 sacks last season – 6.5 by Maddy ... Outside of Maddy, the Hokies return six career starts – five by Marshall and one by Nicolas.

**MADDY THE CLEAR LEADER
OF A YOUNG, INEXPERIENCED
DEFENSIVE LINE**

by **Jimmy Robertson**

On the second floor of the Jamerson Athletics Center, a series of portraits honoring all of Tech’s All-Americans in football hang on the wall. Every time he walks down that hallway, Luther Maddy sees them, with two, in particular, catching his attention – those of Brandon Flowers and Jayron Hosley.

Flowers and Hosley both hail from Maddy’s hometown of Delray Beach, Florida, and both went to his high school, Atlantic High School.

“I want to get my picture on that wall, too,” Maddy said. “Those are the types of goals I have.”

Maddy stands as the lone starter returning along Tech’s defensive line, a group that played a rather large role in a Hokies’ defense that ranked among the nation’s top five last season. The unit lost James Gayle, Derrick Hopkins and J.R. Collins, who combined for 467 tackles, 99 tackles for a loss and 52.5 sacks in their careers. Also, dependable Tyrel Wilson graduated, further depleting the group.

But truthfully, Maddy – a senior defensive tackle – was the best of the bunch last year. He led all defensive linemen in tackles (55), tackles for a loss (13.5) and sacks (6.5). He led the team in tackles for a loss and sacks and ranked fifth on the squad in total tackles. As a result, he earned third-team All-ACC honors (both by the media and the coaches).

He played as a true freshman and has gotten

better every year. The coaches expect big numbers this season and realize they could do worse than to rebuild a defensive line around a player with 29 career starts.

“I think my game has evolved,” Maddy said. “I was more of a quicker guy coming out of high school. I was more of a pass rusher. Where my game has evolved is my run-stopping ability, and I think I still have some work to do in that area this year. I’ve improved on keeping my shoulders square and where to fit in my gaps and how to attack my man. That’s where I’ve evolved, and I’m still evolving. I hope to have more plays in the backfield this year.”

Maddy will be flanked by some inexperienced, but fast, defensive linemen. At the other tackle spot, Corey Marshall returns after missing last season while taking a redshirt year. Marshall’s struggles off the field led to the staff forcing him to take a redshirt year, and he appears to be on the proper path now. He played fantastic football this spring, earning the George Preas Award as the most valuable performer (on defense), and he fared well in the classroom, too.

Dadi Nicolas and Ken Ekanem replace Gayle and Collins at the end spots. Nicolas is the fastest player on Tech’s team, having run a 4.40 in the 40-yard dash in spring testing. He recorded 32 tackles, including seven tackles for a loss, and four sacks in a reserve role last season. Ekanem

played in 11 games last season, mostly on special teams.

The four projected starters eased the mind of defensive line coach Charley Wiles after their solid play this spring. Depth, however, concerns him.

Most of Tech’s backups played sparingly a year ago. Tackle Nigel Williams got the most action out of the backup group, having played 140 snaps a year ago. Woody Baron, who missed spring practice after undergoing surgery on his foot, played 129 plays, and end Dewayne Alford played just 19. Seth Dooley took a redshirt year, while tackle Wade Hansen sat out the season after transferring from a Division III school in New York.

Yet there is a lot to like about the backup group. Williams showed a lot of promise last season after recording seven tackles for a loss and two sacks. Baron finished with eight tackles and gained much-needed experience, and Alford, Dooley and Hansen certainly look the part. All are long and athletic with size. Alford and Dooley run well, and Hansen moves well for a tackle. Now they need to be able to make plays.

The group gets an influx of size and talent with freshman tackles Vinny Mihota, Ricky Walker and Steve Sobczak. Mihota enrolled last January and went through spring practice, giving him a slight edge. He now weighs 264 pounds. Walker

weighs 282 pounds, while Sobczak checks in at 307. Any of the three could play this upcoming season.

“At end, we’re good, with Dadi and Ken, and with Seth and Dewayne backing them up, and they’re all good players,” Maddy said. “I haven’t seen them in game-like situations, but based on what I saw in spring ball, I think they’re going to be pretty good players. They don’t have enough experience, but they’re big, strong, athletic guys.

“We have some depth at defensive tackle. We’ve got me, Corey and Nigel and the other spot is wide open, with Woody being hurt and then we’ve got a walk-on in Wade and the freshmen. I don’t know who is going to be at that spot, but for the most part, I think we do have pretty good depth.”

Tech definitely lacks size up front this season. Nicolas weighs 40-plus pounds less than Gayle, and Marshall weighs around 40 pounds less than Hopkins. And as stated before, they lack experience.

But this group is quick, and they can run. They really played well toward the end of spring, giving the staff and fans reason for optimism toward having another dominant front line this season.

“Going through spring ball and going through the workouts this summer, I think we’re a little more athletic and faster up front,” Maddy said. “You’ll probably see more plays in the backfield this year, more TFLs [tackles for loss] and more

**2014 DEFENSIVE LINE
DEPTH CHART**

ENDS

- 4** Ken Ekanem (6-2, 248, r-So.)
43 Seth Dooley (6-4, 245, r-Fr.)
88 Harry Boston (6-1, 232, Fr.)

STUD ENDS

- 90** Dadi Nicolas (6-3, 225, r-Jr.)
87 Dewayne Alford (6-3, 246, r-So.)
93 Jeremy Haynes (6-3, 223, r-So.)


NOSE TACKLES

- 96** Corey Marshall (6-1, 260, r-Jr.)
77 Wade Hansen (6-6, 280, r-Jr.)
99 Vinny Mihota (6-5, 264, Fr.)
91 Steve Sobczak (6-0, 307, Fr.)
60 Woody Baron (6-1, 296, So.)

TACKLES

- 92** Luther Maddy (6-2, 298, Sr.)
95 Nigel Williams (6-2, 291, r-So.)
98 Ricky Walker (6-1, 282, Fr.)

sacks. We’ll have a lot of production this year.

“I’ve just got to make sure these guys are putting in the work and bring them along. Based on my past experiences, I’ve got no worries about the defensive line. I think we’re all very good players.” 

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LINEBACKERS LACK EXPERIENCE, BUT BRING SPEED AND ATHLETICISM

by Jimmy Robertson

After seeing him suspended on two separate occasions last fall, Tech’s coaches, especially defensive coordinator Bud Foster, were cautious with their comments about Deon Clarke heading into spring practice last March.

Foster saw an extremely talented, but immature player, one who needed to get his act together.

Perhaps motivated by potential playing time, Clarke began his transformation this spring. Long, athletic and fast, he made a lot of plays on the field and started showing some maturity off of it. He came out of spring ball at the top of the depth chart at the backer position and received the Paul Torgersen Award as the top up and comer during spring practice (on defense).

“I was just trying to get around the system, but now I know that I’m the person people are looking up to, so I’ve got to be focused on and off the field,” Clarke said of his off-field struggles the first two years of his career. “What you do off the field carries over to on the field. The coaches tell us that all the time. If they can’t trust you off the field, then they can’t trust you on the field. Coach won’t put you in.

“So this year, I’m focusing on everything I can do better – football and school. They’ve talked to me a lot about schoolwork. So I’m just trying to do all those things right this year. My grades have come up. I’ve been staying off Coach’s bad list. I’m staying up on everything they want me to stay up on.”

Clarke is being pushed by Dahman McKinnon, as Foster looks to replace dependable Tariq Edwards, who recorded 170 tackles, seven sacks and four interceptions in his terrific career.

McKinnon ranks as the second-fastest player on the team behind Dadi Nicolas after running the 40-yard dash in 4.4 seconds in spring testing.

