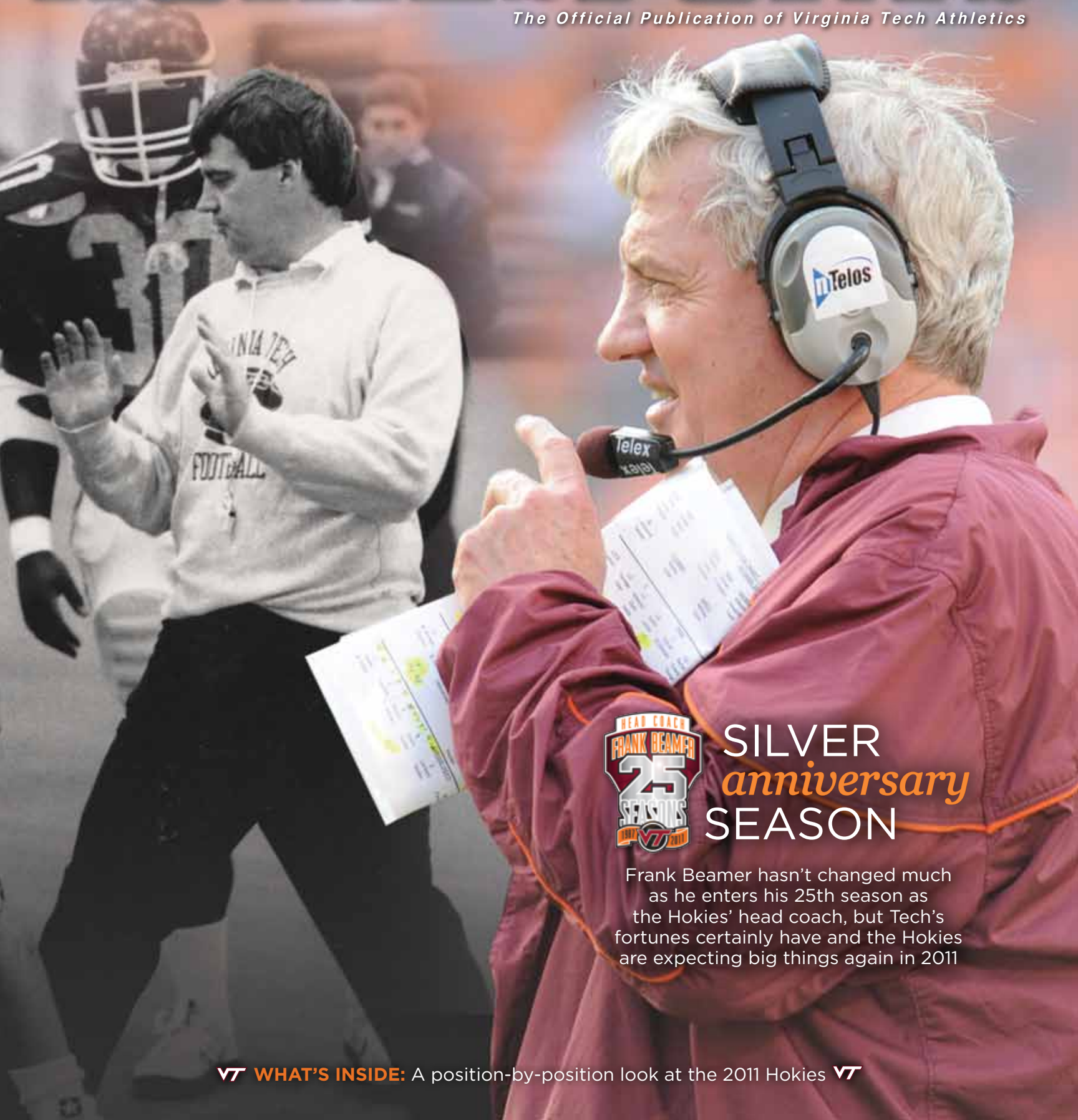


INSIDE HOKIESPORTS

The Official Publication of Virginia Tech Athletics



SILVER *anniversary* SEASON

Frank Beamer hasn't changed much as he enters his 25th season as the Hokies' head coach, but Tech's fortunes certainly have and the Hokies are expecting big things again in 2011



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KICKING OFF ANOTHER SEASON OF HOKIE SPORTS

The women's soccer team opened the 2011-12 Virginia Tech athletics season with an exhibition game against East Carolina on August 12 and will play the first regular-season game of the fall on the 19th. This year's seniors have an opportunity to become the winningest class ever in the program and the first to finish all four seasons with a berth in the NCAA Women's Soccer Championships.





THE STUDENT-ATHLETE EXPERIENCE

"I would like to thank all of the Hokie Club members that have helped pave the way for me to have the opportunity to step on the soccer field and represent Virginia Tech. So far it has been a great experience, and I look forward to my remaining year at Virginia Tech."

JEREMY WILLIAMS
Senior, Men's Soccer

"Thank you so much for giving me this incredible opportunity to play at the collegiate level and to be a member of the student-athlete organization here at Virginia Tech. It has truly been a memorable and growing experience over the years!"

BRITTANY MICHELS
Senior, Women's Soccer



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DENNIS MICHAEL SEMONES

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HOKIE CENTURY CHAMPION

HOKIE CLUB MEMBER SINCE:

1979

CURRENTLY RESIDES:

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MITCHELL (SON)
BRANDON (SON)

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Q&A

Q: A Hokie is ...

A: A TRUE Virginia Tech fan.

Q: The Hokie Nation is real because...

A: I believe that Virginia Tech relates to the students, faculty, and alumni as family. Virginia Tech truly places the interest of the student-athletes at the forefront.

Q: What is your best memory of Virginia Tech athletics?

A: My treasured memories are primarily of the relationships among the football players that we developed as student-athletes and the ones that we continue to develop 40 some years later.

Q: How did you get involved with the Hokie Club?

A: We became donors of the Hokie Club to give back to Virginia Tech a portion of what Virginia Tech gave to us. I probably would not have attended college without the scholarship that was granted to me by Coach Jerry Claiborne. We want Virginia Tech to be a winning program in all aspects of athletics; but, the ultimate goal is for each athlete to earn his or her diploma. I believe that all of the administrators, coaches, and support staff try to instill the

importance of an education to the Virginia Tech athletes.

Q: What caused you to become a fan of Virginia Tech?

A: I have been a Virginia Tech fan since I was a young boy and could not believe that I was really going to play football for Virginia Tech!

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

A: I do not.

Q: Describe your perfect day at Virginia Tech.

A: A perfect day at Virginia Tech begins with breakfast with our Virginia Tech friends. We then get together for a pregame tailgate with wonderful food and drink. The weather is perfect and we enjoy our time together as we get excited for the "Hokie Victory." Virginia Tech plays a perfect game and beats Virginia. We then celebrate with a postgame tailgate and finish the day with GREAT MEMORIES!!

Q: What motivates you to give back to help Virginia Tech athletics?

A: I am a very good example of what a

scholarship means to an individual athlete. As stated earlier, I would not have gone to college without the scholarship to Virginia Tech. I received bachelor's and master's degrees from Virginia Tech. I have had a very successful career in education. Betty and I are donating a scholarship in appreciation for the scholarship that I received because it has added so much to my life. I would encourage everyone to donate to the Virginia Tech Athletic Hokie Club and support the funding of scholarships to our athletes.

Q: I'm a Hokie Club member because...

A: I love Virginia Tech athletics and Virginia Tech.

Q: My favorite Virginia Tech sports are....

A: Football and basketball.

Q: My all-time favorite Virginia Tech football player is ...

A: Our son - Brandon Semones - What very special memories of Brandon playing for his uncle Frank and with our nephew, Shane.

Q: My all-time favorite Virginia Tech student-athlete from another sport is ...

A: Deron Washington

LETTER FROM LU

Welcome Back! Did your summer fly by as quickly as mine did? The students are back on campus and the energy in Blacksburg is electric as a new academic year is underway.

I want to thank each and every one of you for your financial support in the 2010-11 fiscal year. We saw growth in the Endowment Fund, which combined with the Annual Fund, pays the scholarship bill. In the new fiscal year that began July 1, we have been asked to increase our support as tuition, fees, and room and board have grown by over \$700,000. You have responded well in the past and now more than ever we need your increased annual fund gifts.



For the past eight years, we have all been focusing on the Campaign for Virginia Tech-Invent the Future. Thousands of alumni and friends of the university have attended regional campaign meetings and have participated in the effort to meet the announced goal of 1 billion dollars. The campaign has now concluded and the official results will be announced this fall. I do want to thank each and every one of you who have supported the athletics portion of the Campaign and helped us to exceed our goals in support of the endowment, capital projects and annual operating needs. I don't know the final tally so I will look forward to the big announcement in November with great anticipation.

Soon, you will receive a brochure outlining the details for next spring's reseating of Lane Stadium. A committee has been meeting since March to draft the plan and outline for you the specific steps in the reseating process. Look for more information in these pages as we move toward 2012. Our goal is to make you as comfortable as possible going into the process. We are excited to introduce an online seat selection software product. It has been used by other university and professional teams in their seat selection process, and we are confident that our fans will embrace it as well. You will also receive a second brochure that introduces you to the online process and walks you through the selection of your seats. Every Hokie Club member and season ticket holder will have the opportunity to select his or her own seat.

This fall, the athletics department will announce a campaign to raise funding for a new indoor field house. This facility will be located east of the current practice fields and will allow our football program and many of our Olympic sport teams the opportunity to train and practice during inclement weather. Our current indoor facility, Rector Field House, will be turned over to our nationally ranked track & field program on a full-time basis to allow those athletes full access to train and compete. The Hokies have hosted the ACC Indoor Championships in Rector Field House in recent years and are once again scheduled to host the 2012 ACC Indoor Championships. We will be providing more details on the new field house facility once architectural drawings are complete. We are excited about the opportunities the new indoor field house facility will offer to our student-athletes.

The opening of football season is days away and we look forward to seeing you in Blacksburg and Lane Stadium. We are grateful for your past support for our athletics program and will need your help as we prepare to meet the increasing costs of educating our student-athletes. Please join me by increasing your gift this year. I think it is an excellent investment in the future of this university and its athletics programs. It's a great time to be a Hokie in the Atlantic Coast Conference!

Go Hokies,

LU MERRITT

Senior Director of Development for Intercollegiate Athletics



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Drager applying for Rhodes Scholarship

Tech tight end Chris Drager confirmed at Tech's Football Media Day that he was submitting his application for the Rhodes Scholarship. The prestigious scholarship allows students to take postgraduate courses at renowned Oxford University in England for anywhere from one to three years. Only 32 students in the United States are awarded this scholarship each year.

"Christina McIntyre [associate director of Tech's University Honors Program] contacted me last spring and said I had the potential to be a good candidate," Drager said. "Right away, I wanted to do it. I was kind of surprised because I didn't put myself up there to get that award. Then football started up and I started grad school and I didn't have time. Then the summer came and I had some free time, so I figured I might as well do something and applied for it."

Drager, who got his undergrad degree in human foods, nutrition and exercise and is now working on his master's, must submit a resumé, eight letters of recommendation from people who know him well (five must be professors) and a 1,000-word personal essay to Tech by Aug. 25. Then he interviews with a committee, which decides whether to send his application to Oxford. The officials at Oxford then make a decision by Thanksgiving.



Chris Drager

Hopper, Acree change positions

Tech's staff moved James Hopper, a 5-9, 180-pound redshirt sophomore from Fayetteville, N.C., from tailback to free safety shortly before fall practice started to add depth to that position. The move marks the second in less than six months for Hopper, who was moved from rover to tailback before the start of spring practice. Hopper played in 12 games and recorded 10 tackles a year ago.

Also, the staff moved Nick Acree from defensive tackle to the offensive line at his request. The 6-5, 278-pound redshirt freshman from King William, Va., felt he was a better fit on the offensive line, and the coaches granted his request.

DeChristopher to miss 2-4 weeks

Four-year starting offense tackle Blake DeChristopher is expected to miss 2-4 weeks with a strained pectoral muscle after injuring himself while performing the bench press in the weight room a week before fall practice started. DeChristopher, a 6-foot-5, 311-pound redshirt senior, earned second-team All-ACC honors a year ago while starting all 14 games. He leads all of Tech's offensive linemen with 37 career starts.

His status for the season opener against Appalachian State is unclear, but he anticipates playing.

"I think 2-4 weeks is pretty accurate, with the way I feel right now," he said. "As of right now, I feel a lot better. I think I will be back, but I'm going to be smart and not do anything stupid and hurt it even more. This is a big year for me and this team, and I'm not going to do anything stupid by re-injuring it."

Vinston Painter, a 6-6, 303-pound redshirt junior, and Michael Via, 6-7, 292-pound redshirt junior, are competing for reps until DeChristopher returns. Painter

played in four games a year ago, while Via, hampered while recovering from a torn ACL, played in six. Via, though, has starting experience, having started three games at center as a redshirt freshman following an injury to Beau Warren.

"They need reps, and Blake knows what to do," offensive line coach Curt Newsome said. "It's a long season. We think he'll be back for the first game, so let those other guys get some reps. Blake doesn't have to get all the preseason bumps and bruises. Plus, we need to find out who is going in for Blake during a game. I hate that Blake is hurt, but I don't think this is going to hurt our football team."




Blake DeChristopher

Tech to face Alabama in 2013 Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game

Alabama and Virginia Tech will open the 2013 college football season in the Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game in Atlanta.

The game will be a rematch of the 2009 season opener. In that one, the No. 5 Crimson Tide downed the No. 7 Hokies 34-24 on their way to the national championship.

The game is expected to air in prime time on either ABC or ESPN. Tickets to the game will be evenly split between the two teams, creating a true neutral-site game. 

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editor's desk | by Jimmy Robertson

Lots of things have changed over 25 years, but Frank Beamer isn't one of them

Tech's new running backs coach remembers when times weren't this good for Virginia Tech's football program. He remembers once when a rude fan called the Beamer home, and his sister answered and dealt with a tirade that left her in tears. He remembers seeing his dad, stumbling through the throes of what ultimately would be a 2-8-1 season, walk through the door each evening, looking tired and haggard.

But Shane Beamer never wondered whether tough times would change his father.

"He was like he is now," Shane said. "It's the truth. I was in high school. When he came home, he was dad. It wasn't like he was screaming and yelling and bringing his frustrations home with him. You knew how hard he was working, and you knew how much it hurt that they couldn't get over the hump. But when he came home, he was the same guy, the same dad, whether times were successful or difficult.

"He was that way in 1992 and nothing has changed."

On Sept. 3, Frank Beamer begins his 25th season as the head coach at Virginia Tech, and times certainly have changed. After winning just 24 games in his first six seasons, Beamer and the Hokies have won at least 10 games in each of the past six seasons, and his silver anniversary team – the 2011 Hokies – appear poised to continue that streak, with a talented roster and a nicely constructed schedule.

Other things have changed, too. Lane Stadium looks like a football palace. The complex features immaculate practice fields, and the

year-old locker room rates second to none.