In theory, McKinnon stands as “1A” on the depth chart. Their competition made both of them better players this spring, and the battle figures to carry over into the fall.

“Always having someone behind you fighting for a position keeps you on your toes,” Clarke said. “It always makes you go out there and be the best player that you can be. You don’t want to have any ‘mess ups’ because that one mess up can send you right back down the depth chart. So you’ve always got to stay focused, knowing that the person behind you is just as good as you. You’ve got to stay focused and do what you do.”

At the other linebacker position, the mike linebacker spot, Chase Williams came out of spring practice as the leader. Williams has the unenviable job of replacing Jack Tyler, arguably Tech’s most consistent player on defense the past two years. Tyler recorded 286 tackles, including 32.5 for a loss, in his career, along with 8.5 sacks. So the task looms large for Williams.

But in Williams, Tech has an experienced player, one who has played in 38 games in his career – mostly on special teams. He played well this spring, and Foster is confident in Williams’ ability and leadership.

Andrew Motuapuaka goes into this fall as the backup to Williams. The young man brings impressive instincts to the position, and Foster thinks highly of him. He played a little inconsistently this spring in what was his first spring practice, and he injured his shoulder, causing him to miss the final practice and the

A QUICK GLANCE

Returning starters: none

Starters lost: Jack Tyler (31 career starts), Tariq Edwards (28 career starts)

Projected new starters: Chase Williams, Deon Clarke

Top reserves: Andrew Motuapuaka, Dahman McKinnon

Newcomers: Motuapuaka, Jameion Moss, Raymon Minor, Melvin Keihn

Breakout candidate: Clarke


Notes: The two positions combined return one career start (Williams vs. Austin Peay in 2012) ... Williams has played in 38 games in his career, mostly on special teams ... Williams has 29 career tackles (11 solo) ... Clarke and McKinnon have combined for 23 tackles in their careers ... Tyler and Edwards combined for 456 tackles, including 55 for a loss, and 15.5 sacks in their careers ... Tyler started the final 29 games of his career.

spring game. He was cleared for practices, though, in August.

Motuapuaka obviously needs experience, which he figures to get mostly on special teams this season. He is certainly a player to watch going forward.

Any success Tech enjoys defensively this season probably hinges on how the players perform at these two critical positions. Tyler and Edwards were two of the best ever at Tech and leave a legacy of excellence.

But this current crop of linebackers can really run, which can make up for mistakes. Their overall potential is limitless.

“There’s definitely an opportunity, but there are some big shoes to fill after being behind Tariq and Jack,” Clarke said. “When I was behind them, they would always help me out and tell me things, but now, Coach Foster is expecting me to be on their level. I’ve got to go out there and be just like them, or even better. That’s what Coach is expecting me to do, just play like they do or better.” 

2014 DEPTH CHART

MIKE LINEBACKERS

36 Chase Williams (6-1, 212, r-Sr.)

54 Andrew Motuapuaka (5-11, 231, r-Fr.)

56 Sean Huelskamp (6-1, 216, So.)

44 Devin Vandyke (5-11, 228, r-So.)

BACKERS

40 Deon Clarke (6-2, 214, Jr.)

35 Dahman McKinnon (6-1, 209, r-So.)

50 Jameion Moss (6-1, 211, r-Fr.)



DESPITE TOUGH YEAR, VANDYKE READY TO GET BACK IN THE MIX AT WHIP LINEBACKER

by Jimmy Robertson

It hasn’t been the easiest 12 months for Ronny Vandyke.

A shoulder injury suffered last August forced him to miss the season, and he participated only sparingly in spring practice. Then, in early July, he received even more devastating news when good friend and fellow Fellowship of Christian Athletes member Darren Hankins, a Tech wrestler, died in a swimming accident.

That hurt him much worse than his shoulder injury.

“Darren was someone who lived a life of purpose,” Vandyke said. “He always wanted to get to know people. He made it a point to meet people where they were in their lives and not cast any judgment on them. That really encouraged me. He taught me to do that.

“In the Bible, it talks about loving people as God loves us and reaching out to people, and Darren really exemplified that. Each and every day, he lived a life of purpose.”

A player of deep religious convictions, Vandyke lives his life to glorify God, and one way he hopes to do that is by getting on the field this upcoming season.

Vandyke figures to be one of three candidates in the mix for the starting job at whip linebacker this season. His shoulder injury left the door open, and Josh Trimble ended up being the starter, starting in five games last season.

Truthfully, though, Vandyke’s absence forced the coaching staff to play more nickel defense,

with five defensive backs. Thus, Trimble and last season’s backup, Derek Di Nardo, played sparingly from scrimmage. In fact, Trimble played 181 snaps from scrimmage, the fewest among Tech’s regulars, and Di Nardo played just 12 from scrimmage. They saw most of their action on special teams.

The staff’s plans on using more nickel defense this season partly hinge on Vandyke’s return and his ability to live up to the potential they saw in him when the coaches recruited him out of South County High School in Northern Virginia and when they played him 13 games – starting him twice – as a redshirt freshman. They liked him as a blitzer and a bigger body with an ability to play in coverage.

“I don’t know their plan for this year, but I know that I control what happens to me, and as long as I continue to keep working and put in as much work as I can on the field, I’ll give them second thoughts about taking me off the field,” Vandyke said. “All I can do is to do my part, and at the end of the day, the Lord has everything under control. He has the final say. I’ve just got to do my part and keep trusting in Him.”

Can Vandyke knock the rust off during the first two or three weeks of August in time to become the starter? Trimble and Di Nardo shared the top spot on the depth chart coming out of spring practice, but Vandyke was listed in the top spot for the first day of practice in August.

A QUICK GLANCE

Returning starter: Josh Trimble (5 career starts)

Starter lost: none


Projected new starter: Ronny Vandyke

Top reserves: Derek Di Nardo, Josh Trimble

Newcomers: none

Breakout candidate: Vandyke

Notes: Tech’s whip linebackers combined for 29 tackles last season ... When the Hokies go to their nickel defense (five defensive backs), they use Kendall Fuller as the whip linebacker ... Trimble played 153 snaps on special teams last season – second-most on the team (Darius Redman, 165) ... Trimble’s best game last season came against Virginia when he recorded three tackles and a sack ... Di Nardo played 119 snaps on special teams ... Vandyke started two games in 2012 and played in all 13 ... He finished that season with 21 tackles.

“I expect there to be some type of rust just coming back from an injury,” Vandyke said. “I haven’t played football in a year. I missed spring practice, too, but I know I’m going to be able to shake that off faster than I think. All I need is a couple of days to get back into something that I’ve been doing since I was young, which is playing football. I’ll be fine.” 

2014 DEPTH CHART

37 Ronny Vandyke (6-3, 217, r-Jr.)

32 Josh Trimble (6-0, 216, r-Jr.)

41 Derek Di Nardo (5-11, 213, r-Sr.)

33 Quinton Taylor (6-0, 216, r-So.)



Kyshoen Jarrett

A QUICK GLANCE

Returning starters: Detrick Bonner (30 career starts), Kyshoen Jarrett (26 career starts), Kendall Fuller (12 career starts)

Starters lost: Kyle Fuller (41 career starts), Antone Exum (35 career starts)

Projected new starter: Brandon Facyson

Top reserves: Donovan Riley, Desmond Frye, Chuck Clark, Der’Woun Greene

Newcomers: Shawn Payne, Holland Fisher, C.J. Reavis, Terrell Edmunds, Greg Stroman

Breakout candidate: Facyson

Notes: Fuller made the “Watch List” for the Bednarik Award, which goes to the nation’s top defensive player ... Fuller’s six interceptions were the most ever by a Tech freshman ... Facyson became the first true freshman cornerback to start a season opener in head coach Frank Beamer’s tenure ... Bonner has started 27 straight games for Tech, while Jarrett has started 26 straight ... Both of Bonner’s interceptions last season came against Western Carolina ... Bonner returned one of his interceptions for a touchdown – Tech’s lone score by the defense last season ... Jarrett doubles as the team’s punt returner and returned a punt 94 yards for a touchdown in 2012 against Pittsburgh – the second-longest punt return in school history.