Assistants have come and gone in that time, though Bud Foster and Bryan Stinespring have been here for nearly the duration. Rickey Bustle left to be a head coach, J.B. Grimes departed to be closer to home, and Todd Grantham and Kevin Rogers went to the NFL, to cite examples.

Players have left and then came back. Tech's current staff features five assistants who played for Beamer – Bud Foster, Charley Wiles, Torrian Gray, Cornell Brown, and of course, Shane. The current graduate assistants include former players John Candelas, Jimmy Martin and Orion Martin.

There have been three athletics directors at Tech in Beamer's tenure – one who hired him, one who kept him during the rough times and one smart enough to make sure he never left. There also have been four university presidents.

"The thing you realize is that I've been very fortunate," Beamer said. "I was fortunate to have the administration that I had when I first began. I don't know if a guy would survive if he had the same record I had when I first started out here. To see the place change and to see the facilities change and to be with as many good coaches and as many good players ... I've just been a fortunate person. I very much realize that."

Even with all the changes, he's never changed. Beamer's best trait may be his uncanny ability to remain calm in a storm. In 1995,


Tech started out the season with high expectations, but an 0-2 record. The Hokies then won out, beating Texas in the Sugar Bowl. Last year, Tech started out the season with high expectations, but an 0-2 mark. The Hokies went on to win the ACC title and went to the Orange Bowl.

"There was no panic," Foster said. "He told us we were good coaches and we have a good formula for success here. We just had to get the right players and let them learn from their mistakes and we were going to be fine. That was comforting and showed a lot of confidence in us. That's what a leader of an organization does."

Hopefully, fans appreciate conference championships, bowl bids (18 straight) and bowl wins (8). Just consider the plights of ACC brethren Clemson and North Carolina, both on their fifth coach since Beamer started. The Tech program, his program, is in fine shape, both for this season and in the long run, so there should be more glory in the future.

Frank Beamer's enjoyed unprecedented success at Tech. And the length of his tenure also may become unprecedented, given today's college football climate.

"Coach [Steve] Spurrier [South Carolina head coach] always said 10-11 years was long enough to stay at one place," Shane said. "Whether that's true or not, it's a different time now."

"You may see a situation like that [a coach staying at one school for a long time] in the future, but I'd be surprised if there was." 



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kroger roth report | by **Bill Roth**



Despite some large losses of talent, head coach Frank Beamer's 25th Tech team will look like many of his past squads

You don't have to spend much time watching the 2011 Virginia Tech football team practice to understand why there's so much optimism surrounding this ball club.

Yes, the Hokies suffered some tremendous personnel losses from their 2010 ACC championship team. Gone are Tyrod Taylor and tailbacks Ryan Williams and Darren Evans, who each departed Blacksburg early for the NFL. The team graduated both its all-conference kicker and punter, and cornerback Rock Carmichael is with the Houston Texans. And that's just a sampling of missing names and faces.

Despite those losses, Frank Beamer's 25th Virginia Tech team looks much like most of his recent squads – lots of talent, tremendous speed, outstanding character and off-the-charts skill at many positions.

As a result, the Hokies find themselves ranked in the preseason top-20 for the seventh straight year and the runaway favorites in the ACC's Coastal Division ... again.

There's much to get into heading into this season, so let's look at some major storylines.

LOGAN THOMAS AT QUARTERBACK

Much of the preseason talk about the Hokies centers on Thomas, who replaces Taylor at the most vital position. The redshirt sophomore has attempted just 26 career passes. In fact, he's caught more touchdowns (one) than he's thrown (zero) during his career.

Taylor, though was a proven, experienced quarterback. Thomas, at present, is neither.

"No, he's not," Tech quarterbacks coach



Jarrett Boykin, who is on the verge of breaking two receiving records at Tech, will be a key weapon in 2011.

Mike O'Cain agreed. "But Logan is further along now than Tyrod was when we threw him in there (in 2007) in his first year. Logan redshirted and got to be around our program and at our meetings. We gave Tyrod a lot of author-

ity and a lot of leeway in what we did offensively, and Logan saw that and learned from that. We're not going to throw quite that much on him, obviously. We want him out there playing, not thinking, but he's seen what we do



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throughout a game and throughout a season.”

O’Cain says Thomas can make all the throws, has a big-league arm and will be able to throw more passes over the middle than previous Tech quarterbacks because of his height (6-foot-6).

“But what I want to see is his game management,” O’Cain said. “How does he get the team in and out of the huddle? How does he handle the crowd? How will he handle both the good and the bad?”

“The key for any quarterback is not to get caught up in a good play and be also able to play through a bad one. I call it poise. It’s all about game management. All those things are unknown with Logan because we can’t simulate any of this in practice. You don’t really know any of these things until you get a young quarterback out there in a game situation.”

WHAT O’CAIN WANTS TO SEE

O’Cain shared that he wants his quarterback to be poised and efficient, and doesn’t get caught up in rotisserie-league statistics.

“I’m not worried about passing yards or touchdowns,” O’Cain said. “Those stats are a by-product of a system and don’t necessarily tell you how good a quarterback is. Same with that touchdown-to-interception ratio stat. That doesn’t tell me much about a quarterback either. In my mind, touchdown passes are a by-product of a system. Interceptions, on the other hand, are the responsibility of the quarterback.”

What numbers does O’Cain feel serve as an accurate barometer for a quarterback?

“The two numbers that I think are the best gauge are completion percentage and a low number of interceptions,” he said. “If a quarterback is completing a high percentage of his passes and throwing a low percentage of interceptions, that means two things. First, he’s probably an accurate passer. And secondly, he’s a guy who makes good decisions.”

Accurate passers who make good decisions usually win games. Here’s a look at Tech quarterbacks under O’Cain since the Hokies joined the ACC:

Year	Primary QB	Compl. %	TDs	INTs
2006	Sean Glennon	56.0	17	10
2007	Sean Glennon	60.9	12	5
2008	Tyrod Taylor	57.2	2	7
2009	Tyrod Taylor	56.0	13	5
2010	Tyrod Taylor	59.7	24	5

Tech won at least 10 games in each of those seasons, and the Hokies led the ACC in passing efficiency in each of the past two seasons. O’Cain hopes Thomas can continue that trend this fall.

DEPTH ON DEFENSE

After watching practice for a while this August, it’s clear the Hokies have some really nice players on defense. James Gayle and J.R. Collins are sen-

sational ends, and the Hopkins brothers are solid tackles. Bruce Taylor has the look of a big-time linebacker, Jeron Gouveia-Winslow is a totally different player from last year, and the secondary is star-studded. But after that first group?

“We’re going to have a lot of first-year players out there, which is similar to last year,” defensive coordinator Bud Foster said. “We have self-motivated kids with a lot of athletic ability and physically much different than last year (when the Hokies finished eighth in the ACC in total defense, allowing 361.5 yards per game). But depth at tackle and end is a concern, and depth at safety is a major issue right now.”

The Hokies moved James Hopper back to safety after he spent the spring at tailback. He’ll be providing depth to Eddie Whitley. Freshman Boye Aromire is listed as the backup to Antone Exum at rover, but nothing is set in stone.

“We’ve got to find some people who can play. Who is our rover?” Foster asked.

Another issue here is leadership. The Hokies have just four seniors on their defense and just one senior starter (Whitley).

BOYKIN LEADS DEEP, EXPERIENCED RECEIVING CORPS

The Hokies may have lost their all-league quarterback, but they return nearly the entire receiving unit, including Jarrett Boykin, who should become Tech’s all-time leading receiver early this year. Entering 2011, Boykin has 123 career receptions, which ranks second in school history to Ernest Wilford (126). And his 2,123 receiving yards is third in Tech history behind Ricky Scales (2,272) and Antonio Freeman (2,207). That means Boykin should break both records in September.

“I think he’s a great fit for our program,” Beamer said of Boykin. “He’s doesn’t say much, but he’s productive.”

When you throw Boykin in with Danny Coale, Dyrrell Roberts, Marcus Davis and D.J. Coles, you have a group that combined for 135 receptions and 13 touchdowns last year.

KICKER

During the past two seasons, that’s a total of 28 games, the Hokies missed just four field-goal attempts. Last year, Chris Hazley was 21 of 22, and during the 2009 season, Matt Waldron was 20 of 23. That’s just absolutely remarkable. The five years before Waldron, Tech kickers Dustin Keys (23 of 29), Jud Dunlevy (21 of 26) and Brandon Pace (58 of 68) were just tremendous. Which leads us to Cody Journell, Tech’s 2011 kicker.

Journell was a high school All-American at Giles High, but has yet to attempt a kick in a college game. He has come back from injuries and appears to be 100 percent healthy this fall. Will the Hokies be counting on a 20-year-old kid who’s never played in a college game to be clutch in a big way this year? You betcha!

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Keeping up *with* Compliance

The compliance corner answers questions concerning the governance of intercollegiate athletics and its impact on our athletics department. Have a question? Please send it to inside@hokiesports.com and we'll answer it in upcoming issues.

Now, here are a couple of questions that we've received from Tech alums and fans over the past few months, with responses from Tim Parker, Associate AD for Compliance:

Q: What exactly can a coach do on an unofficial visit? I read where LSU got dinged by the NCAA when an assistant coach provided transportation and lodging for a recruit. Is this not permissible for unofficial visits? Thanks!

- Jerry in Blacksburg

TP: "Transportation is permissible, but with conditions. A coach may provide transportation on an unofficial visit if he or she is driving the prospective student-athlete and/or his parents to see off-campus practice and competition sites in the prospect's sport, or any other school facilities located within a 30-mile radius of campus. Also, a coach can provide three game tickets to an athletics contest.

"But other than that, no member of the coaching staff or the athletics department can provide transportation, lodging or anything else for a prospective student-athlete on an unofficial visit. This is the primary way in which unofficial visits differ from official visits."

Q: More and more student-athletes are joining Twitter and posting random thoughts. Is it a violation for me to contact a student-athlete using Twitter?

- Brent in Blacksburg

TP: "Simply interacting with a current or former student-athlete via a social website is not a problem. However, posting in any public forum on the social media site of a prospective student-athlete (e.g. high school or junior college athlete) is problematic, if the content of the posting involves any language related to recruitment or any solicitation of that prospect's athletics services on behalf of the college/university that you support."

Q: I'm hearing that Mike Gentry [Tech's associate AD for sport performance] isn't allowed to discuss the Hokies' off-season testing results at Tech's annual media day. What is the NCAA's logic behind not allowing this? This is ridiculous.

- Marla in Gainesville, Fla.

TP: "The NCAA rules permit strength and conditioning staffs to design and conduct summer workout programs for student-athletes, but these summer workouts are still technically voluntary. Student-athletes cannot be required to attend the voluntary workout, and no information can be reported back to the coaching staff related to the student-athletes' participation in the workouts. The goal is to prevent student-athletes from being indirectly 'required' to practice and train year round, while also giving those who want to work out in the summer the option of doing so. But coaches – and the public – aren't allowed to know anything about these workouts, hence, the no-publicity rule."

Q: Just a random question concerning drug testing. What if a student-athlete tests positive for a banned substance and it turns out to be medication that a doctor prescribed? Would the student-athlete be punished in this scenario?


- Torye in Statesboro, Ga.

TP: "No. The NCAA rules do recognize a legitimate need for certain banned substances and exception procedures do exist. Keep in mind, though, that a prescription does not guarantee that a banned substance is okay to use."

Q: What exactly is academic fraud? You keep hearing more and more about that these days (e.g. North Carolina), and it seems to be a growing problem in college athletics. Thanks.

- Cindy in Blacksburg

TP: "Academic fraud includes many types of activities, but generally involves cheating. This could be cheating off a classmate's work or having someone else write a paper for you and turning it in as your own.

"Whenever academic fraud involves a staff member or employee of the university (e.g. tutor), NCAA bylaw 10.1-(b) comes into play. The penalties for violating this bylaw are very severe, starting with permanent competitive ineligibility. So student-athletes need to be aware of the consequences before going down that road." 

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Tech AD optimistic about Hokies' future in spite of ever-changing landscape

by Jimmy Robertson

Virginia Tech is entering its seventh year as a member of the ACC, and the landscape of college athletics continues to change. The question remains how will this impact Virginia Tech going forward. Tech AD Jim Weaver sat down and graciously answered questions concerning many different topics.

Q: What progress is being made on the building of a new field house next to the football locker room?

JW: “We’re getting ready to move on that and start a fundraising campaign. We’re getting a publication printed, so that when we get after it here in the next six weeks, I would think we’d start our active campaign in concert with the start of the football season. We don’t have a timetable set as to when we’d like to start construction or when we’d like to have it done, but we have an idea as to what we’d like built and we’re moving forward with that idea.”

Q: How did the arrangement with Alabama come about [2013 Chick-fil-A Kickoff Game], and what are your thoughts on all these neutral-site games?

JW: “Last fall, Gary Stokan [president of the Chick-fil-A Bowl] approached me and said that they would like for us to consider coming back and playing Alabama. The new College Football Hall of Fame is going to be opening and run by the Chick-fil-A people, and Frank [Beamer] and I felt honored that they wanted Virginia Tech and Alabama to play in that special game in conjunction with the new Hall of Fame.

“I do like neutral-site games when it’s the right thing to do. The kinds of exposure we got

with the first one [e.g. ESPN *Gameday*] and the enthusiasm around the game was good. But I’m not one who wants to keep going to neutral-site games. I want our fans to be able to have as many opportunities to see us play in Blacksburg as we can because they’re buying season tickets, club seats, suites, etc. I want them to have the opportunity to use those.”

Q: What’s the latest with football scheduling? You need a game next year, correct?

JW: “Yes, we’re looking for a I-AA because we don’t have one scheduled. We were supposed to play East Carolina in 2012 and 2013, but when we got the invite to play Alabama, I called Terry Holland [ECU AD] to see if we could do anything and we agreed not to play in 2012 and 2013, but we are going to push those games back to 2016-17. Having said that, they had an opportunity or two that they wanted to look at, so we worked together on that.

“Other than looking for a game for next year, we’re scheduled out through 2015, and we’re looking at adding a MAC opponent in 2016. I’m waiting for the contract on that one before I say anything, but that fits with our scheduling philosophy. We want to schedule a major institution like Ohio State (2014-15), Wisconsin (2016-17) and Pittsburgh (2012-13), which are on our future schedules, and then fill in with I-AA’s and teams from the MAC and Conference USA (e.g. Marshall, ECU).”

Q: Do you see any movement to playing nine ACC games and getting rid of a non-conference game?

JW: “We discussed that at two or three ACC

meetings last year, and for all intents and purposes, the AD’s voted to take that off the table. We’re not actively pursuing that. Some teams would be playing five conference games at home in a given year, while others would be playing four. To be honest, a lot of the head coaches didn’t like that.

“We talked about the “buy” games because the guarantees are getting so expensive. But it’s not to the point yet where we’re willing to go to nine conference games.”

Q: What led to the decision to perform another re-seating of Lane Stadium?

JW: “When we did the first re-seating, we said we were going to re-seat in no less than five years and no more than seven years, so we’re keeping our word. There are a lot of donors who have given us gifts with the understanding that they’re going to have a chance to get better seats. So we feel that re-seating is the proper thing to do, and we have a committee that is working diligently on that.

“I don’t have any concerns about our process. I think our process will be better than what we had in place the last time, and we had very few, if any, problems the last time and received compliments from sister institutions in the way we went about it the last time.”

Q: How concerned are you, like most AD’s, about selling tickets to bowl games?

JW: “Very. The secondary ticket market is killing everyone right now. Our people have been such terrific followers to bowls and away games. But go back to the one Orange Bowl a few years ago when the Orange Bowl was go-

ing to host the national championship the week after. They [Orange Bowl officials] mandated that people who bought tickets to the championship game also had to buy tickets to the Orange Bowl. So a lot of those people had no interest in the Orange Bowl and were selling those tickets and parking passes at tremendously reduced rates. That killed us.

"It's an issue, and we've talked about it a lot. But I'm not sure what can be done. Different things have been tried, but without a lot of success. I don't know what the answer is. That's a wait-and-see deal."

Q: What do you think of all the chatter in regards to paying student-athletes?

JW: "The reason this is a hot topic is that a lot of these young people don't have spending money, and you're hearing more and more about expanding scholarship dollars to cover the "cost of attendance," which means not only giving money for tuition, fees, books, etc., but also for personal expenses.

"The problem with doing that is that if you don't pay that for everyone, you have a potential Title IX issue. Now, if I understood what [ACC commissioner] John Swofford said, he would like to pursue increasing the value of the scholarship, and I don't think it's necessarily

the same issue as paying them [student-athletes] the cost of attendance. If that's the case, then there's equity within your department and it's not going to be as costly because not every student-athlete is on full scholarship – some get a percentage of a scholarship. I think increasing the value of a scholarship might be a way to do it without getting into all the other issues that may come into play."

Q: So you wouldn't be for paying student-athletes a set rate of \$100 or \$200 a month or whatever the number might be?


JW: "I would not. I still believe that the amateurism issue should be in effect. There are a lot of young men and women on scholarship who go through college and get some Pell money or get some NCAA assistance money or they work a little in the summer, and they still graduate and they're okay. I'm not for paying college athletes. I am for having as many opportunities available for our young people to get resources such as the Pell money and the NCAA special assistance money.

"If we start paying people, and let's just say it's \$100 a month as a hypothetical, then people will say that won't be enough. There's no end to it, and remember, in this day and age,

there are 20 schools that are operating in the black (actually 22) – and we're one of them. If they're already in the red, how are they going to afford to make headway toward operating in the black?"

Q: A story came out recently in *The Washington Post* about the financial problems in Maryland's athletics department. How is this department financially looking ahead to the next several years?

JW: "I think we're as solid as any schools that have been operating in the black. We've been operating in the black for as long as I've been here. We're proud of that fact. We have a requirement from the state that you have to have 22 percent of your operating budget in reserve, and we fulfill that obligation. We have the lowest student fees among the schools in the state, and we're still on solid ground.

"The most important reason we're in the black is that we have a fan base called Hokie Nation that loves this university and supports this university and buys football and basketball tickets, which it takes to operate the enterprise. They also give of their resources to help us build facilities. Without them, we would have a hard time." 

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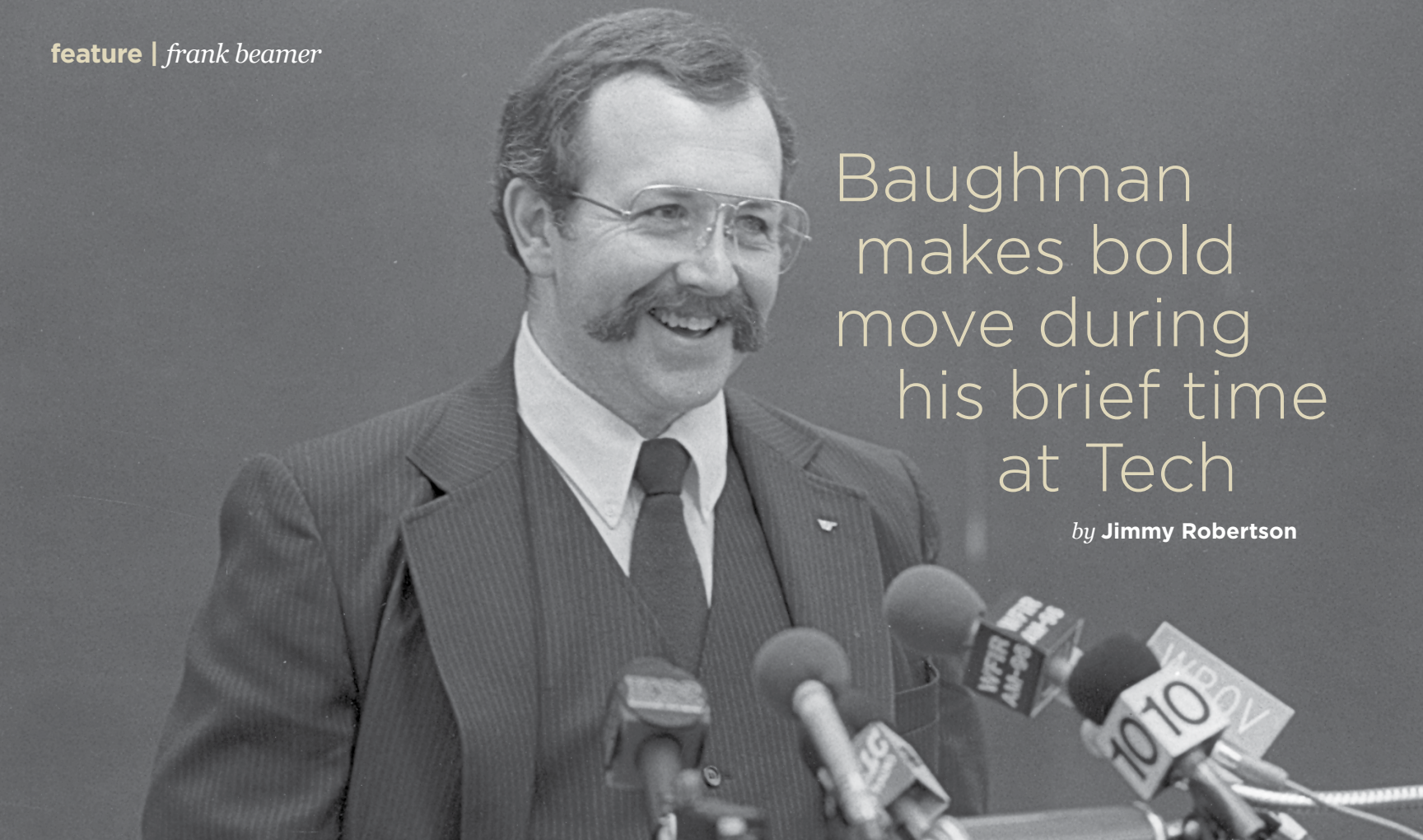
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Baughman makes bold move during his brief time at Tech

by Jimmy Robertson



Toward the end of 1986, the Virginia Tech athletics department was a tumultuous place to be – and this was following a great football season that ended with a thrilling Peach Bowl victory over N.C. State.

The department was transitioning to a new athletics director and a new football coach, as Bill Dooley, who served both roles, resigned earlier in the season – he said he was fired – after university officials wanted to split his coaching and AD roles. Other issues at the time included an NCAA investigation into Tech’s football program, the lack of a conference home for all its sports, and a lack of revenue.

But one person wanted to take on the challenges.

“What you described is precisely why I took the job,” Dale Thomas Baughman said, better known to Tech fans as “Dutch.” “Charlie Moir [the Tech men’s basketball coach at the time] was a very good friend and helped me understand what was needed. Anybody can take an AD position when everything is working just right, but frankly, that never happens. There is always a reason why a position is open, and there is always something that needs to be fixed.

“The other intangibles, such as the people involved, the institutional leadership, the mission of the institution, etc., are all compelling reasons.”

Dutch Baughman’s tenure at Tech lasted less than six months – he resigned following a rift

with university administrators over an investigation into the school’s men’s basketball program. But he made a decision in that brief time span that propelled Virginia Tech into a national football powerhouse going on two decades now.

“No way I could have imagined it,” said Baughman, who now serves as the executive director of the Division I-A Athletic Directors’ Association. “I would not be telling the truth if I said I could.”

Baughman hired a little known football coach from Murray State named Frank Beamer to head Tech’s football program following Dooley’s departure. Interestingly, Beamer wasn’t necessarily Baughman’s first choice.

To backtrack a little, Baughman got the job on Dec. 11, 1986, when then-Tech president William Lavery heeded the recommendation of his 23-member search committee and hired Baughman to take over the AD’s job. Baughman, one of 96 applicants for the position, had been working for the Southwest Conference for three years prior to taking the Tech job, and before that, he worked as the AD at Furman from 1979-83.

Baughman combined a tough, disciplined approach honed from spending three years in the Marines and from also serving as a graduate assistant football coach under legendary Woody Hayes at Ohio State, with a softer side that put integrity and the welfare of student-athletes first. His handlebar mustache, trademark cow-



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25 YEARS

This is the first in a series of stories that looks back at head coach Frank Beamer’s 24 years as the head man of Tech’s football program. To begin, we look back at the circumstances that led to his hiring – and the man who made it happen.

boy boots and cheery disposition helped him win over the committee.

But to win over the Tech fan base, he needed to hire a quality football coach – and quickly.

“I had to move swiftly, but not hastily,” Baughman said.

Baughman’s top choice was Bobby Ross, who had resigned as the head coach at Maryland following that season. Baughman met Ross in Richmond to discuss the Tech job, but Ross thought it too soon to jump back into coaching. He recommended a former assistant coach of his from when he served as the head coach of The Citadel – Beamer.

“Bobby thought it was too soon to be involved, but he did tell me that his first hire would be Frank Beamer as his assistant head coach,” Baughman said. “I thought that was interesting. I was talking to Bobby about the job, and he gave his endorsement to Frank Beamer, who was another person whom I was interested in at the time.”

Beamer desperately wanted to return to his alma mater. He had been the head coach at Murray State for six years and amassed four straight winning seasons, including in 1986 when the Racers shared the Ohio Valley Conference championship and made the Division I-AA playoffs.

Baughman knew of Beamer’s accomplishments and was intrigued. He met with Beamer and his wife, Cheryl, in Nashville, and then Cheryl departed to leave the two men alone to talk more in depth about the job. The two men discussed the landscape of college football and Virginia Tech’s place in it, and also, the pending NCAA ruling.

“We had an incredible conversation,” Baughman said. “I remember it well. There was a level of comfort immediately. He had a passion for Virginia Tech, and he wanted the coaching search to go in the best way possible, not for Frank Beamer, but for Virginia Tech.”

Typical of a Marine captain, Baughman went into the Virginia Tech coaching search with a plan and a set of criteria. He wanted someone who had core values that he would not deviate from, and he wanted someone who could stand in front of faculty, alumni, students or media and represent the university well. And he wanted someone who shared the same values as he did because the two of them needed to work together and be compatible with the mission of the institution.

“The more I knew of Frank, he met each one of those,” Baughman said. “It became apparent that he should be the person at Virginia Tech.”

Virginia Tech made it official on Dec. 23, 1986, by announcing the hiring of Beamer to take over following the Hokies’ Peach Bowl appearance. He inherited a solid team coming back, but the transition turned out to be a difficult one, as Tech went 2-9 in his first season.

Making matters worse, the NCAA ultimately punished the program, putting Tech on probation for two years and reducing scholarships – Beamer could only sign 17 prospects in his second recruiting class, eight under the NCAA limit. Plus, Baughman was gone.

Still, Beamer managed to put all that aside and led the Hokies to winning seasons in his third and fourth years. Tech just missed on a winning season in his fifth year and then plummeted to 2-8-1 in 1992, leading to speculation that Hokie higher-ups might make a change.

But Dave Braine, who ultimately replaced Baughman, stuck with Beamer. Tech went to the Independence Bowl the following year and hasn’t missed one since. Beamer has guided the program to unprecedented success, winning or sharing seven conference championships and currently ranking as the second-winningest active coach in Division I.

“I was convinced he could create a program that modeled what we had in mind,” Baughman said. “But to forecast what he’s been able to do,



Frank Beamer

no one could do that.”


Baughman spent eight years at Oregon State as the AD after his brief tenure at Tech. Following his time in Corvallis, Ore., he took over as the executive director of the Division I-A Athletic Directors’ Association, where he’s been for the past 15 years.

He keeps in touch with Beamer and returns to Blacksburg periodically, though he rarely announces his arrival. He stays “under the radar,” as he calls it, preferring to stay on the sideline during a football game and enjoy the moment.

“I do that out of respect for Frank and Jim Weaver [Tech’s current AD],” Baughman said.

Baughman enjoys what he does these days, impacting student-athletes’ lives across all sports while remaining in relative anonymity. And he still thinks highly of Virginia Tech and southwest Virginia as a whole in spite of a brief tenure during a difficult period in Tech athletics.

“I’m so proud of that athletics department,” he said. “That was a group of people who came together quickly, and I could be there so easily.

“I don’t regret leaving because I knew why I was leaving and it was for the right reason. But I do regret missing out on so many great things there. I really feel like I missed out on a lot.” 



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blacksburg **BROTHERHOOD**

by Jimmy Robertson

The Hopkins brothers, Derrick (left) and Antoine, are the latest brother tandem on Tech's football squad and are looking forward to teaming up as starters on the Hokies' defense this fall



Close on the field and off it, brothers Antoine (left) and Derrick Hopkins plan on shoring up Tech's rush defense this fall.

The picture frame resembled most any other in any other typical family home in America.

Only this one lay shattered in pieces, the result of a squabble between two brothers in a wrestling ring disguised as a living room.

Jackie Hopkins, the strong mother of the two troublemakers, came into the room, saw the frame and directed her anger to the oldest of the two, who, in turn, was the innocent one. Meanwhile, the youngest, the one who errantly tossed a frozen water bottle that doomed the picture frame, sat and watched, too scared to challenge his mother's authority.

Remembering the moment still brings a smile to Derrick Hopkins' face, though not because he dodged his mother's wrath that particular day roughly 10 years ago.

"He didn't tell," Derrick said.

"He," of course, being Antoine Hopkins, Derrick's tormentor that day and his older brother by 23 months. It was Antoine who willingly accepted the punishment for Derrick's transgression.

"I was teasing him, and he doesn't have very good aim," Antoine said, smiling "He hit that picture and broke it. I was the oldest, so I got in trouble."

Similar stories about brothers get told on a daily basis, so Antoine's gracious act comes as no surprise. In fact, the Hopkins brothers' relationship has no surprises. They simply do what

brothers do, following the ageless adages of brotherhood.

Brothers are best friends and the bitterest of rivals. They love and hate with equality. They outlast marriages and survive deaths of grandparents and then parents, and they shake hands following quarrels that would sink any other friendship. They knock each other down, dust each other off and then go drink Kool-Aid. They possess a near unbreakable bond, one that often lasts a lifetime.