TECH’S SECONDARY LOADED WITH TALENT, DEPTH AND EXPERIENCE

by Jimmy Robertson

A year ago, Tech’s defensive backs intercepted 17 of the team’s 19 passes, and the Hokies finished tied for sixth nationally in interceptions. A freshman, Kendall Fuller, finished in the top 10 nationally with six interceptions. Another freshman, Brandon Facyson, intercepted five passes.

Those two return for the 2014 season, but the undisputed leaders of this group play on the back end of the secondary – rover Kyshoen Jarrett and free safety Detrick Bonner. They anchor an experienced defensive backfield that includes eight players returning who earned some form of game experience a year ago.

Tech’s defensive backfield should be the strongest group on the 2014 squad, even without injured stars Antone Exum and Kyle Fuller, who departed. Exum played in just three games last season, while Fuller, a first-round NFL Draft pick of the Chicago Bears, played in nine games before missing the final four games with a groin injury. Those injuries hurt last year, but provided opportunities, which makes this year’s group even better.

“I’m very excited,” Jarrett said of the defensive backfield. “We’re still young, but we have a lot of experience. We have some guys who have been in games and gotten some action and understand the type of atmosphere that we have to prepare for every week. They’re in the meeting rooms, and they’re learning how fast-paced everything is and how fast they have to process things.

“But I’m extremely excited. Even the younger guys coming in are a talented group for this year and for the future.”

The underrated Jarrett, who underwent shoulder surgery in January and missed spring practice, steadies the group from his rover spot. He finished third on the team with 71 tackles (41 solo) and added two interceptions a year ago.

The staff moved him from cornerback to rover two years ago after playing him as a true freshman, and the transition has been seamless. His versatility allows the staff to do many things – blitz him, play him in the box or play him in zone or man defenses.

“I love it,” Jarrett said. “At first, I didn’t like the adjustment because I always wanted to be a corner. But I’ve grown into it. As a corner, I thought I was physical, and being a safety has brought out that physical nature and helped me a lot.

“I do like the role. On one play, I could be playing in the box, and the next play, I’ll be playing a slot receiver. The next play, I could be playing a tight end. So I love that. I love that I get to do a lot of different things from that position.”

Jarrett will be teaming with Bonner to form an experienced back end. Bonner, another former cornerback and two-year starter, recorded 48 tackles and two interceptions a year ago.

Desmond Frye figures to be Bonner’s backup, and he enjoyed an excellent spring practice. Frye, who played in 13 games a year ago (mostly on

special teams), showed a physical nature, and Gray said he was the unit’s most improved player.

At the cornerback spots, Kendall Fuller and Facyson figure to be locking down opponents this season. Fuller earned the ACC’s Defensive Rookie of the Year honor and was a freshman All-American after starting 12 of the 13 games and recording 58 tackles to go with his six interceptions. Facyson missed spring practice with a stress fracture and part of August practices with a hip flexor, but he’ll be ready to go. He started nine games last season in place of Exum and recorded 27 tackles in addition to his five picks.

Tech’s staff and players knew the two youngsters possessed talent, but no one could have predicted before the season how well Fuller and Facyson were going to play as true freshmen. Jarrett himself played as a true freshman, so he understood the difficulties of playing at a high level that young.

“They definitely produced,” Jarrett said. “My role was different. I was the fifth or sixth corner. I was the last resort. I was behind an All-American in Jayron Hosley, and Kyle Fuller was productive. They [Kendall Fuller and Facyson] had to come in and grow up quick, whereas my role was to play special teams and play corner if they needed me.

“But I’m not surprised at how they played. Kendall learned a lot from Kyle, who taught him the role. With Brandon, he’s so smart, and everyone gathered around and helped him out. Antone

Exum played a big part in that since he didn’t play much last season. So I’m not surprised at all that they played well.”

Donovan Riley, Chuck Clark and Der’Woun Greene all played at cornerback this spring and got reps because of Facyson’s absence. Greene ended up being moved to rover to provide some depth behind Jarrett. All three played last year, serving mostly in key roles on the Hokies’ special teams units.

Tech literally goes two deep at every position in the secondary. The talent and experience at those spots hopefully will make up for a defensive front that lost five starters. Tech’s front seven may need some time early to grow into their roles.

Jarrett is confident that they can do it. He’s also confident that he’ll get to enjoy a big senior season. He contemplated declaring for the NFL Draft last January, but decided he needed to improve on some things and get more coaching from Gray, a former defensive back.

With that decision made, he wants to go out in a big way.

“I’m definitely looking forward to this season,” he said. “It’s crazy how I came in here four years ago, and I was trying to learn the defense. Now, I’m teaching it to the younger guys.

“I’m excited for it. I’m just going to play ball and see where it takes me. Hopefully, it’s to an ACC championship and a nice bowl game. This

2014 DEFENSIVE BACKS DEPTH CHART

LEFT CORNERBACKS

- 31 Brandon Facyson (6-2, 194, So.)
- 2 Donovan Riley (5-11, 207, Jr.)
- 3 Greg Stroman (5-11, 164)

FREE SAFETIES

- 8 Detrick Bonner (6-0, 207, r-Sr.)
- 26 Desmond Frye (6-1, 196, Jr.)
- 13 C.J. Reavis (6-1, 205, Fr.)


ROVERS


- 34 Kyshoen Jarrett (5-11, 201, Sr.)
- 23 Der’Woun Greene (5-10, 188, r-So.)
- 24 Anthony Shegog (6-1, 206, r-Fr.)
- 12 Zach Snell (5-11, 204, r-So.)

RIGHT CORNERBACKS

- 11 Kendall Fuller (6-0, 196, So.)
- 19 Chuck Clark (6-1, 208, So.)
- 21 Terrell Edmunds (6-1, 192, Fr.)

year, they have the playoff system, so hopefully our name is mentioned. I have confidence in our offense and in our defense. Special teams as well. I’m very excited to see how this season goes.”





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2014
SPECIAL TEAMS
PREVIEW

FINDING A KICKER A TOP PRIORITY FOR BEAMER

by Jimmy Robertson

Most folks' attention in the offseason centered on the quarterback position, but perhaps bigger issues needed to be addressed in the kicking game.

"We're going to have a lot of interest in that," Tech coach Frank Beamer said at the ACC Media Kickoff held in Greensboro, North Carolina, on July 20-21. "We must get more consistent in that area."

Specifically, Tech needs to get better play out of its field-goal kicker, whoever wins the job. The Hokies used four field-goal kickers last season, and the group combined to miss 11 field goals. Six of those were from 40 yards or less.

Spring practice did not deliver a definitive answer. Michael Branthover, who made one of his two attempts last season, kicked well early, but tailed off. Eric Kristensen made four of five last season, but he lacked consistency this spring.


The list of candidates for the job was expanded by three in the summer with the arrival of Michael Santamaria and walk-ons Joey Slye and Carson Wise. Wise, a local product from Blacksburg High School, made 32 of 40 field-goal attempts in his prep career.

All will get an opportunity to win the job. Beamer said repeatedly in the spring that he would not be afraid to play a true freshman at kicker.

As for the punting job, things are more settled with the return of A.J. Hughes, a second-team All-ACC choice last season. Hughes averaged 44.1 yards per punt a year ago, with 22 punts of 50 yards or longer.

"With [A.J.] Hughes, the emphasis is going to be getting more height," Beamer said. "He had a good average, but when you hit that low liner, it's getting ready to come right back at you for a good return. So consistency in our kicking game, that's going to be critical."

Other key returnees on special teams include snappers Eddie D'Antuono and Joe St. Germain, both of whom possess game experience. Mitchell Ludwig had 13 touchbacks on 39 kickoffs last season, and punt returner Kyshoen Jarrett and kick returner Demetri Knowles come back for 2014.

Beamer wants improved play on special teams this season. But the most improvement needs to come from the field-goal kicking position – and the person who wins that job may not be known until days before the season opener. 

A QUICK GLANCE

Returning starters: A.J. Hughes (26 career games), Eddie D'Antuono (13 career games), Joe St. Germain (19 career games)

Starter lost: Cody Journell (34 career games)

Projected new starter: TBD

Newcomers: Michael Santamaria, Carson Wise, Joey Slye

Notes: Hughes is on the "Watch List" for the Ray Guy Award, which goes annually to the nation's top punter ... Hughes' punting average last season ranked second in the ACC behind Miami's Pat O'Donnell ... Hughes' 78 total punts ranked third in the ACC ... Hughes placed 24 punts inside the 20 a year ago ... Kyshoen Jarrett's 5.3 yards per punt return ranked eighth in the ACC ... Tech was 105th nationally in punt return average last season (4.68 ypr) ... Jarrett was tied for second in the ACC with 26 punt returns ... Demetri Knowles' 21.8 yard average on kick returns ranked tied for eighth in the ACC ... Tech was 76th nationally in kickoff return average in 2013 (20.9 ypr).

2014 DEPTH CHART

KICKERS

- 1 Eric Kristensen (5-11, 170, So.)
- 13 Remington Hinshaw (5-8, 178, r-Jr.)
- 30 Mitchell Ludwig (5-11, 202, So.)

PUNTERS

- 27 A.J. Hughes (6-0, 201, Jr.)
- 38 Michael Branthover (5-8, 200, Sr.)
- R.J. Warfel (5-11, 164, r-Fr.)
- 30 Mitchell Ludwig (5-11, 202, So.)

SNAPPERS

- 59 Eddie D'Antuono (6-5, 269, r-So.)
- 65 Joe St. Germain (6-0, 210, r-Sr.)
- Colton Taylor (6-0, 224, r-Fr.)



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SENIOR SEASON A MEMORABLE ONE FOR SAUNDERS

This is the first in a series of features spotlighting former Virginia Tech players who played in the very first game at Lane Stadium in October of 1965. We start off with Mike Saunders, who was one of just eight seniors on the team and a key part of the Hokies' success. He later enjoyed a terrific career as a professor at Georgia Tech.

by Jimmy Robertson

When Mike Saunders chose to come to Virginia Tech back in the fall of 1962, he made that decision not because he would eventually get to play in a new football stadium. On the contrary, he took a more practical approach with his decision-making process.

“Frankly, it was because of engineering,” he said. “As boring as that sounds, that was probably the big issue for me in terms of deciding. That’s where my capabilities and interests were.”

Saunders, though, went on to become a rather distinguished part of Tech athletics history. He and his teammates played in the first varsity game ever at Lane Stadium in the fall of 1965.

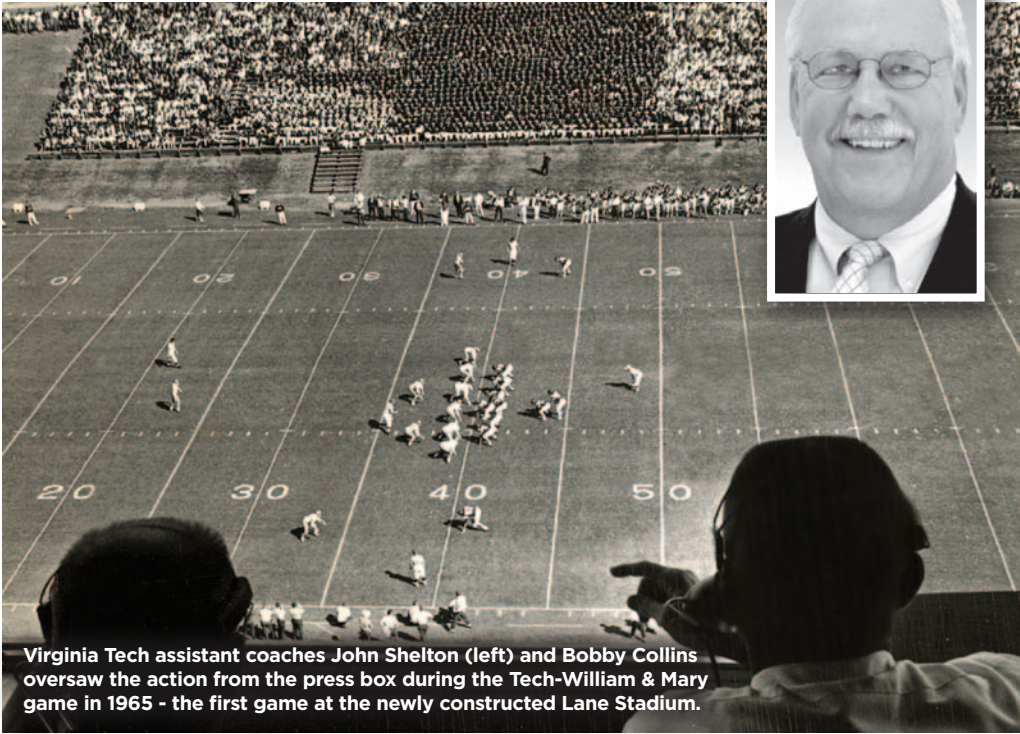
Saunders, a native of Lynchburg, Virginia, who played at E.C. Glass High School, serves as a great resource for those digging into the history of the stadium and of that era, as the university celebrates the 50th season of the venue. A retired environmental engineering professor at Georgia Tech, he is used to keeping complex topics organized, so maintaining ties with former teammates and recalling memories from that era serve as nothing short of a breeze for him.

Saunders was a lineman on head coach Jerry Claiborne’s 1965 team and one of three captains, along with Bill Edwards and Bobby Owens. They and their senior classmates played their first two seasons at Miles Stadium, directly behind War Memorial Gym, and during that time, Lane Stadium was being constructed.

“We didn’t really think about it at the time,” Saunders said. “We came in with nominally 80 guys, and you were fighting for a job, so to speak. That’s really your focus when you actually get there.

“But we knew it [the stadium] was coming. I’m not exactly sure when they turned the first shovel. I’m not sure I remember that. But I do remember we played in Miles in 1964 and beat Florida State with [Fred] Biletnikoff and his crowd when they were No. 10 coming in, and then that [Miles Stadium] immediately went away. They immediately started tearing that down.”

Saunders said the Gobblers played their spring



Virginia Tech assistant coaches John Shelton (left) and Bobby Collins oversaw the action from the press box during the Tech-William & Mary game in 1965 - the first game at the newly constructed Lane Stadium.

game in the spring of 1965 at Victory Stadium in nearby Roanoke, Virginia. The Gobblers also opened the 1965 season in Roanoke, beating Wake Forest 12-3 at Victory Stadium.