The Hopkins brothers have been picking on, and picking up, each other since birth. That won't change now, as the duo, now members of the Virginia Tech football squad, join forces as starters at the defensive tackle spots for the Hokies entering the 2011 season.

These two have been practically joined at the hip since they came into the world. They shared friends and played the same games, usually basketball, with other kids in their neighborhood. For young kids, they lived the life.

"We were like a normal family," Derrick said. "We lived together and stayed together and supported each other all the way through middle school and high school and now. It was just a normal life.

"He [Antoine] picked on me a little bit, but that was just being normal brothers. We didn't fight or anything like that. We were close. We helped each other out."

"I used to tease a lot," Antoine admitted. "Then once we got older, there wasn't a whole

lot of fighting. It just wasn't like that."

Most of that goes back to the firm child raising of Jackie and Gary Hopkins, who raised them and the youngest son, Justin, in a nice neighborhood in Highland Springs, Va. Jackie and Gary provided a loving home, but put up with no nonsense. Their boys knew it, too, and never really got into trouble.

"No suspensions, no detentions or anything like that," Derrick said, going down the list. "We were always good. My neighborhood was a quiet neighborhood. We were always playing basketball outside. You didn't see any crime or drugs or anything like that. There weren't any shootings or robberies. It was a good neighborhood."

Gary Hopkins started his kids on a path toward football stardom when a neighbor told him about a recreation league team. He convinced them to go out for that team when Antoine was 7 and Derrick was 5 more or less because he wanted to see if his kids would enjoy the sport.

They ended up playing it and have played it every fall since those days. They still played basketball, and Antoine actually liked it more early on before sacrificing it as time went by. He grew out of it – literally.

"That was the sport I wanted to play," he said. "Then I became 6-1 and 300 pounds. I had to put that dream out the window."

Most of the time, the Hopkins brothers played on the same team and on the defensive line next to each other. They became separated for a brief spell when Antoine went to middle school, and

then for another brief period when Antoine went to Highland Springs High, while Derrick was in middle school. But eventually, the two of them became standouts at Highland Springs.

Following a senior year in which he recorded 61 tackles, including 19 for a loss, and three sacks, Antoine earned first-team All-Met honors by *The Richmond Times-Dispatch* and second-team All-Group AAA honors. He was one of the top prospects in the state of Virginia and received multiple scholarship offers. He ultimately chose to attend Virginia Tech.

"It was close to home," he said. "I wasn't going too far away from home. It's as simple as that. If anything happens [in Highland Springs], it's not that far away. It was a good situation here, too. I had a chance to play early. This was a good opportunity for me."

Antoine's departure left Derrick to fend for himself. For the first time, Derrick's big brother wasn't in the house or hanging out with him at school or lined up next to him on the football field. It made for somewhat of a strange period.

But brothers often like to be their own persons. Derrick quickly adjusted and liked his newfound freedom as the oldest child in the house.

Plus, there was an added benefit to Antoine's leaving.

"There was more food in the house," Derrick laughed. "There was more spaghetti left or a few more pieces of chicken. When he was there, there would be none left. Then he left, and there'd be three or four pieces left and I'd clean it up."

"But nah, it wasn't that much different. I'm my own person. I had my own friends. There wasn't much of a difference at all."

Derrick got the best of his big brother in the awards category. He recorded 59 tackles, including 13 for a loss, his senior season, and was named the Capital District defensive player of the year. He earned first-team All-Group AAA honors and became one of the top 15 prospects in Virginia.

Most assumed Derrick would follow Antoine to Virginia Tech. But Derrick remained open-minded in the process. He considered other schools, including Georgia, which made him an offer. In the end, though, he chose Tech, and the Hopkins brothers became yet another brother tandem to come to Blacksburg, joining the likes of Beau, Brett and Blake Warren; Jonathan and Kevin Lewis; Nekos and Wiley Brown; Chad and Cody Grimm; Kyle, Corey and Vinnie Fuller; and others.

"It wasn't a given," Derrick said of his college

decision. "People always ask me that. I thought it was the best move for me. It wasn't like that, but people try to make it like that."

Last season, the two of them were reunited, both on the field and off it. Derrick played as a true freshman, seeing action in 13 games and recording nine tackles, including 1.5 for a loss. Antoine started in 12 games last season as a redshirt sophomore, taking advantage of a season-ending knee injury to Kwamaine Battle. He finished with 45 tackles, including 6.5 for a loss, and two sacks.

Antoine retained his starting job coming out of spring practice, and Derrick joined him, winning the spot vacated with John Graves' departure. Derrick, whom defensive line coach Charley Wiles called "unblockable" this spring, appears poised for a great season after being named the top newcomer on defense coming out of spring practice. He continues to push his older brother and may surpass him as the best player in the family.

"I don't get caught up in all that," Antoine said. "My job is to be the older brother and play my game. I want to be a better player, but I don't want him to be a lesser player than me. And our younger brother, hopefully he'll be better than both of us. That's the whole game plan."



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THE HOPKINS, HEAD TO HEAD


"We're a close family," Derrick said. "If someone says he did better than Derrick at this or Derrick was better than Antoine at this, then we'd congratulate each other. There's no jealousy in the family."

Both of them need to be great players for the Hokies in 2011. Tech lacks depth at the defensive tackle positions, but perhaps more importantly, the Hokies need to become a little firmer up front. A year ago, Tech's defense gave up an average of 4.7 yards per carry – the worst in Bud Foster's 16-year tenure as defensive coordinator.

"No question, those two are ultra critical for us," Wiles said. "We need for some defensive tackles to step up, but Derrick and Hop [Antoine] separated themselves this spring and they only helped themselves this summer. They've been playing and working at an elite level and that needs to continue."

They possess bright futures off the field as well. Derrick plans on using his math skills to become an accountant, while Antoine, a human development major, is a whiz at computers. He has the ability to dismantle a computer and quickly put it back together, following along the lines of his father, who does the same thing in his profession. Antoine wants to follow in Gary's footsteps, except he wants to run the business.

For now, though, the immediate concern is teaming up on the field again, just like they've done so many times in the past, and helping the Hokies win another ACC crown.

"The older you get, the more you realize that a lot of people don't get to play with their brother," Antoine said. "There's stuff you could say in a whole paragraph, but I can look at him and nod and he'd know exactly what I'd mean. We know each other, and we know what's on the table." 

Are you more like your mom or dad?



Derrick | I'm more like my mom. He's more like my dad.



Antoine | I take after my dad, but I think I have some traits of my mother's.

Okay, then who is more outgoing?



Derrick | He is. I'm not really shy, but I like to keep to myself sometimes.



Antoine | He's a little more of a partier. I'm more laid back.

Who is more patient?



Derrick | Oh, I am. We'll be around my little brother and try to teach him something, and he'll [Antoine] get frustrated with him. I'll stick with him [Justin] a little longer than he would.



Antoine | I'm more patient. I love kids. I worked at a daycare this spring. I'm laid back. You could put me in a room with 20 kids, and I'd be laid back.

Who is the better student?



Derrick | I am.



Antoine | He is.

Who is the better dancer?



Derrick | I am. I take after my mom. She loves to dance. My brothers take after my dad. They can't dance.



Antoine | He is. I can't dance at all. I have no rhythm.

Who is better at video games?



Derrick | He's better at COD [Call of Duty]. If we play Madden or a sports game, then I am.



Antoine | COD, that's me. I'm not that good, but I don't think he's that good either.

Who is the better basketball player?



Derrick | He is.



Antoine | I am. All day.

Future plans (excluding football)?



Derrick | I'll probably be an accountant.



Antoine | Hopefully, I'll get this computer business started up and have that running. I have a friend in Richmond who I may go into business with. I'm going to get my degree and I'm taking as many computer classes as I can. I'll get my certifications. That's the plan.



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Thomas assumes the helm for the Hokies

by Jimmy Robertson

As if Logan Thomas didn't have enough to worry about in replacing the all-time winningest quarterback in Virginia Tech history, he also faces the inevitable comparisons to a guy who recently won a Heisman Trophy and a national championship.

Mostly because of his size and running ability, Thomas gets compared to former Auburn quarterback Cam Newton, who led the Tigers to the national title last January and who won the Heisman Trophy. As the 2011 season approaches, he hopes his season follows a similar path as Newton's 2010 campaign.


"I take it as a blessing," Thomas said of the comparison. "He's doing what he wants to do. He was the No. 1 pick in the draft, won the national championship, won the Heisman, and he's the type of player I want to be. That's a dream and a goal. My dream is the national championship. I don't care about the Heisman. Of course, you want it, but it's a team game. It's not an individual game, and I want to be known as a person who led his team to victory."

Thomas takes over for Tyrod

Taylor, who won 34 games in his four-year career. Thomas played in seven games as a backup last season, completing 12-of-26 for 107 yards. His best moment came in the Miami game when, with Taylor shaken up and having to come out for a play, he completed a 24-yard pass on a third-and-16 play. Tech later scored on the drive and went on to win, but Thomas wants to be remembered for more.

"That's not what I want my career to be defined as whatsoever," he said. "It was a great first play to put me on the scene, but I'm ready to make a name for myself in another respect other than that."

Ju-Ju Clayton and Mark Leal serve as the top backups to Thomas. Leal continues to push the more experienced Clayton for the job, but clearly Tech's success in 2011 hinges on Thomas.

"It's an opportunity, and I'm blessed to have this opportunity," Thomas said. "God has put me in this situation that he wants me in to use me, and I'm pretty excited for my time to come. Hopefully the season will go well." 

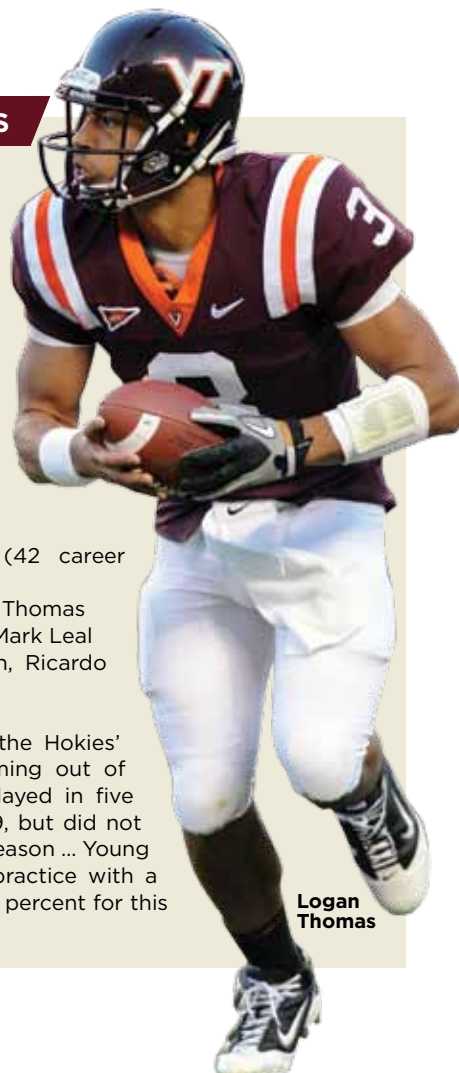
2011 QUARTERBACKS

QUARTERBACKS

- 3 Logan Thomas (6-6, 254, r-Soph.)
- 12 Ju-Ju Clayton (6-1, 225, r-Jr.)
- 6 Mark Leal (6-0, 209, r-Fr.)
- 16 Trey Gresh (6-1, 205, r-Fr.)
- 5 Ricardo Young (6-0, 178, r-Fr.)

A QUICK GLANCE

Returning starters: none
Starter lost: Tyrod Taylor (42 career starts)
Projected new starter: Logan Thomas
Top reserves: Ju-Ju Clayton, Mark Leal
Newcomers: Leal, Trey Gresh, Ricardo Young
Breakout candidate: Thomas
Notes: Thomas was named the Hokies' top offensive performer coming out of spring practice ... Clayton played in five games behind Taylor in 2009, but did not play a snap during the 2010 season ... Young missed nearly all of spring practice with a foot injury, but should be 100 percent for this season.



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Oglesby excited for the opportunity to show his talent

by **Jimmy Robertson**

Josh Oglesby readily admits that he's a big fan of Twitter, and he would be the first to admit that his volume of "tweeting" has increased over the summer. But that tends to happen when some of your best friends, guys like Tyrod Taylor, Ryan Williams and Darren Evans, for the past four years depart, and you find that certain forms of social media best keep you in touch.

Interestingly, not seeing those guys – well, at least in the case of Evans and Williams – works in Oglesby's advantage as the 2011 season approaches. Their departures removed a couple of impediments in the logjam at the tailback position, and Oglesby, a fifth-year senior, finds himself with the opportunity he's long coveted.

"I'm very excited," Oglesby said of the approaching season. "I finally have a legitimate chance to showcase my skills, and I'm also excited about the group of players we have. I think this team has a chance to be something special."

David Wilson and Oglesby head into the season as the new tandem at the position and will be counted on to replace two of the all-time best ever to play at Tech. Evans led Tech with 854 yards rushing and 11 touchdowns a year ago, while Williams, missing nearly four games with a hamstring injury, rushed for 477 yards and nine touchdowns. Williams, who set a Tech single-season record with 1,655 yards and 21 touchdowns two years ago and went in the second round of this past April's NFL Draft, and Evans rushed for a combined 4,251 yards in their careers.

Wilson, who rushed for 619 yards and five touchdowns as the third tailback a year ago, displays a ton of explosive ability and figures to be the starter. Oglesby resembles Evans in that his strengths lie in running between the tackles. Oglesby also excels at catching the ball out of the backfield and in pass protection, picking up blitzing linebackers.

"Ryan and Darren had a great skill set, and me and David bring forth similar traits," Oglesby said. "There will be a change, but the end result will pretty much be the same."

Oglesby, who has played sparingly in his career, spent last season at fullback and rushed just six times. He contemplated transferring several times, but in the end, he decided to stay put.

"It's tough not playing at all," he said. "But getting a degree was real high [he graduated

2011 RUNNING BACKS

TAILBACKS

- 4 David Wilson (5-10, 205, Jr.)
- 2 Josh Oglesby (5-11, 218, r-Sr.)
- 22 Tony Gregory (6-0, 190, r-Soph.)
- 14 Dominique Patterson (6-2, 236, r-Fr.)

FULLBACKS

- 45 Joey Phillips (5-11, 221, r-Jr.)
- 25 Martin Scales (5-11, 207, r-Jr.)
- 32 Riley Beiro (5-9, 221, r-Fr.)

A QUICK GLANCE

Returning starters: none

Starters lost: Darren Evans (18 career starts), Ryan Williams (18), Josh Oglesby (moved to TB)

Projected new starters: David Wilson, Joey Phillips

Top reserves: Josh Oglesby, Tony Gregory

Newcomer: Dominique Patterson

Breakout candidate: Wilson

Notes: Wilson has averaged 9.3 yards every time he's touched the ball in two years at Tech. ... He has 2,096 all-purpose yards and 15 touchdowns in two seasons ... He was an All-American in track, finishing sixth in the triple jump at the NCAA's outdoor meet in June ... Gregory is back at full strength after tearing his ACL at UNC last season ... Patterson was moved from whip linebacker to tailback following spring practice.