Tech played its first varsity game at Lane Stadium on Oct. 2 against William & Mary (the freshman team played at the stadium a week earlier). The stands on the West side and the press box weren’t quite finished, but workers got far enough along to allow for a game to be played.

Tech won 9-7 over William & Mary in a tight-knit affair. Owens, who is deceased, scored a touchdown late to give the Gobblers the victory.

“We didn’t want to lose in the opening game of our stadium, but we didn’t want to lose in any game,” Saunders said. “We worked hard to win every game.

“But it was fabulous playing on that field. I still remember us going through that tunnel coming out. That is nowhere as exciting as it is today because the stands didn’t shake, and there was no

music. But as far as our eras, that was exactly what was going on at that time.”

Tech went on to win every game at Lane Stadium that season. That included a 22-14 victory over Virginia on Governor’s Day. University president T. Marshall Hahn and Governor Albertis S. Harrison, Jr., dedicated the stadium, naming it after Edward H. Lane, a former Board of Visitors member who helped raised more than \$3 million for the stadium’s construction.

Saunders, though, remembers the day more for what happened on the scoreboard than on the sidelines.

“I’m from Lynchburg, and there are a lot of Wahoos there,” he said. “We had lost a tough game to them the previous year in Scott Stadium. They had a big guy named [Robert] Kowalkowski, and I got asked so many times, ‘Do you know how big of a shoe that boy wears?’ and things like that through the whole year when I was at home. So me, personally, I had that game targeted as being

really key.

“Of course, it was Governor’s Day and a game against the ‘Hoos, and they were favored. We weren’t supposed to win. It had a lot of special meaning for me. A lot of preparation went into getting ready for that game against UVa. I remember that game front to back. I got the game ball from that one. All the team signed it. It’s still sitting here at my house in a case.”

Tech finished with a 7-3 record that season, the final campaign in a terrific three-year run for Saunders and his classmates. They went 21-9 combined in those three seasons.

Following his final season, Saunders received the distinguished Williams Award, which went annually to the “member of the football squad who demonstrates high qualities of leadership, character, and the greatest amount of moral influence on his teammates.” It was one of numerous honors for Williams, who was the Monogram Club president in 1965-66 and also a member of the prestigious German Club, Omicron Delta Kappa and the Corps of Cadets’ T Company.

Saunders stayed at Tech in the spring and fall of 1966 while finishing his degree requirements. That summer, he got married, and he worked for the water control board. He received his degree in civil engineering in 1967.

Saunders and his teammate, Edwards, ultimately stayed in Blacksburg and enrolled in the

master’s program in sanitary engineering (which is now environmental engineering). He finished the coursework for his master’s in 1968 and received his degree in 1969 (Tech handed out degrees once a year in that era).

Master’s degree in hand, he then made the decision to pursue a Ph.D. in environmental engineering at the University of Illinois.

“My parents always told me to get as much education as I could,” he said. “They can’t take that away from you. So I applied across the country and was lucky to get in and offered funding. I had no idea I was going to go that route.”

In 1974, Saunders had completed requirements for his Ph.D. In April, he went to work as a design engineer for L. Preston Wade at Wiley & Wilson Consultants in Lynchburg, doing mostly consulting work and “gaining some of the best experience of my life.” In October, he mulled between going to work for DuPont or going to work as a professor at Georgia Tech. He chose the Georgia Tech gig, defended his thesis the following summer and ended up staying at Georgia Tech for 34 years, eventually becoming the associate chair of the School of Civil and Environmental Engineering.

“At the time, the money opportunities [between DuPont and Georgia Tech] seemed about the same,” Saunders said. “I said, ‘What the heck, I’ll give this academic stuff a look.’ I wasn’t sure I could live in a city with a million people in it. That


was Atlanta at the time. Of course, now it’s 6.5 million or 7.”

Saunders and his wife raised their three children in the Atlanta area and still reside there. He retired in 2008 after a career spent working in the areas of coastal-ocean science and engineering, environmental engineering systems and water-quality engineering. Virginia Tech honored him several years ago by inducting him into its Civil and Environmental Engineering (CCE) Academy of Distinguished Alumni for his work over the years.

His career took him to a lot of places around the world, including a more-than-two-year stint in Singapore to work on a project.

But he never forgot his Virginia Tech roots.

“Playing for Coach Claiborne was special,” he said. “It taught me a lot about myself, about persistence, about sticking to your goals and objectives and about leadership. The best thing to do if you get knocked down is to get up and go harder. We know those kinds of things happen throughout your life. So Coach is pretty special to me.”

Since retiring, Saunders gets back to Blacksburg once or twice a year and figures to be up at some point this season. It would be fitting. Fifty seasons ago, he and his teammates played in the first game at Lane Stadium. They began its history – and nothing can ever change that. 

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Ashley Meier, a junior, scored nine goals last season and is one of many Tech players on the 2014 squad with the ability to put the ball into the back of the net.

HOKIES HOPING FOR ENCORE PERFORMANCE

The Virginia Tech women’s soccer team will need to replace All-American Jazmine Reeves and one of the best goaltenders in school history in Dayle Colpitts, but plenty of talent returns from a team that made it to the College Cup last season

by **Marc Mullen**

As almost anyone knows, the 2013 Virginia Tech women’s soccer team enjoyed its most successful season ever. The Hokies made a run to the ACC championship game, played host to four NCAA Tournament games, and won all four of those games to advance to the College Cup – soccer’s version of the Final Four – for the first time in program history.

So the biggest questions for head coach Chugger Adair and his staff heading into the 2014 campaign are “What do you do for an encore?” and “How do you accomplish that?”

“We want to build off of last year and not rest on our laurels,” he said. “But we’ve got a new team – a new group, new players, new dynamics, new relationships, new culture – and we’ve got to make

sure we have the gritty mentality, the chip on our shoulder still that we’ve had in the past, and we’ve got to play with that.

“We have to have that tenacity and that bite. There are going to be a few more teams looking to get results against us, so we’ll be more the hunted than the hunter, as I would expect. I told the team recently when I talked in front of a camp with the counselors [many of the 2014 Tech players], ‘Hey, this is the last time we’re going to talk about last year, in front of everyone, and give you a little pat on the back for what we did.’ We want to move forward.”

Entering the 2013 season, the Hokies had to restock their backline, as they lost three starters. Then-juniors Dani King and Jodie Zelenky stepped

into the lineup and played well, each starting all 27 games, and so did then-senior Taylor Antolino, who started 26.

Stalwart Jordan Coburn, now a junior who has started every game since stepping foot on campus (47 games), rounded out a defense that was a catalyst for a team that tied a school record with 12 shutouts and limited its opponents to a miniscule 8.9 shot percentage and 9.2 shots per game – the lowest numbers ever for the team as a member of the ACC.

In fact, this was the most underrated part of Tech’s team a year ago. The Hokies played terrific defense, a fact lost given their offensive firepower last season.

“The backline, last year, we had three new

starters, and those players stepped up and were all players that we were able to develop and that’s been important for us,” Adair said. “That’s been a big part of our program. Taylor Antolino was itching for the opportunity because she had trained and felt like she should start, and she proved it last year.

“She did a tremendous job, so we’ll have to fill that right back spot, but Dani King and Jodie Zelenky were also two new starters back there and did a tremendous job, as well as Jordan Coburn, who will give us some stability on the backline. We’ll look at that hole we need to fill, and Morgan Conklin is one that is definitely going to get a look.”

Much of the credit for those numbers on defense also goes to departed goalkeeper Dayle Colpitts, who walked away from Tech as the school’s career record holder in four categories, including wins (46), shutouts (29) and goals allowed average (1.15).

Determining her successor is paramount to any future success for the 2014 edition of the Hokies.

“We’ll have three goalkeepers on the roster this year,” Adair said. “That starts with Caroline Kelly, who played five games when Dayle was with the Canadian U-20s, so she’s got a bit of experience. She has a very outgoing personality. She’s a good leader, vocal.

“Also competing for the spot will be Blayne Fink, one of our other returners, and Kaylyn Smith, an incoming freshman who is very athletic, good with her feet. She’s kind of a modern goalkeeper.

So those three are going to vie for the spot, and it’s an open position as we go into the preseason. It’s something that we’ve never had recently because Dayle had been the incumbent, so filling that spot is going to be a priority.”

All-everything Jazmine Reeves, who tied a team high with 11 goals, and Ashley Manning (five goals) were also lost to graduation. Reeves ranks as one

of the greatest players in Tech history. Last season, she became the program’s first All-American and the first first-team All-ACC selection. She also was a semifinalist for the Hermann Trophy, which is the highest national honor in women’s soccer. Manning, who played in 83 games in her career, made the 2013 NCAA All-Tournament Team after recording a goal and an assist in the Hokies’ 3-2 loss to Florida State in the College Cup.

But almost two-thirds of the goals scored last season return for the Hokies, as Murielle Tierman (11), Ashley Meier (9) and Katie Yensen (7) come back. So, too, does Kelsey Loupee, who led the team with 10 assists.

“In replacing Jazzy [Reeves], I think we’ve got a group of kids who can come in and help on the frontline,” Adair said “There are three incoming kids that will play a lot – Alani Johnson, Madi Conyers and Laila Gary, who could see some time in there. But we do have some returners as well. Bria Dixon [a sophomore from Cary, North Carolina] could compliment some of the other runners up there.”

The season gets underway in late August with the team’s home opener on Friday, Aug. 22, against VCU at 7 p.m. The schedule is littered with nine teams that made the 2013 NCAA Tournament and features road matches against traditional powerhouses in UNC, Florida State and Louisville. The home slate isn’t any easier, with Notre Dame, Wake Forest and Virginia coming to Blacksburg.

The goal for the team is to get back to the College Cup, but it won’t be easy, and Adair is aware of the facts.

“We are looking forward to the year, and we’ll look to repeat what was a good solid run with getting back to the Final Four,” he said. “It is very difficult to do, though, as only 28 programs in the history of the women’s soccer tournament have



Kelsey Loupee started all 27 games last season for the Hokies and led the team with 10 assists, the third-most in a single season in Tech history.

made the Final Four, which is crazy. In the 32 years, 128 opportunities, only 28 programs, so it’s been an elite group, and what I learned from the Duke coach [Robbie Church] and the Wake coach [Tony da Luz] is that it’s not easy. We want to make a run, and that’s going to be our goal.”

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GETTING TO KNOW DANI KING

- I'm a human development major.
- I am pursuing a masters of education after graduation and want to be an elementary school teacher.
- I wear No. 8 because I wore No. 4 since the age of 5 through high school, and No. 8 is double that.
- I am most looking forward to the Florida State game.
- My most memorable game was the NCAA final four game vs. Florida State.
- My favorite book is the Bible.
- I am active in Cross Training, which is a combination of Athletes in Action and Fellowship of Christian Athletes.
- My childhood nickname is Sunshine.
- I drive a 1998 Toyota Avalon that is named Fran.
- My favorite dining hall is Turner because of their Strawberry Nutella Crepes.
- My favorite meal is flank steak, with a baked potato and broccoli.
- My favorite movie is Crazy, Stupid, Love.
- My favorite kind of music is country.
- I am from Fairfax, Virginia, and have lived in the same house my entire life.

JUST THE FACTS

3.61 – Team GPA last season, the highest at Virginia Tech for the third straight semester.

4 – The 2013 final national ranking for the Hokies, which was the highest ranking ever for the program.

5 – Losses from last season, the fewest ever in program history.

6 – Wins against ranked opponents, including a 4-2 win over then-No. 1 Virginia in an ACC Tournament semifinal match.

7 – Different Hokies on the 2013 All-ACC Academic Team, tying Duke for most from any school.

8 – Number of starters returning from last year's squad that reached the NCAA Women's College Cup.

9 – Goals allowed against ACC teams in the regular season last year. It was the third-lowest in the ACC.

SETTING THE PACE

The Virginia Tech women's cross country team thinks it can make a run at the ACC title this season, while the men's team will be in rebuilding mode with a young squad

by Marc Mullen

Just once in its program's history, back in 2006, has the Virginia Tech women's cross country team qualified for the NCAA Championship. Over the past four seasons, they've come close, as the Hokies ran to a pair of fifth-place finishes and one sixth-place finish at the regionals. They were just on the outside of advancing.

With six runners on the squad running in their final season of cross country at Tech, head cross country and distance coach Ben Thomas believes strongly that this is the year for this group.

"It's kind of now or never this year for this group of women, the seniors," he said. "They've had some good individual successes, but we've never quite put it all together. I know we've been in the top five of the region, which is one of the largest regions in the country and always has a strong showing, but that doesn't quite get you to nationals. We've been just on the cusp, on the bubble, you could say.

"But if this group can come together ... it's the most depth we've ever had at the start of the season when it comes to returning runners who have been all-region or All-ACC."

Four of the women have, at one time, earned all-region honors for the Hokies, starting with Sarah Rapp grabbing one each of the past two seasons and

earning a spot in the 2013 NCAA Championship. Courtney Dobbs (2013), Madalyn Nuckols (2011) and Paige Kvartunas (2010) all have earned one, while newcomer Hilary Krein – a transfer from Oklahoma – was an all-region performer last year in the Midwest.

"We have two good, potentially, lead runners – low sticks as you call them in cross country, those girls that can place high – in Sarah Rapp and Courtney Dobbs," Thomas said. "Sarah is the returning ACC champion in the 5,000 [during the outdoor season], and Courtney was All-ACC and all-region for us in cross country along with Sarah last year.

"And if they lead us, that gives us a good 1-2. Then Hilary Krein - she's a transfer who's going to grad school - was All-Big 12 last year, so she could be a really strong newcomer who could help us out with our depth.

"Then you throw in Paige and Madalyn – who we need to have their best years or even just equal to what they've done in the past – and we could be really good. That's a solid top five."


The men's side will have the look of a rebuilding team. With so many young guys in the program, Thomas is thinking about redshirting Thomas Curtin, who finished second at the 2013 ACC

Championship, fourth at the 2003 Southeast Regional and 69th at the 2013 NAAs.

"Yeah, this is kind of a rebuilding year for the men, a year to get some of them good experience and then we can make a strong push the following year," Thomas said. "That will be – if we redshirt Tommy this year – his final year. He'll come back and lead that group.

"We had a really good group of talented freshmen come in last year and to give them another year of experience, maturing, getting used to the distance – it's such a jump to go from a 5K in high school to 8K, 10K here – would be helpful. To give some of those youngsters an opportunity to build into that and then have Tommy come back for his senior year ... hopefully we'll have a chance to win the next fall."

The 2014 ACC Championships will be held outside of Charlottesville on Oct. 31, a course the Hokies know quite well. Thomas likens it to Tech's home course, and last year's regional meet was held there, when the Tech women finished fifth.

That's also the highest the program has ever placed at the ACC Championship (back in 2006 and 2007), but everything seems to be in place for the women to improve upon that and reach their first NCAA meet in almost a decade. 