Josh Oglesby

last spring], and I knew transferring would set me back academically. And this is a great program. This is where I ultimately wanted to be, so sometimes, you've got to give a little bit."

Oglesby's move to tailback opens the door for walk-ons Joey Phillips, Martin Scales and Riley Beiro at fullback. In Tech's offense, they'll be used mostly in short-yardage and goal-line situations.

All the running backs will be playing under a new coach after Shane Beamer came aboard last winter, taking over for Billy Hite, who moved into an administrative role. Always preparing himself for what lies ahead, Oglesby got a scouting report of the younger Beamer once the announcement occurred.

"I had four high school teammates who played at South Carolina and they raved about him [Beamer]," Oglesby said. "When he was at South Carolina, they would talk to him. They kept telling me, 'Coach Shane is cool.' So I knew he would be a great fit, and I'd have a good feel for his personality. He just brought a new life to the meeting room.

"Coach Beamer has coached at some tremendous football programs, but had never really coached the offensive side of the ball. With that being said, his experience of coaching defense gave us a new look at reading defenses and knowing what the secondary is doing and blitzes that may be disguised. This has been a great opportunity to learn new things." 

Tech's receiving group gets stronger with Roberts' return

by Jimmy Robertson

Tech's football players run 110-yard sprints often over the summer as part of their conditioning in the Hokies' strength and conditioning program, and while most guys hate running those drills, at least one was gleeful to be doing so.

In early November, Dyrrell Roberts took a blow to his thigh during the Georgia Tech game. A few hours later, he was at Montgomery Regional Hospital undergoing emergency surgery for compartment syndrome.

"I was scared," Roberts said. "Once I got home, it started throbbing and swelling up. I fell asleep, and it [his thigh] just woke me up. It was throbbing so bad that I had to wake my mom up – my family comes up for games – and go to the hospital. It was hurting too bad. I knew something was wrong."

Roberts, who had caught 21 passes (two touchdowns) up to that point, spent nearly a week in the hospital and missed the rest of the season. He went through a difficult rehab, but showed Tech's sports medicine staff that he was ready to return to the field this fall. Still, the sports medicine staff held him out of contact drills this spring as a precaution.

Now, he's ready to go and pick up where he left off from last fall.

"I haven't taken a hit yet, but I feel it's in shape to go back to where I was," Roberts said. "I feel like I was healed in the spring even though I wasn't. But as far as my motion and getting my speed back, it felt good. They say I look faster than what I was before. I think I had a pretty good session to get my muscle back to where it was."

"I'm looking forward to the season. The work that I've done to get it back to where it was ... I hope it pays off. You don't realize how hard you can train until you have to. You've got to go twice as hard even when you're hurt. Now that I've had a chance to work with the strength and conditioning staff and the trainers, I think they've done a great job of getting me ready."

Roberts is one of many in a talented group that ranks as the most experienced position on the team. Tech's top four receivers include three seniors in Roberts, Jarrett Boykin and Danny Coale and a redshirt junior in Marcus Davis.

Boykin and Coale, the projected starters, combined for 92 catches and 1,579 yards last season, with nine touchdowns. Roberts caught 21 for 303 yards and two scores, while Davis caught 19 for 239 yards and two scores.

Davis may be the most talented at 6-foot-4, 231 pounds. He caught 23 passes for 297 yards and four touchdowns combined in the Hokies' scrimmages and the Maroon-White game. He

2011 WIDE RECEIVERS

SPLIT ENDS

- 81 Jarrett Boykin (6-2, 218, Sr.)
- 18 D.J. Coles (6-3, 224, Jr.)
- 85 E.L. Smiling (6-3, 200, r-Fr.)
- 83 Corey Fuller (6-2, 189, r-Jr.)

FLANKERS

- 19 Danny Coale (6-0, 200, r-Sr.)
- 7 Marcus Davis (6-4, 228, r-Jr.)
- 11 Dyrrell Roberts (6-2, 196, Sr.)
- 82 Willie Byrn (5-10, 177, r-Fr.)

A QUICK GLANCE

Returning starters: Danny Coale (40 career starts), Jarrett Boykin (32)

Starters lost: none

Projected new starters: none

Top reserves: Marcus Davis, Dyrrell Roberts

Newcomer: E.L. Smiling


Breakout candidate: Davis

Notes: Boykin should become Tech's all-time leader in receptions and receiving yards ... He needs just three catches to pass Ernest Wilford in receptions (126) and 149 yards to pass Ricky Scales in receiving yards (2,272) ... Boykin is only the fourth receiver in Tech history with more than 2,000 yards receiving at 2,123 yards ... Coale could be the fifth – he's only 246 yards away from that plateau ... Coale may also be the team's punter.

caught two touchdown passes in the Maroon-White game.

Behind those four will be D.J. Coles, E.L. Smiling, Corey Fuller and Willie Byrn. Coles possesses the most experiences of that quartet, having played in nine games a year ago.

The group expects to put up big numbers this season, but that depends on how they mesh with new starting quarterback Logan Thomas. Roberts doesn't feel as though there will be any drop off.

"When we first started camp last year, we were getting work with Logan because he was the No. 2 [quarterback]," Roberts said. "It's not like we're brand new to each other. We've got a foundation as to how each one of us plays and runs our routes, and things like that." 

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2011 TIGHT ENDS

- 33 Chris Drager
(6-4, 264, r-Sr.)
- 86 Eric Martin
(6-2, 269, r-Soph.)
- 13 Randall Dunn
(6-2, 228, r-Jr.)
- George George
(6-4, 265, r-Jr.)

A QUICK GLANCE

Returning starter: none
Starter lost: Andre Smith
 (25 career starts)
Projected new starter:
 Chris Drager
Top reserves: Eric Martin,
 Randall Dunn
Newcomers: Darius
 Redman, Ryan Malleck
Breakout candidate:
 Drager
Notes: Drager's last catch
 in a game came Oct. 4,
 2008, against Western
 Kentucky ... Dunn caught
 one pass for nine yards (in
 the Wake Forest game)
 - the last catch by a
 returning tight end ... Dunn
 also caught a touchdown
 pass in one of Tech's spring
 scrimmages.

Drager back to his original spot and hoping to be a playmaker

by Jimmy Robertson

Not many student-athletes at the elite Division I level can go from being a starter on the defensive line one season to a starter at tight end the next season.

"I like to tell people that I'm not a defensive end or a tight end. I'm just an athlete," Chris Drager joked.

All jokes aside, Drager figures to be a critical component to a Tech offense that lost playmakers at quarterback, tailback and tight end, where Andre Smith enjoyed a tremendous season with 20 catches, including five for touchdowns. Smith is now gone, and Drager is the only tight end with any hint of experience - albeit experience that came three years ago. For the past two seasons, he worked at defensive end, including last season when he served as a starter.

Tech's coaching staff decided to move Drager back to tight end because of a lack of depth there. Despite being rusty, Drager won the starting job in spring practice.

"It was a little rougher than I expect-

ed, but it didn't go too badly," he said. "I learned the plays. They [the offensive staff] switched up a lot of the play names, so I had to re-learn that. Then they started incorporating us more as an H-back and using us as a fullback or in the 'off' position [off the line of scrimmage]. That was somewhat different than what I did my first two years. That was the toughest part."

It's not as if Drager is unproven, though. He played in four games at tight end as a true freshman and caught a couple of passes, but a torn ACL ruined that season, and he ended up receiving a medical hardship waiver. The next season, he played in all 14 games at tight end and caught a couple of passes.


As a redshirt sophomore, he played defensive end, as the staff moved him because of a lack of depth at that position. He played well at that spot for two years, with last season being his best. He recorded 34 tackles, including six for a loss, and two sacks.

Then after last season, he found himself summoned into head coach Frank Beamer's office and knew what was coming.

"I loved playing defensive end. That's probably my favorite position to play," Drager said. "But I think I'm better at tight end. I think I'll be able to help the team out more on offense."

Tech needs for Drager to have a big season in part because of the unproven reserves behind him. Eric Martin came out of spring as the No. 2 tight end, but he played in nine games last season and did not catch a pass. Randall Dunn was at No. 3 on the depth chart. He played in seven games last season and caught one pass.

That leaves one to believe that Drager will have to produce - and he hopes he's ready.

"I think I'll be able to answer that better in a few weeks," Drager said, looking toward the season opener. "Right now, there is no reason not to be confident." 





Andrew Miller is the lone new starter on Tech's offensive line and will make the calls as the center.

Miller ready to hold his own on a talented and experienced offensive line

by Jimmy Robertson

This past winter, Andrew Miller spent his free time trying to pin wrestler David Marone, a two-time NCAA qualifier at the heavyweight classification, in practices.

This spring, Miller pinned down the starting center job during spring football practice.

Miller, a redshirt sophomore from Bassett, Va., won the only starting vacancy on Tech's offensive line, taking over the role held by Beau Warren, a three-year starter. The rest of the line features four returning starters – all of them seniors. In fact, Tech's starting line has accumulated a total of 95 career starts, with Miller being the only one who hasn't started a game.

"There's a lot of pressure, but I probably put most of that on myself just to make sure I'm ready," Miller said. "We've got all seniors except for me, so I've got to step up my game."

He certainly took all the proper steps to prepare himself for the 2011 season. First, he joined Tech's wrestling team back in January. A two-time state champion as a wrestler, he never wrestled in a match this past season, but worked out with Marone to make Marone a better wrestler. That also helped Miller, improving his own mobility.

"I gave him [Marone] a bigger body to compete with," Miller said. "And just getting on the mat helps my condi-

tioning and my mobility. It's definitely helped me be a better football player over the years."

Then, he played well in spring practice, showing command of Tech's offense. In fact, he played so well that he received the top offensive newcomer award following spring ball.

Finally, he stayed at Tech for both summer sessions. He improved in all his lifts and got his weight up to 315 pounds after playing at 290 a year ago.

"I feel good," he said. "I'm strong, and I'm getting faster. I've gained a lot of weight since last year. I wasn't this heavy last year. I'll probably lose some weight. During the season, I'll drop 10-15 pounds. I usually do."

Miller, who played 136 snaps a year ago, will be surrounded by plenty of experience to help him out if need be. The four other senior starters all played more than 700 snaps (offense and special teams) a year ago, with three of them playing more than 800.

On the right side, Blake DeChristopher and Jaymes Brooks return at tackle and guard, respectively. DeChristopher, a second-team All-ACC selection last season who may miss the opener with a pectoral muscle injury, has started 37 games in his career, while Brooks has started 28.

On the left side, Greg Nosal returns at guard. Nosal played the most snaps of any offensive lineman last season – 885. To his left will be Andrew Lanier, who played 707 snaps a year ago. Lanier stepped in when Nick Becton injured his toe during preseason practice, and he played so well that he never allowed Becton to get in the starting lineup.

Becton returns, giving Tech an experienced backup. In fact, the Hokies return several promising backups, making this one of the deepest offensive lines in recent memory.

Michael Via, who started three games at center as a redshirt freshman, returns after missing a lot of time last season with a knee injury. He'll be the backup behind Miller, but also possesses the versatility to play tackle if needed. Also, guard David Wang and tackle Winston Painter return after seeing limited time a year ago. Wang backs up Nosal, while Painter stands in behind DeChristopher.

Three redshirt freshmen – Mark Shuman, Matt Arkema and Laurence Gibson – may not play a ton, but Tech's staff, notably offensive line coach Curt Newsome, likes them.

A year ago, the Hokies led the ACC in scoring offense (33.9 ppg). Most of that can be attributed to a terrific rushing attack, as Tech finished second in the league in rushing offense (198.7 ypg).

2011 OFFENSIVE LINE

RIGHT TACKLES

- 62 Blake DeChristopher (6-5, 311, r-Sr.)
- 71 Winston Painter (6-6, 303, r-Jr.)

RIGHT GUARDS

- 68 Jaymes Brooks (6-2, 307, r-Sr.)
- 64 Matt Arkema (6-3, 287, r-Fr.)
- 60 Laurence Gibson (6-6, 312, r-Fr.)

CENTERS

- 74 Andrew Miller (6-4, 315, r-Soph.)
- 67 Michael Via (6-7, 292, r-Jr.)
- 79 Caleb Farris (6-3, 309, Fr.)
- 63 Bo Gentry (5-9, 262, r-Jr.)

LEFT GUARDS

- 75 Greg Nosal (6-6, 297, r-Sr.)
- 76 David Wang (6-1, 300, r-Soph.)
- 59 Courtney Prince (6-2, 282, r-Jr.)
- 77 Dale Davis (6-2, 303, r-Fr.)

LEFT TACKLES

- 72 Andrew Lanier (6-5, 306, r-Sr.)
- 54 Nick Becton (6-6, 326, r-Jr.)
- 69 Mark Shuman (6-7, 302, r-Fr.)
- 58 Nick Acree (6-5, 278, r-Fr.)

A QUICK GLANCE

Returning starters: Blake DeChristopher (37 career starts), Jaymes Brooks (28) Greg Nosal (15), Andrew Lanier (15)

Starter lost: Beau Warren (23 career starts)

Projected new starter: Andrew Miller

Top reserves: Nick Becton, Michael Via, David Wang, Winston Painter


Newcomers: Laurence Gibson, Matt Arkema, Mark Shuman, Nick Acree


Breakout candidate: Miller

Notes: Nosal was the Hokies' top grader a year ago, grading at 85 percent for the season ... DeChristopher led the team with 59 knockdowns last season ... Becton is the Hokies' most experienced reserve, having played 287 snaps a year ago.


The Hokies could better that number in 2011. Of course, that depends on the continued development of Miller and the continued excellence of those other four starters.

"We have to communicate," Miller said. "Everyone has to be on the same level. We've always been great about getting along with each other and we work well with each other. We're like a family, and the seniors have been doing a good job of helping everyone out.


"It helps to have those guys. They've been there and done it. They can answer any questions you might have. Or if you have problems, they are there to correct you." 



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James Gayle had a big spring and is ready to be a force at defensive end this fall.

Gayle hopes big offseason and spring practice carries over into this fall

by Jimmy Robertson

With the exception of a couple of weeks once the spring semester ended, James Gayle was in Blacksburg the entire summer, working out and taking classes.

“Sometimes, I feel I need a break from school, but not with football,” he said, with a smile. “I love lifting weights.

“This [playing football] is what I’ve always wanted to do. So I figured I might as well be up here working on my craft.”

A redshirt freshman a year ago, Gayle gained some experience last fall as a reserve at one of the defensive end spots. He thrived

in the strength and conditioning program, winning the Excalibur Award – the top honor in the program – over the winter, which came as a surprise to him. At 251 pounds then, he recorded a 420-pound bench press and a 38-inch vertical jump, and then he ran the 40-yard dash in 4.45 seconds.

“It [the Excalibur Award] surprised me,” he said. “I knew I was going to get it sooner or later. I just didn’t know it would be this soon. I didn’t expect my numbers to jump that high, that fast.”