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GETTING TO KNOW HILARY KREIN

- I'm originally from South Dakota. I grew up in a town of 1,000 people and graduated in a class of 12 – meaning I lived 75 miles from a Walmart for 18 years of my life.
- I earned my bachelor's degree in accounting at the University of Oklahoma.
- I'm pursuing a master's in political science and a certificate in environmental policy at Virginia Tech and using my last year of eligibility here.
- My favorite meal is borscht (it's a beet soup that my mom makes, and it's absolutely delicious).
- I love biking and the Tour de France and reading Lance Armstrong books.
- I also enjoy yoga and doing a lot of headstands.
- Shalane Flanagan is my favorite runner. She's tough and always races with conviction.
- Ice cream, wine and coffee are the keys to my heart.
- I've hitchhiked once. I was in Montana and got lost cross skiing.
- I love salt, on watermelon, especially.
- Sometimes my Northern accent comes out. Don't ask me to say "book bag."
- My favorite place to be is anywhere I have a good view of the mountains.



MIX OF YOUTH AND EXPERIENCE HAS HOKIES OPTIMISTIC ABOUT 2014 SEASON

The Virginia Tech volleyball team saw talented seniors Victoria Hamsher and Samantha Gostling depart, but the Hokies return a ton of experience from a team that won more matches a year ago than any Tech team since 1995.

by **Marc Mullen**

It’s certainly a combination that any coach would love to start the year with, especially considering the rugged schedule, but Virginia Tech head volleyball coach Chris Riley enters the 2014 preseason with an honorable mention All-American, two All-ACC performers, four seniors, five players who started at least 24 matches and six Hokies who saw action in all 34 games last year on his roster.

Sure, he lost three seniors, including Victoria Hamsher and Samantha Gostling, off a team that won 22 games – the most by a Tech team since 1995. Hamsher was a first-team All-ACC choice and ranked 21st nationally in attack percentage (.405), and she closed her career by entering the top five in three career categories at Tech. Gostling started 51 matches in her career and recorded nearly 1,000 kills.

But returning starters from a team that went 22-12 last season include senior Kathryn Caine (32 starts), who was the honorable mention All-American and a third-team All-ACC selection, and sophomore Lindsey Owens (31), an All-ACC rookie team member, along with seniors Jordan Fish (34) and Latasha Samson-Akpan (34) and sophomore Amanda McKinzie (24).

“I’m very optimistic about the season,” Riley said. “We’ve got a very good team, but a very young team. So I am excited not only for this year, but also for the future of our program. We’ve got a lot of good players, but a lot of young players. We’ve got some seasoned veterans in Kathryn, Jordan, LaTasha and Megan [Beckwith], who all played a good percentage. But the kids that are right behind them are very good as well and will be challenging in all of those spots.

“So it gives us a lot of competition. It gives us a lot of good players. We’ve got a good sophomore class. They are fantastic with Lindsey and Katie [Krueger] and with redshirting Ashley [Battle] and Stacey [Christy]. Both of them are coming along, and both will add a different level to our program. So we are really excited about the season and the group and the future of the program.”

The four Hokie seniors will certainly be leaned upon to provide leadership, but also balance the program on the court. Beckwith, who played in all 34 games in 2013, is a libero, while Fish is the team’s top setter. Caine is an outside hitter, while

Samson-Akpan is a middle hitter.

Riley points to junior Kennedy Bryan, though, as one of the key components for a successful 2014, as she had a great spring and the coaching staff will be looking for her to be on the floor for the entire game. She started six matches a year ago and played in 17, recording 82 kills.

“Kennedy Bryan is going to play a huge role for us this year,” he said. “She was kind of behind Sam [Gostling] for a couple of years while learning, and now she’s going to fill that role. So she’s the one who has potential to make an impact. She’s going to be on the floor the whole time for the first time in her career. She had a great spring and will be needed as a leader for this team for the next couple of years.”

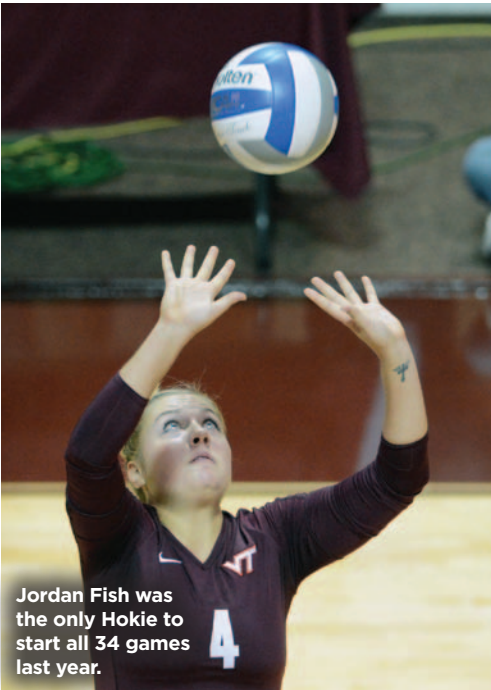
The Hokies, who have made just one NCAA Tournament appearance in their history – back in 2010 when they won 19 regular-season matches – missed out on the postseason last year despite the 22-win total. Riley believes two things will help with that this season.

“Honestly, we played very well through most of the year, but we had a couple of bad losses that kept us out of the tournament,” he said. “We’ve got to be a more consistent team throughout the year. We started off great, and we always start off pretty well, but now we’ve got to be consistent throughout.

“So we have to change our training philosophy a little bit more and be able to extend our year so that we’re playing with an understanding that December is our end time, which we always have. But we have to change the day-to-day practice routine and just train a little differently.”

Another thing that he said needed a bit of a tweak was the schedule – and has he ever tweaked it. The first two weeks of the season, Tech will play in tournaments at Kentucky and Ohio, and of its six opponents, not one was ranked lower in the RPI [Ratings Percentage Index] than Tech’s final spot of 66.

Butler (42), Wichita State (38) and the host Wildcats (13) sport a serious test for the Hokies to open the season, while VCU (52), Texas A&M (29) and Ohio (39) do not make week No. 2 any easier. They head to the Blue Raider Bash in Tennessee after that, and Tech will face Middle Tennessee (87), Washington (67) and Illinois (16). That




doesn’t include the ACC portion of the Hokies’ schedule, which has five NCAA tournament teams, including newcomer Louisville.

“We start the season, the first three weekends, with seven teams ranked in top 52 of the country,” Riley said. “So our schedule is extremely difficult for the first three weekends. Any wins we get in those first three weekends are good.

“But we have to put ourselves into position playing against those teams to win those matches. Now, it will be a test and a challenge for us those first three weekends. In some of those matches, we might be in a little over our heads, but that’s OK. That’s what we want, just to be in those situations.

“What we discovered last year was we played very good teams, but as they faltered down the road, because they weren’t in the best conferences, as their RPIs fell, that would pull us down. They were good teams, but when they finished out of the top 75 in the RPI, it didn’t help us. So we had to schedule teams that are above that or we expect to be above that.”

Senior leadership, good balance and depth is what the 2014 Hokies will bring to the court. The difficulties that their schedule present will certainly require all three to prevail. 

GETTING TO KNOW KATHRYN CAINE

- I drive a Rav4 named Lucille - I came up with that name because it is sophisticated, yet knows how to have fun (e.g. Lucille Ball).
- I could live off of Mexican food.
- I'm obsessed with nail color and nail art. I always have my nails painted in some way.
- My favorite color is pink.
- I'm getting a dual degree in marketing management and international relations with a concentration in international business.
- One time, I out-ate the football team at iHop.
- Even though I've been out of the country, my favorite place in the world is the Outer Banks, North Carolina.
- I hate flying, and I'm scared of heights.
- My favorite movie ever is The Fault in Our Stars. I saw it twice in theaters ... debating on going a third time.
- I'm really claustrophobic.
- I'm a history nerd, and it's one of the many ways I hard-core bond with my Dad.
- I could eat cake every single day.
- I really love knowing about the weather. I wanted to be a meteorologist for more than half my life.