All that helped him dominate on the field

this past spring, with six sacks combined in Tech’s scrimmages and in the Maroon-White game. He earned the team’s most valuable defensive player award following spring practice.

Tech’s defensive coaching staff hopes this progression continues this fall, as Gayle headlines a defensive line that lost three starters from a year ago, including Chris Drager, who was moved to tight end. The coaches need for Gayle to make plays and be a force along a defensive front partly responsible for giving up 4.7 yards per carry a year ago –

the worst yards per carry number in defensive coordinator Bud Foster's tenure.

"I feel we're going to play a lot more consistently," Gayle said. "We had a lot of young guys last year. Myself, I know I made a lot of mistakes that gave up yards. That was from not knowing the game plan mentally and not following through. But I feel, this year, we're going to be a whole lot better. You can tell just from watching the spring.

"Everyone talks about how we're going to be much better on defense. I don't see us giving up five yards a carry – at all."

Tech's starting defensive line should form a much more formidable wall this season. J.R. Collins, who, like Gayle, enjoyed a superb spring, lines up opposite Gayle at the other end spot, while the Hopkins brothers man the two tackle spots. Derrick Hopkins, who played as a true freshman last season, was unblockable this past spring, and Antoine, the older of the two, was a starter a year ago, recording 45 tackles, including 6.5 for a loss and 2.5 sacks. He possesses a ton of ability. Those four provide a solid nucleus.

The question concerning Tech's defensive line will be depth, as only Kwamaine Battle possesses any significant experience. Even Battle comes as a bit of a question mark because he tore his ACL in the James Madison game last season and missed the rest of the year. He practiced this spring, and Tech's coaches hope he provides some playmaking ability as a reserve.

Most of the backups are either young or inexperienced, or both. Tyrel Wilson, a redshirt sophomore, and Duan Perez-Means, a redshirt freshman, back up the end positions. Perez-Means flashed a lot of ability this spring, and the coaches remain high on his future. At the tackle spots, Dwight Tucker and Isaiah Hamlette serve as reserves.

That makes it imperative that Gayle and the

2011 DEFENSIVE LINEMEN

ENDS

- 42 J.R. Collins (6-2, 240, r-Soph.)
- 66 Tyrel Wilson (6-1, 219, r-Soph.)
- 95 Zack McCray (6-5, 254, r-Fr.)
- 87 Justin Taylor (6-2, 230, Fr.)

STUDS

- 99 James Gayle (6-4, 257, r-Soph.)
- 90 Duan Perez-Means (6-4, 248, r-Fr.)

TACKLES

- 56 Antoine Hopkins (6-1, 306, r-Jr.)
- 55 Isaiah Hamlette (6-5, 291, r-Jr.)

NOSE TACKLES

- 98 Derrick Hopkins (6-0, 301, Soph.)
- 93 Kwamaine Battle (6-1, 302, r-Sr.)
- 53 Dwight Tucker (6-1, 280, r-Jr.)

A QUICK GLANCE

Returning starter: Antoine Hopkins (12 career starts)

Starters lost: John Graves (36 career starts), Steven Friday (14), Chris Drager (moved to tight end)

Projected new starters: James Gayle, J.R. Collins, Derrick Hopkins

Top reserves:

Kwamaine Battle, Duan Perez-Means, Dwight Tucker

Newcomers:

Perez-Means, Zack McCray

Breakout candidate:

Gayle

Notes:

Graves, Friday and Drager combined for 233 tackles, 44.5 tackles for a loss and 19 sacks in their careers

... In contrast, Gayle, Collins and Derrick Hopkins have combined to start in three games ... Collins and Gayle combined for nine sacks and 13 tackles for a loss

last season ... Derrick Hopkins played in 13 games as a true freshman.



J.R. Collins

rest of the starters enjoy huge years. He showed big-time potential in brief playing time last season, recording four sacks and 6.5 tackles for a loss.

"To be honest, last year, what held me back was knowing the plays," Gayle said. "Now that I know the plays, things are much easier. Everything comes fluidly. When you're lining

up and you have Coach Foster calling the plays as you're lining up – and you don't really know the plays anyway – it makes it harder. But now, I know everything.

"I'm very excited. I felt like I've been learning the past two years. Last year, I had minimal playing time, but this year, I think I'm going to play a lot more. I'm going to have fun."

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Edwards ready to step into a playmaking role at backer

by Jimmy Robertson

Tech fans remember vividly the days when Xavier Adibi patrolled the field at the backer position. Tall, strong and fast, Adibi made plays from sideline to sideline and earned All-America honors following a senior season in which he recorded more than 100 tackles.

The backer position hasn't seen anyone like him since then – until now.

Tariq Edwards, a redshirt sophomore, looks like Adibi in pads. He stands 6-foot-2, weighs 230 pounds and runs from sideline to sideline. He thumped people on the field this past spring and earned the team's most improved defensive player coming out of spring practice.

Finally, he played the way he wanted to and knew he could – and the way the coaches knew he could, too. The difference? He felt comfortable with Tech's scheme.

"It was just the mental part of the game," Edwards said when asked what held him back originally. "I was just trying to figure out what was going on

here and what was going on there. Usually, I'm pretty good at that, but when I'm coming from a simplistic defense in high school to a complex defense, I had to learn a little more, like coverages and different blitzes and audibles. That was the hardest part. But now I feel I know what to do."

Edwards holds the top spot at backer on the depth chart, but was challenged this spring by Telvion Clark, who enjoyed his best spring since arriving at Tech. The two of them will need to replace Lyndell Gibson, a 13-game starter a year ago who decided to transfer following the season.


"We [he and Telvion] push each other," Edwards said. "That's how it's supposed to be. He's doing a great job, and I'm doing a great job. We'll never lose a step if either of us is in the game. That's how you get better as a team."

Bruce Taylor returns to handle things at the other inside linebacker spot – the mike linebacker position. The second-

team All-ACC selection started all 14 games a year ago and finished with 91 tackles and six sacks. He missed spring practice with a shoulder injury, but should be at full strength once the season starts.

Barquell Rivers, Jack Tyler and Chase Williams all return at the mike spot. Rivers, who started in 2009, missed nearly all of last season while trying to recover from a torn quadriceps tendon and should be at full speed this fall.

These two positions are among the most experienced on the team. The players hope to return the defense back to its previous ways after allowing 155.9 yards rushing per game last season.

"I'm very excited," Edwards said. "I'm watching film, trying to get prepared. I'm doing everything I can to help the team as much as possible. I've been trying to get to this point since I've been here. It's been a learning process. I've been trying to get over the hump, and it feels good to get over the hump." 



Tariq Edwards

2011 LINEBACKERS

MIKE LINEBACKERS

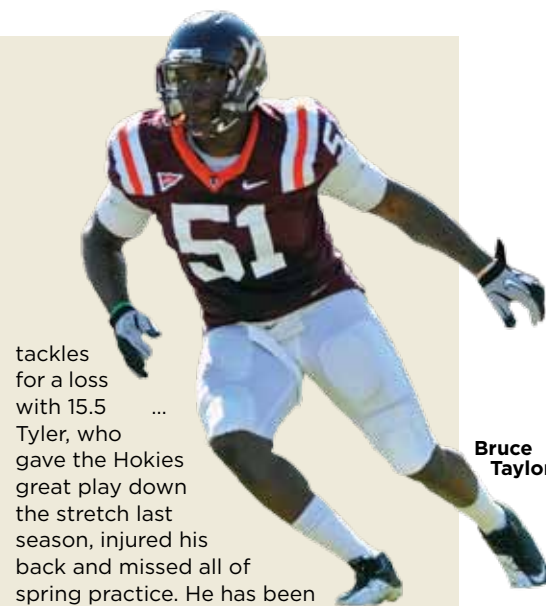
- 51 Bruce Taylor (6-2, 243, r-Jr.)
- 52 Barquell Rivers (6-0, 250, r-Sr.)
- 58 Jack Tyler (6-0, 229, r-Soph.)
- 36 Chase Williams (6-1, 223, r-Fr.)
- 47 Brian Laiti (6-3, 217, r-Fr.)

BACKERS

- 24 Tariq Edwards (6-2, 231, r-Soph.)
- 57 Telvion Clark (6-1, 228, r-Soph.)
- 36 Chase Williams (6-1, 223, r-Fr.)
- Jonathan Halfhide (5-10, 217, r-Fr.)

A QUICK GLANCE

Returning starter: Bruce Taylor (14 career starts)
Starter lost: Lyndell Gibson (13 career starts)
Projected new starter: Tariq Edwards
Top reserves: Telvion Clark, Barquell Rivers, Jack Tyler, Chase Williams
Newcomer: Williams
Breakout candidate: Edwards
Notes: Taylor led the Hokies in tackles a year ago with 91 and in



Bruce Taylor

tackles for a loss with 15.5 ... Tyler, who gave the Hokies great play down the stretch last season, injured his back and missed all of spring practice. He has been cleared for fall practice. ... Rivers, who missed virtually all of last season while recovering from a torn quadriceps tendon, earned the Don Williams TEAM UNITED award this spring for putting the team first.

Gouveia-Winslow hopes strong end to 2010 and strong spring leads to 2011 success

by Jimmy Robertson

Jeron Gouveia-Winslow made one of the biggest plays of the season a year ago, and yet hardly anyone ever talks about it.

In the first quarter of the ACC title game against Florida State, Gouveia-Winslow intercepted a tipped pass of FSU quarterback E.J. Manuel and returned it 24 yards for a touchdown to give Tech a lead it never would relinquish.

"That was exciting for me," Gouveia-Winslow said. "Those big plays will happen. It's just a matter of being around the ball and making the play. It'll come. You just have to play your part. Do what you're supposed to do. The plays will come to you. It was nice to finish the year off with that big play and end the year well."

For Gouveia-Winslow, that play and his forced fumble in the Orange Bowl against Stanford marked a great way to

end his year. Maligned at times early in the season, he showed his mettle by continuing to work hard. It paid dividends, as he started playing better, culminating with his big plays down the stretch.

He carried that play over into spring practice, and now, heading into the 2011 season, he's ready to become a playmaker at the whip position.


"I was real excited about how I played this spring," he said. "That's why I was anxious to get back on the field this fall. I look good and I feel good. I'm definitely excited to continue how I've been playing. I'm looking forward to it."

"Last year, it was tough to try and play consistently. Everyone was getting on me about the first two games. We were rotating in and using personnel changes [which resulted in Gouveia-Winslow coming out of games] to help us out. It was definitely tough. I came back toward the end of the year and

started playing better, and I carried that over to the spring. I'm just trying to play consistent right now."

Tech's whip spot appears to be in much better shape heading into the 2011 season than it was a year ago. Not only does Gouveia-Winslow return, but so, too, does Alonzo Tweedy, a lanky, athletic player who can really run. Known more as a special teams player, Tweedy hopes to work himself into a rotation with Gouveia-Winslow. Also, Nick Dew, though a little raw, possesses many of the same traits as Tweedy.

But Gouveia-Winslow plans on holding off the competition – and making a name for himself.

"I feel confident with the defense and with everyone behind me," he said. "I'm making the right calls, and everyone is making calls. I feel better running around. I feel I'm playing good right now." 

2011 WHIP LINEBACKERS

- 43 Jeron Gouveia-Winslow (6-2, 205, r-Jr.)
- 28 Alonzo Tweedy (6-2, 189, r-Jr.)
- 27 Nick Dew (6-2, 196, r-Fr.)

A QUICK GLANCE

Returning starter: Jeron Gouveia-Winslow (7 career starts)
Starters lost: none
Projected new starter: none
Top reserves: Alonzo Tweedy, Nick Dew
Newcomers: none
Breakout candidate: Gouveia-Winslow
Notes: Gouveia-Winslow finished with 41 tackles and two interceptions a year ago ... Tweedy was slowed by a groin injury early last year and struggled to get back into the mix ... Tweedy still played in all 14 games a year ago and was a special teams standout, leading the team with 17 special teams tackles on the season.



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Kyle Fuller started six games as a true freshman and should make more of an impact in 2011.

Fuller one of many excellent players in what should be a good 2011 secondary

by **Jimmy Robertson**

For years, Kyle Fuller was in the shadow of his older brother, Vinnie, who enjoyed a terrific career at Tech and now plays for the NFL's Tennessee Titans.

Now, Kyle Fuller, the projected starter at field corner, sits in the shadow of Jayron Hosley, Tech's boundary corner who led the nation in interceptions last season and earned All-America honors.

Fuller hopes to step out of the shadow, though, this upcoming season and make a name for himself, and he figures to get plenty of opportunities in what should be a strong, talented Tech secondary. Hosley's skills and reputation as a ball hawk should result in Fuller seeing plenty of action coming at him.

"That happened the year before with Rock [Rashad Carmichael], and that's how Jayron made a name for himself," Fuller said. "The same thing is going to happen to me, so I've got to take advantage of my opportunities. I've got to be ready to take on that challenge."

Fuller, a sophomore, got his baptism into Division I football a year ago as a true freshman when he saw extensive playing time in Tech's nickel defense. In fact, he started six games mostly because of all the spread offenses thrown at the Hokies by their opponents, but also because of injuries (Eddie Whitley) and inconsistency on a defense that forced Tech's staff to juggle things a bit.

Though slender at roughly 170 pounds when he enrolled, he got on the field because of his intelligence – arguably his best trait.

"You have to be able to know other positions," Fuller said. "I was able to learn the nickel, and that's what helped me get on the field last year. If I hadn't been able to do that, then maybe I wouldn't have been on the field as much as I was."

"As long as you know your alignment, your assignments and your adjustments, you'll be good. That's hard for freshmen. But I think that's what helped me get ahead of some of the other freshmen."


With Fuller and Hosley manning the corner spots and Whitley controlling the

free safety position, Tech's 2011 secondary is in good shape. Hosley finished with 50 tackles and nine interceptions last season, while Whitley – a senior and a leader – had 80 tackles and two interceptions.

The other starter will be Antone Exum, who heads up the rover spot and replaces Davon Morgan. Exum started five games a year ago when Tech went to its nickel defense and finished with 45 tackles. At nearly 220 pounds and with a nose for the ball, he could make a ton of plays at a playmaking spot like rover.

Cris Hill, a steady senior, and Detrick Bonner, a talented freshman who enjoyed a fantastic spring, provide depth at the cornerback spots. But depth at free safety and rover remains a concern. Theron Norman, who backed up Whitley this past spring, will miss the early part of the season with an injury, and Boye Aromire, a freshman who enrolled last January but has no college experience, is the backup at rover.

The young depth makes it imperative that the starters stay healthy, including Fuller, whose smarts and smooth style – and newly bulked-up body at 187 pounds – could make him the next big star out of Tech's secondary. At the least, he's going to be challenged and he welcomes it, though he doesn't have any messages for opposing receivers.

"I'm not that type of guy," he said. "But I'm ready to take on all the challenges." 

2011 DEFENSIVE BACKS

BOUNDARY CORNERBACKS

- 20 Jayron Hosley (5-10, 171, Jr.)
- 9 Cris Hill (5-11, 180, r-Sr.)

FIELD CORNERBACKS

- 17 Kyle Fuller (6-0, 187, Soph.)
- 8 Detrick Bonner (6-0, 189, r-Fr.)

FREE SAFETIES

- 15 Eddie Whitley (6-1, 200, Sr.)
- 21 Theron Norman (6-3, 196, r-Fr.)

ROVERS

- 1 Antone Exum (6-0, 220, r-Soph.)
- 30 Boye Aromire (6-0, 201, Fr.)

A QUICK GLANCE

Returning starters: Jayron Hosley (13 career starts), Eddie Whitley (14)

Starters lost: Rashad Carmichael (26 career starts), Davon Morgan (23)

Projected new starters: Kyle Fuller,

Antone Exum

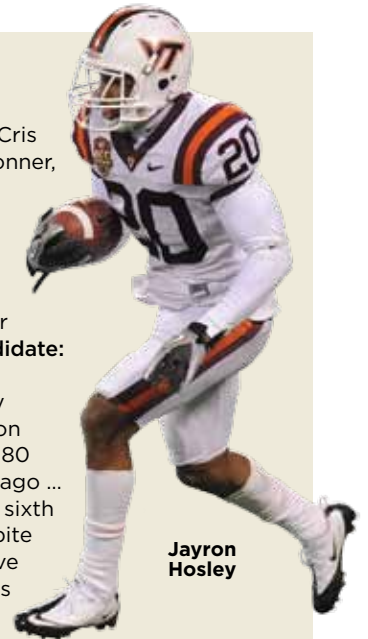
Top reserves: Cris Hill, Detrick Bonner, Boye Aromire

Newcomers:

Aromire, Theron Norman, Detrick Bonner


Breakout candidate: Fuller

Notes: Whitley finished third on the team with 80 tackles a year ago ... Exum finished sixth in tackles despite starting just five games ... Tech's secondary finished with 20 of the team's 23 interceptions – the 23 picks tied for second nationally.



Jayron Hosley

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Kickers are not proven, but possess the talent to keep tradition going

by Jimmy Robertson

Perhaps no positions on Tech's squad over the years have been as consistent as the kicking and punting spots, and head coach Frank Beamer hopes that trend continues.

Coming out of spring practice, Beamer told people that redshirt sophomore Cody Journell all but won the kicking job. Journell will become the first Tech kicker since Brandon Pace started in 2005 to start as a non-senior, snapping a trend that began with Pace in 2006 and continued with guys like Judson Dunlevy, Dustin Keys, Matt Waldron and Chris Hazley.

Journell has big shoes to fill as Hazley was a first-team All-ACC performer a year ago and made all but one of his field-goal attempts. In fact, he set a single-season record with 20 straight and made all six of his field-goal attempts beyond 40 yards. In short, Hazley had arguably the best season ever by a Tech kicker not named Chris Kinzer.


But Journell showed potential this spring. He made six of his nine field-goal attempts combined in scrimmages and in the Maroon-White game. His consistency enabled him to snag the job from Justin Myer.

Myer returns as Tech's kickoff expert. Thirty of his 94 kickoffs last season went for touchbacks, and he has 52 touchbacks for his career.

Tech's punting situation was unsettled following Brian Saunders' departure after last season. Saunders, a second-team All-ACC member, averaged 44 yards per punt, and placed 18 of his 60 punts inside the 20.

Heading into the season, receiver Danny Coale leads in the battle to replace Saunders. He averaged a game-best 44 yards per punt on three punts in the Maroon-White game, while Ethan Keyserling averaged 43.5 yards per punt on two punts.

"If we stay inconsistent, I'm probably going to go with Danny Coale because he's the guy you trust and the guy that's been in the game," Beamer said following the spring game.

Collin Carroll returns for the fourth straight season to handle the snapping duties. He delivered every snap on extra points, field goals and punts for the Hokies during the 2010 season and possesses the most experience, having played in 41 games entering the 2011 campaign. 

KICKERS AND PUNTERS

KICKERS

- 89 Cody Journell (5-11, 178, r-Soph.)
- 48 Justin Myer (6-1, 220, Sr.)
- Tyler Weiss (5-10, 169, r-Sr.)

PUNTERS

- 19 Danny Coale (6-0, 200, r-Sr.)
- 92 Ethan Keyserling (6-2, 197, r-Fr.)
- Scott Demler (5-11, 194, r-Jr.)

SNAPPER

- 50 Collin Carroll (6-3, 232, r-Sr.)

A QUICK GLANCE

Returning starters: Justin Myer (played in 40 games the past three seasons), Collin Carroll (snapped in every game the past three seasons)

Starters lost: Chris Hazley, Brian Saunders

Projected new starters: Cody Journell, Danny Coale

Top reserves: Myer, Tyler Weiss, Ethan Keyserling

Newcomer: Michael Branthover

Breakout candidate: Journell

Notes: Journell has only dressed in one game in his brief collegiate career – the Orange Bowl ... Myer starts as the kickoff guy, but would be the backup to Journell as the field-goal/extra-point kicker ... Myer was fourth in the country with 30 touchbacks a year ago ... Myer surprisingly has 14 special teams tackles in his career ... Branthover is a two-time All-Met selection by *The Washington Post*.



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HOKIES DIGGING DEEP FOR REPEAT NCAA VOLLEYBALL APPEARANCE

Erin Leaser is one of many talented players on a team looking to head back to the NAAs.

Head coach Chris Riley has nearly everyone back from a team that made history with an NCAA bid and victory

by Marc Mullen

In head coach Chris Riley's first year in Blacksburg, he led a Virginia Tech volleyball team that had won just 13 games in each of the prior three seasons to a 17-win season that included 11 ACC wins, still the high-water mark for the Hokies.

Last year, his fifth at Tech, Riley elevated the program to another plateau, accomplishing three things that had never been done at the school in the previous 33 seasons.

First, after 24 previous tries, the Hokies defeated a top-25 program with their 3-2 victory over No. 25 Florida State on Oct. 29. A month later, on Nov. 28, they earned an

invitation to the NCAA Championships.

Five days later, they checked "NCAA tournament victory" off the list as they defeated Delaware in the first round before falling to three-time defending national champion Penn State on the Nittany Lions' home court.

And Riley is poised to take a very experienced team back to the tournament, but wants more.

"Our expectation is the same as it is every year, trying to make the NCAA tournament and, for us, to try and advance past where we did last year," he said. "Our goal is to make

the Sweet 16, going a little bit farther than the round of 32.

"I think we've got a pretty experienced, good group, a senior-led team that's been playing since they walked on campus. So we expect them to be pretty solid, and we've got a lot of experience on the floor."

A member of Riley's senior-laden roster, and the leader on the court, is setter Erin Leaser, who has made 91 starts and played in all 94 games since arriving as a freshman. She is already fourth all time at the school in assists with 3,755 and is just 1,000 shy of second. She would need a monster senior year

to become the school record holder, as Melissa Markowski (2002-05) holds the mark at 5,287.

“Erin is definitely our floor leader, and we’re going to lean on her a lot,” Riley said. “She’s got to be consistent for us. She has to be solid and be the same player every day for us. We can be pretty good and make some good strides if our setters can be consistent.

“Erin, Allison (Munter, a sophomore) and Jordan (Fish, a freshman) are all going to be leaned on, and the most important aspect for all three of them is to be consistent everyday because we’ve got attackers all over the place that can score. So we’re going to be pretty physical, and we’re probably one of the best ball control teams in the conference, so if we can be consistent setting, we are going to be very good.”

Attackers include senior Justine Record, juniors Cara Baarendse and Jennifer Wiker, and sophomores Victoria Hamsher and Samantha Gostling, who all had at least 100 kills in 2010.

Baarendse is most likely the player who will be looked upon as the leader of this group after the graduation of three-time All-American Felicia Willoughby. An All-American herself in 2010, Baarendse led the Hokies with 385 kills and a .376 hitting percentage, and she added 121 digs to her totals.

“Losing Felicia is pretty hard, a three-time All-American and the best kid to play here, but Cara is fantastic,” Riley said. “To be an All-American as a sophomore is impressive. With the progression that she’s made and how efficient she is as an attacker – she just doesn’t make any mistakes – she’s going to be tough to defend. Cara could be hitting over .400 all year for us.”

Riley believes the experiences Leaser and Baarendse enjoyed this summer also will help his 2011 Hokies. In June, the pair joined a USA Development Team that trained for several

days in California and then toured and played matches for almost two weeks in China.

“It was a great experience for both of them,” Riley said. “I think they played with a lot of great college players that are in the US system. They got an opportunity to play at a higher level, see what the international game was like, and keep playing together.

“They both made strides and came back comfortable with what we wanted them doing and what the next level looks like. So they are going to try and bring that to our gym with our group.”

And a group is exactly how Riley sees his 2011 squad. He believes that, at times in prior seasons, his team was too “Felicia heavy,” and that this year, his team will feature a more balanced attack.

Evidence he pointed to was during the spring, when his team went 7-1 in a pair of tournaments that included a win over North Carolina, who also lost in the round of 32 at the NCAA tournament.

“At times this spring, we were actually better than we were in the fall,” Riley said. “We had a fantastic spring. With the amount of kids we had, being able to move them around and get them on the court was essential. But when we had our best team out there, we were very, very good.

“Our balance offensively – our ability to set anybody at any point – is a big emphasis for us, and it’s going to be really hard to defend us if we can do that. I’m excited about what we have, and we got a great group of freshmen coming in that are going to keep building on what we’ve done so far.”

The class coming includes Fish, a 5-foot-8 setter who earned first-team all-state selection in Michigan last year; LaTasha Samson-Akpan, a 6-foot middle blocker from Ohio who had 383 kills and 74 blocks as a senior; and Alyssa


Gammel, a 5-10 outside hitter from California who was named a PrepVolleyball.com Feb 50.

“We’ve got a real good class coming in that all are going to be really good players,” Riley said. “Jordan’s a great setter, Alyssa is a dynamic jumper, a good ball-control kid, and LaTasha is so fast in the middle that she reminds me of what Felicia was before Felicia became Felicia.

“Then we’ve got a couple libero/defensive setters in Catherine Kane, a local Virginia kid and probably the fastest player on the team, and Gabrielle Talley. Lastly, we have Bailey Dowd, a 6-3 right side front from Pennsylvania, who is a big blocker. So we expect them to help us get better and help our practices tremendously.”

The last key component Riley points to for his team to make a return trip into the postseason is another solid non-conference showing. The schedule includes six 2010 NCAA tournament teams, among them Sweet 16 participant Indiana and SEC power Tennessee.

“If we learned anything from the past, for us to make the NCAA tournament, we’ve got to beat some teams that are going to be in it,” he said. “Last year, we beat Western Kentucky and Missouri in the non-conference and Florida State and Duke in the ACC. But you have to have some out-of-conference wins that put you on that board.

“So having the opportunity to play against teams like Tennessee and Indiana at home and playing against Western Kentucky, Ohio, Kentucky and UConn is something we are looking forward to. We have a very heavy schedule, but I think that’s what is going to help us get back to the NCAA tournament.” 

For the complete volleyball roster, please check:

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A screenshot of the Facebook page for Hokie Sports. The page header shows the VT logo and the text "HOKIESPORTS". A large graphic in the center says "DO YOU Like HOKIE SPORTS?" with a thumbs-up icon. At the bottom, it says "PROVE IT BY JOINING THE OFFICIAL PAGE OF THE HOKIES" and "FACEBOOK .COM/HOKIESPORTS".



A recruitment poster for the Hokie Kids' Club. It features a cartoon turkey mascot wearing a white t-shirt with "HOKIE" on it. The text says "JOIN TODAY AND RECEIVE" and "HOKIE KIDS' CLUB". A list of benefits includes: Hokie Kids' Club T-Shirt, FREE Admission to one (1) select Men's Basketball Game, Invitations to exclusive HKC events, Opportunities to meet Tech Athletes, and FREE Women's Basketball Season Ticket. A purple circle says "ONLY \$25 FOR THE 2011-12 ACADEMIC YEAR". At the bottom, it says "REGISTER ONLINE AT: HOKIESPORTS.COM/KIDSClub" and lists sponsors: McDonald's, University Bookstore, and StellarOne.

RETURNING EXPERIENCE
AND TALENT,

TECH MEN'S SOCCER SQUAD READY TO SEE IMPROVEMENTS IN 2011



James Shupp returns to Tech's lineup after missing last season with an injury and provides much-needed experience as a defender.

BY MARC MULLEN

The calendar had just been turned to October and Virginia Tech men's soccer head coach Mike Brizendine had his lineup card ready for Tech's match at Wake Forest, checking off freshman Kyle Renfro as his starting goalkeeper for the seventh consecutive match.

Things were looking good for the Hokies. After dropping their first two games, they had compiled a 3-2-1 mark with Renfro starting between the pipes, including an ACC win at NC State and a tie versus Clemson. Renfro was also sporting a 0.84 goals allowed average and a 79.2 save percentage.

Just 48 seconds into that contest, the Demon Deacons put a goal on the scoreboard, only the sixth allowed by Renfro in more than 538 minutes, but it was what happened 20 minutes later that turned the Hokie season.

Trying to stop a ball from going over the end line, Renfro dove and landed awkwardly, dislocating his right shoulder and ending his

season. Tech went on to lose that match 2-0 and fall in nine of its final 11 to limp to a 5-13-1 finish.

"That finish was a combination of two things – one, Renfro is very, very good; and two, our backups didn't meet the challenges of our schedule, so that combination was painful," Brizendine said. "To be honest, we started 3-5-1, but Renfro didn't even play in the first couple of games. We had a positive record when Renfro was playing."

Looking to this year, Brizendine points not just to Renfro's return, but also to those defenders in front of him, including the return of redshirt senior James Shupp. A defender, Shupp missed the 2010 campaign to injury after starting in 55 games the previous three seasons. Renfro, Shupp and the rest of the defenders should be the strength of this year's team.

"There are a number of things, and having Renfro healthy makes our whole goalkeeping

situation much better," Brizendine said. "And having the guys in reserves, we have firmed that situation up.

"And having James Shupp back in the lineup and getting some other guys playing time, like Devante Dubose, was good. He comes in late in the season and has an outstanding performance. We are very excited about him. So I think we are going to firm some things up in the back line."

Dubose saw limited playing time through the first two months of the season, but earned four starts to end the year. Junior David Fiorello, who started 35 matches in his first two years, and senior Jeremy Williams, who made 12 starts in 2010, return on the back line.

"David Fiorello was a captain last year. He brings a lot of things to the table and he's a very good leader," Brizendine said. "And it'll be nice for him to have Shupp back, someone he can lean on, but he's come along way. He had to

really step up last year, so this year, he feels much more comfortable, especially as one of the older guys.”

And there aren't too many “older guys.” Brizendine enters his third year at the helm of the Tech team and has brought in more than 20 guys over the past two seasons in an attempt to get the players whom he wants and who fit the system he wants to play.

“This is my second recruiting class and this class ... we spent more time and energy recruiting this group of young men than the first one,” he said. “We actually were recruiting both of them, our '10 class and our '11 class, at the same time. So we are very comfortable with what these kids are going to add to the table.