JUST THE FACTS

2 – Players (Kathryn Caine and Lindsey Owens) who were named to both the All-ACC Academic Team and earned postseason ACC accolades in 2013.

6 – Hokie returners who played in all 34 matches last year, while five players started at least 24 matches.

15 – 10-plus win seasons at home for the Hokies in their program’s history, including a 13-4 mark last year.

18 – The ranking of Florida State in 2013 when Tech beat them, marking the highest ranked team the Hokies ever have beaten.

21 – Victories shy of 167 for head coach Chris Riley, which would move him into second place at the school

22 – Wins compiled last year by the Hokies, the most for the program since the team also won 22 games back in 1995.

440 – Assists needed by Jordan Fish to move into the top five in the Hokies’ record book.

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Daniel Lauretano scored two goals last season and will be looked to for more scoring in 2014.

HOKIES LOOKING FOR SCORING PUNCH

Virginia Tech men’s soccer coach Mike Brizendine hopes improved play by returning players and an influx of talent will lead to more scoring in 2014

by Marc Mullen

There will be more new faces joining the Virginia Tech men’s soccer program than the returners, and among the several challenges facing the 2014 Hokies include how fast the coaching staff can get those young men to come together and play as one unit.

Two other factors that will determine the fate of this year’s squad will be how often can the Hokies put the ball in the back of the net and who will replace departing goalkeeper Kyle Renfro.

“Kyle had been awesome for us, and we’ve needed him,” Tech coach Mike Brizendine said. “Anytime you lose a first-team All-ACC player is difficult, but I will tell you one thing, we have three very good goalkeepers who will be playing for us this year. Picking the starter is going to be very difficult.

“Ben Lundgaard from Delaware and Morten Lamps from Germany are very impressive and walk-on Ben Lockler, who came to us in the spring, continues to impress our staff. That might be the hardest position when it comes to who’s going to start. We have some good options, but we went hard and heavy after that position because we knew we were going to lose arguably our best player.”

Renfro was crucial for the Hokies a season ago, helping them to a 4-8-5 record. That may sound odd – a net-minder who posted that mark was named to the All-ACC first team. But of the eight setbacks, five were by a single goal, with two in overtime.

Scoring goals was the dilemma in 2013, and with the top three point scorers from last year

– Robert Alberti (six goals, two assists), Kai Marshall (3, 2) and David Clemens (2, 2) – gone, the Hokies return just 16 (six goals and four assists) of their 49 total points registered a season ago.

“That was certainly an issue for us last year, and we attacked that in this year’s recruiting class, and with the right couple of kids, it could have been a much different situation,” Brizendine said of the lack of scoring. “So that was our focus [in recruiting], and we didn’t lose anything in the defending aspect. I think we improved in some other areas. We brought in some better attacking players that could give some people some fits. Had we had some goal scorers last year, it certainly would have been a different season for us.

“But we have some guys that need to step up, and we have some guys coming in that could be impact guys right away. But there are some returners that I need more from, and I think they’ll be ready. Dan Lauretano is a perfect example – a guy who could score five or six goals for us – or Niels Kirch and André Thomas in the midfield. They have the ability to score some goals. We need some more output when it comes to that.”

As far as starters for the 2014 season, Brizendine believes Hokie fans could see as many as six or seven new bodies on the field to open the season. Some of that is because Renfro, Clemens, Alberti and defender Devante Dubose started so many games – they were a part of a six-member senior class – but also because the recruiting class he is bringing in is littered with so much talent. Again, getting them all on the same page is key.

“We’ll have 13 newcomers, and because of competition, every position is open. But I think of that new group, we’re expecting some of those guys to start right away,” Brizendine said. “Now, whether he’s in his first year in our program or not, that will be the thing we’ll find out near the end of August.

“But we recruited a number of very good players. We graduated a big class that did well, and we had some guys that signed pro contracts

that we were very excited about. So we brought in a big class, and getting them to work together as a unit, I think, is going to be crucial.”

And to assist with that, the team will be playing three scrimmages this fall before heading out on the road for its first three games of the regular season.

“Our feeling toward having three scrimmages was because jamming 18 games into our short schedule is so difficult, and having proper rest is crucial for us,” Brizendine said. “For example, we have Pittsburgh at home Friday, and then the next weekend, we have to go on the road to Notre Dame, the defending national champions. So having a Tuesday game in between is not optimal.

“We want to have some time to plan for them. It’s later in the season. So we took out one game and added it to the preseason schedule. That will help us to get more rest in our schedule. The other reason is because I knew we were going to have all these new faces and we had to get them together. So playing games, we thought, was the best way to do that. Finding out who our best 14 or 15 guys are as quickly as possible will be important.”

The Hokies reported to camp Aug. 12 and the team’s first game is the 29th at SIU-Edwardsville. It gives Brizendine and his staff more than two weeks to resolve their challenges.



André Thomas, who started 16 games last season, scored two goals and had two assists, and he is the second-leading returning scorer for the Hokies this upcoming season.

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JUST THE FACTS

- 2** - Hokies who signed pro contracts after the 2013 soccer season (Kyle Renfro and David Clemens).
- 3** - Times in the past three seasons that Tech has played host to the No. 1-ranked team in the nation at Thompson Field.
- 4** - Tech players who have been drafted in the MLS Superdraft after defender Devante Dubose was selected by San Jose in January.
- 8** - Teams on the Hokies' 2014 schedule that finished with an RPI last season of 60 or better, including No. 1 Notre Dame.
- 9** - International players on Tech's fall roster.
- 14** - All-region selections for the Hokies over the past 13 seasons.
- 18** - NCAA schools that have seen both their men's (2007) and women's (2013) soccer teams advance to the College Cup.

GETTING TO KNOW ALESSANDRO MION

- God's first in my life.
- I went to four high schools.
- My favorite restaurant is Colombian El Pueblito Viejo No. 2 in Miami, which turns into a party at night.
- My favorite movie is Rush Hour 2.
- My parents are Venezuelan and Italian.
- I speak Spanish.
- I played in the 2011 U17 World Cup in Mexico with the U.S. team.
- I am from Miami, and there is no place like it.
- I enjoy dancing, especially to Latin music.
- The food I miss the most when in Blacksburg is Cuban food after my dad's cooking, of course.
- My favorite candy is any chocolate (haha).
- I go to karaoke on Thursday nights.
- My roommates and I regularly enjoy cookie parties, where we make cookies and watch Netflix.
- I am a pro at the game "Just Dance."



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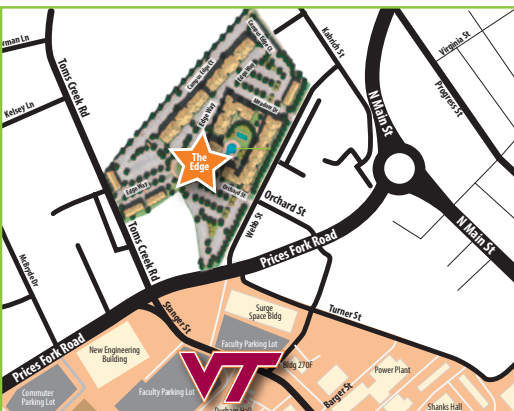
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