“We're optimistic. I think the ship is still moving in the right direction. We had some setbacks last year. It's difficult to bring in 20 new kids at one time, so we tried to stagger it over a couple of years, and I think we are getting closer to that, and you'll see a difference in both the quality of play on the field as well as results.”

Not wanting to single anyone out, and because he hasn't spent too much time with them, Brizendine is reserved on any expectations for his newcomers, but isn't shy about highlighting a couple of sophomores who excelled in their first seasons with the program.

“There are a couple of kids that are going to start and some that are going to add depth – be the 11-12-

13-14 spot or at least that's we think,” he said. “That is what we are projecting.”

“There are a couple that we are excited about and will make an impact similar to last year's class, guys like Beto Velazquez, David Clemens, Mikey Minutillo. So while we have some veterans in the back, everything in front of them will be younger kids, freshmen or sophomores.”

Velazquez made 10 starts and played in 16 total games as a midfielder, while Clemens and Minutillo showed off some scoring ability. Minutillo, a forward, started 11 games and played in 18, and was second on the team with five goals and also added an assist. Clemens, a midfielder, was right behind him with four goals and one assist in 18 games, five of those starts.

Junior midfielder Robert Alberti was another Hokie with a four-goal, one-assist season, playing in all 19 matches and starting 12 of them. However, Tech will have to replace almost half of its points lost from last season (42 of 78), with the biggest loss being Clarke Bentley's six goals and three assists.

“We always hope someone steps up and becomes a 10-goal guy, but right now, I don't see anyone at that point,” Brizendine said. “That doesn't mean someone can't emerge. Again, Mikey Minutillo and David Clemens, we expect big things from them.

“As we look at it, it's going to be scoring by committee. There will be more guys with five or six goals, but you never know. Being a goal scorer is an interesting thing. You get hot and your confidence

is high, and it just happens.”


Ten-goal guys are not the norm in Blacksburg, as only eight men have ever reached double figures in goals in the program's 38-year history and it's only happened twice since the turn of the century, last in 2006.

But also to be successful, the Hokies will need to do something not done since 2007 – register more than two wins away from home. Over the past three seasons, on the road and at neutral sites, Tech is a combined 5-21-3.

Working in its favor, though, is that Tech plays five straight at Thompson Field to open the season, and with a young squad, that has to help.

“We want to be at home as much as possible, in front of our fans, but I think, as you get older, it gets easier to go on the road,” Brizendine said. “But really, anytime you leave your home against an ACC opponent, it's going to be challenging.

“I think, because of our experience, especially in the back line, with guys like Shupp specifically and his kind of leadership, it's going to be easier for us. I expect better results away from our place.

“We're going to take our lumps every once in a while because these young guys are still learning to play at this level. But again, I think it's a very good group, and I think they are going to adapt quickly.” 

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Kelly Conheaney tied a school record with 12 assists a year ago and will need to be a scorer again in 2011.

The Tech women's soccer program is thinking NCAAs once again

by **Marc Mullen**

This year's Virginia Tech women's soccer seniors have a chance to leave their mark on the program as arguably the greatest class by posting one last season with at least 10 wins and one that culminates with another berth into the NCAA Championships.

A winning tradition is now the norm, with last year marking the fourth straight season with an overall record of .500 or better, including the past three seasons with at least 10 wins. In short, a national presence has been established, with the Hokies advancing into the postseason three straight years as well.

And the new leader is not about to let that end on his watch.

"That's one of the things that I am going to talk about with the seniors," said first-year head coach Charles Adair, who took over for Kelly Cagle following Cagle's resignation last spring. "They have an opportunity to be the first group that's gone through this program having made the tournament all four years.

"The kids that have left – Jen Harvey, Emily

Jukich, Julian Johnson, Robin Chidester – they helped establish the tradition during their time here. They experienced a lot here as a player. They came in here when Virginia Tech hadn't made the tournament. They had a couple near misses, when we thought we should have been among the 64 that made the tournament. They had those experiences and they kind of felt that, so they were able to build on that and grow.

"The program then grew along with that. So, these seniors haven't had that feeling, and it's important for us to recognize what we've done well and why we were in the tournament and continue to build on that and try to instill that into our younger kids. That is definitely an expectation for us now. We want to make the NCAA tournament and go from there."

But for those seniors – Rachel Beaumont, Katie Cramp, Katie Kooiman, Brittany Michels and Brittany Popko – to etch their names as the winningest class, they will need to rely on a number of underclassmen to repeat their

efforts from a year ago or step into roles lost by departures.

"This season is going to be a test for us. There is no question," Adair said. "We've lost some impact players, and we need to fill those spots. We have a number of quality players coming in as freshmen and then we have some sophomores that can step into those roles and fill those voids."

Sophomore Dayle Colpitts is one who does not need to step into a role, but one who will be looked upon to improve on her rookie success. Named to the 2010 ACC All-Freshmen team as a goalkeeper, Colpitts started all 21 games in net for the Hokies last year and posted a 1.74 goals allowed average, with four shutouts.

"Dayle is going to be a key component for our team, as she was last year," Adair said. "I think gaining a year of college experience as a freshman will help her in leading from the back. She's been training hard this offseason, so she'll be fit and ready to go, and she'll continue to build and help us in the transition

of having to fill a void at center back after losing Kelly Lynch."

Lynch was a huge part of the Hokies' success over the prior four seasons and ended her career with the most career starts (84) and tied for the most games played (86) of any player ever at Tech. She also helped the team to 28 shutouts in her time on the field.

However, the Hokies do return three experienced defenders from last year's squad in Michels (21 starts in 2010 and 52 career starts), and juniors Kelsey Mitchell (21 and 44) and Julia Goldsworthy (20 and 27) and each will have a shot at replacing Lynch. Or their experience will be valued if the role is taken over by a newcomer.

"Those are three of our back four, so we have some experience and some versatility," Adair said. "I know that Kelsey Mitchell has the ability to step inside and become a center back. She doesn't have as much experience there, but she could help fill that role."

"But we do have some freshmen coming in who are quality players at the position. Jodie Zelenky is one that we will look at, and Helen Butler has played there as well. We just have to find the right combination that's going to compliment our whole back four."

Finding the combination that works in the back line with some seasoned vets is one thing, but replacing three seniors – Harvey, Kelsey Billups

and Marika Gray – who combined for 17 goals and 13 assists in 2010 is another. The cupboard, though, isn't bare.

Junior midfielder Kelly Conheeny returns as the top point scorer, as she added a school-record tying 12 assists to five goals for 22 points. Sophomore Jazmine Reeves, who was also named to the 2010 ACC All-Freshmen team, tallied five goals and added one assist.

Adair believes, though, that there are a number of other underclassmen – sophomores Ashley Manning, Katie DeTuro and Shannon Mayrose to name a few – who could emerge as go-to scorers.

"We will definitely miss Marika. She was a four-year starter and a dynamic left-winger who struck fear in opponents," Adair said. "So we have to see who might be the danger person this year. Jazmine Reeves stands out right away, as does Kelly Conheeny."

"Other players that can step in and do the job are definitely Ashley Manning, who scored three of the biggest goals for us probably all year last year, Maryland and BC game-winners, and against JMU, she tied the game for us and those were three huge wins for us. Getting her more consistent time and more time on the field will be important and hopefully she can take advantage of that."


"Katie DeTuro is one who scored a couple of big goals for us as a freshman, so hopefully we get

some more consistent minutes out of her and kind of get her into the flow as well.

"There's also a kid that hasn't had played a minute yet, Shannon Mayrose. She's had to sit out the past two seasons because of knee injuries. She is one that we recruited a couple of years ago to be an impact in the center forward for us, so hopefully she's able to get through some of her health issues and play."

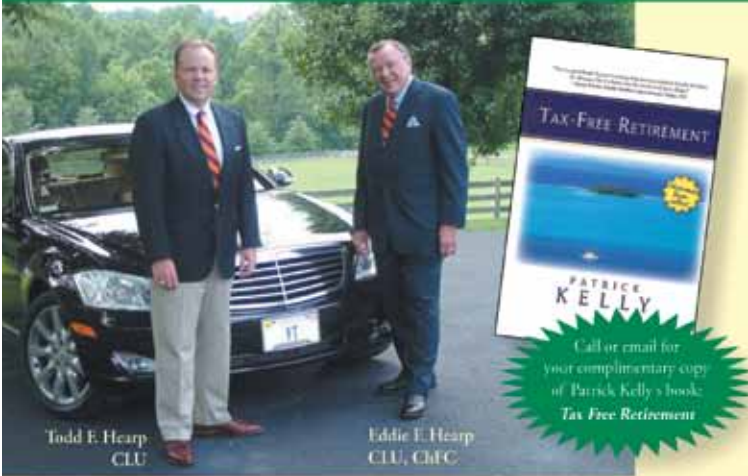
There will be a different look when the Hokies take the field this fall, with not only nine new freshmen joining the squad, but also with Adair and two new assistants on the sidelines leading Tech.

"I think change is going to be important for us and how the kids handle that. I think they've handled it well so far through the spring," Adair said. "Adding Pete Pososki and Erin Lycan – the two new assistants here – has been important, and I think the kids have responded well to them."

"And I think just getting our freshmen into the mix as well ... I think some of the kids that are coming in have an opportunity to play and shine and impact us. How we integrate that and blend our team is going to create our success, and I am looking forward to it." 

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CROSS COUNTRY SQUADS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES IN 2011

by Marc Mullen

Sammy Dow and Will Mulherin will be the leaders on their respective teams this fall.

The Virginia Tech women's cross country team has been there just once – five years ago – while the men's team hasn't advanced to the NCAA Cross Country Championships in more than two decades. Yet those are achievable goals for both those Hokie squads entering the 2011 campaign.

The women return an entire squad that placed fifth out of 37 teams at last year's NCAA Southeast Regional, just outside of moving on to the national event. The men, who didn't fare as well but were still 14th out of 34 teams, return most of their lineup and will add a couple of familiar faces.

"That is always the goal – to be in the top three of the ACC and getting to nationals, and with how (the women) finished the cross country season last fall and gaining another year of experience, that's the next step up," Tech head cross country coach Ben Thomas said.

In regards to the men, he said "We knew we were going to take some lumps last year, but this was our best shot to have a chance to win in the next few years and that's certainly what

we are shooting for – an ACC Championship. And if we are able to do that, we're certainly at a level that is going to qualify for the NCAA Championships. You just got to be able to do it on that day."

One of the top runners for the Hokies on the women's side will be Sammy Dow, who led Tech with a 32nd-place finish at the ACC Championships and will be looked to as a front-runner and provide leadership to the young squad.

"Sammy Dow will be in her senior cross country season, so she's been through three ACC and three regional championships and she was a national qualifier for us in the steeplechase [track] last year," Thomas said. "So she is probably the most experienced of the group. If we are to be successful, she's going to have to contribute a lot. Her and those returning freshmen are going to be key to having a chance to move up in the ACC and get over the hump and get to nationals as a team."

Those freshmen are a quartet – Paige Kvar-
tunas, Courtney Dobbs, Madalyn Nuckols and Taylor Crosson – who placed anywhere from

36th to 57th at the 2010 ACC Championships and 18th to 55th at the regional meet. Kvar-
tunas actually earned All-Region honors last year. Thomas envisions all their contributions to be even greater this season now that they have a full season under their belts, including a full track season.

"Paige Kvar-
tunas finished 18th at the regional as a freshman, which is an outstanding finish, and she has the chance to be a front-runner. We certainly need to develop one or two of those," Thomas said. "Five out of our top seven runners were freshmen, and it's tough coming in as a freshman and competing right away at an ACC level and also adjusting to a slightly new distance – going from 5K to 6K."

"So to finish the season fifth in the region, one spot away from making the NCAA Championships was a really solid finish for them. And they continued to get experience through the track season, so now, they kind of know what to expect coming back for their second year."

At the ACC meet, six Hokies finished within 26 places of each other, led by Dow's finish,

and were within 45 seconds, while at the regionals – taking Kwartunas’ effort out – five Hokies were 15 seconds apart, finishing between 38th and 57th. And that pack is instrumental in accomplishing Thomas’ goal.

“We do have a really nice tight pack. The hope is that, after a year, we’re able to move the whole pack up together,” Thomas said. “We don’t have to move up too far, and then we are right there for being an NCAA qualifier at regionals and hopefully being a top three at ACCs.”

Glancing over the men’s roster from 2010, a couple names pop out as missing in the likes of juniors Michael Hammond and Will Mulherin. The pair was instrumental in leading the Hokies to a third-place finish at the 2008 ACC Championships, finishing 15th and 20th, respectively. Then, in 2009, Mulherin became just the fourth Tech male to earn All-ACC in cross country with a seventh-place finish.

However, it was Thomas’ decision to hold those two runners out last year, and combine them with University of Tennessee transfer Leoule Degfae to make a serious run over the next few seasons at an ACC title and NCAA appearance.

“We had a really solid transfer coming in in Leoule Degfae, and he had to sit out last year, so I really wanted him, Will and Michael to have two years together in cross country,” Thomas said. “I think that’s our best shot to elevate our program to

a higher level, and that’s what we did.

“So, we redshirted those three. They’ll all be back for two more seasons of cross country, and we also redshirted Jared Berman, who was 10th at the US Juniors in the steeplechase after his freshman year. He’s gotten healthy and he’s back. So those guys coming back, with what we have returning, should really bolster our position from last year.”

Also among the ACC team title talk with Tech’s version of the “Big Three” is the mention of Mulherin’s opportunity at an ACC individual title.

“He’s beaten everyone in the conference at some point during the year, whether it’s cross country, indoor or outdoor track. He’s raced all these guys before and at some point has beaten them,” Thomas said. “He’s just never done it over 8K cross country and won the title, but that is certainly a goal of his and something he is shooting for.”

“Michael hopes to make big improvements in cross country. He redshirted last year and he certainly has the capability of being a big-time runner. And we are hoping Leoule Degfae, in his first season for us, can come out and be right there with those guys.


“And that’s what it takes. You’ve got to have that top three, not just a top one or two. But if you have three guys really banging at the front and some depth behind them, that gives you a chance to win an ACC title.”

Thomas believes that redshirting those two run-

ners last year will also have a positive impact on the future of Tech cross country as well, pointing to a strong incoming class.

“We actually have, on paper, our best freshmen class ever coming in,” he said. “So that’s exciting, and another reason we redshirted those other guys, to have a Will Mulherin, a Michael Hammond around a couple more years to hopefully get the freshmen going this year and be even stronger next year.”

Those newcomers added to the redshirt returners and four other runners that placed in the top 100 at last year’s regionals – senior Chris Walizer (59) and juniors Joseph Murray (74), Jason Cusack (91) and Tuhut Degfae (96, and Leoule’s twin brother) – and the men’s goal of making the NCAAs could be a reality.

“There’s some depth that we have coming back and we are certainly excited about that because you’re going to need that. It’s never going to go perfect,” Thomas said. “You need a team that, even on a good day, you’re still among the best in the conference and you can’t do that without a lot of depth. That’s something we feel like we are getting going on the men’s side.” 

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