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The Publication of Virginia Tech Athletics



SPRING SUCCESS

Logan Thomas and the Hokies wrapped up spring practice and now look ahead to the 2011 season



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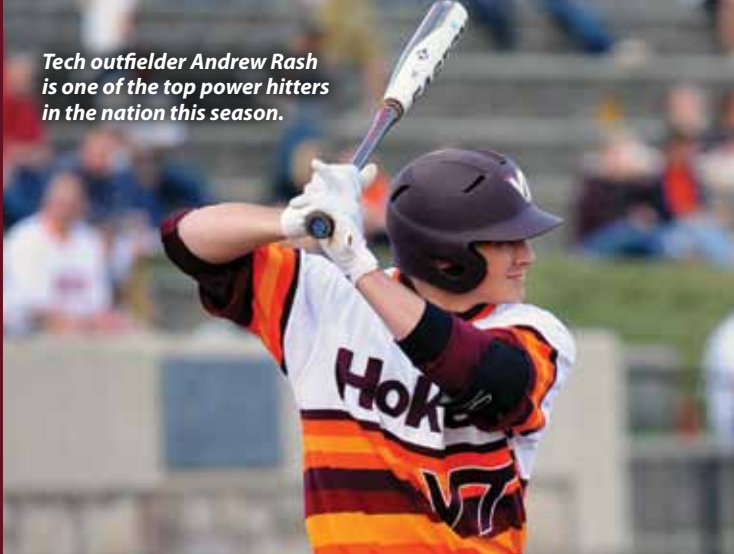
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Tech outfielder Andrew Rash is one of the top power hitters in the nation this season.



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On the Web...

HokieSports Weekly is a new online magazine. This publication gives a photography heavy glimpse into the most recent week in Virginia Tech Athletics. Fans can view or subscribe to this FREE publication at ...
www.hokiesports.com/weekly/



UPCOMING EVENT PROMOTIONS

MAY

8 Baseball vs. JMU 1:00 p.m.
Spend Mother's Day at English Field!
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14 Baseball vs. Clemson 2:00 p.m.
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Post-game autograph session!

21 Baseball vs. Georgia Tech
Senior Day!
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- Invitations to exclusive HKC Events
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- Opportunities to meet Tech Athletes, including an autograph session with the Football Team!

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CELEBRATING HOKIE SENIORS

With graduation fast approaching and the spring sports season winding down, seniors were honored for their time spent as committed student-athletes. Here, three 2010-2011 men's tennis seniors were presented with a gift to show appreciation for all their hard work and dedication to the program.





THE STUDENT-ATHLETE EXPERIENCE

"I have had the greatest experience of my life here at Virginia Tech. I have enjoyed your support. My teammates and I have had the best education I could have gotten."

Pedro Graber - Senior - Men's Tennis

"My experience at Virginia Tech has been truly amazing. I am so blessed to have the Hokie Club to support my four years here. Thank you for all of your help!"

Holly Johnson - Senior - Women's Tennis



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Johnny Bernard

Current Hokie Club level:

Golden Hokie

Hokie Club member since:

"Since it started"

Currently resides:

Retired to Roanoke, Va., after living in Boones Mill, Va., all his life.

Family:

Wife - Jeanne Hall Bernard

Daughter - Carolyn Bernard Hornick

Sons - Stephen, Gordon and Philip (Class of 1982)

Graduation year:

1941, Corp of Cadets, Captain S Battery.

(My wife, Jeanne, graduated from Duke in 1943.)



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

A: The Hokie Club has enabled us to keep in close touch with our old friends and has given us the opportunity to meet many new friends who have similar interests. I have been a Hokie Rep for many years, and in addition to keeping in contact with the members on my roster, it has enabled me to work with the Tech alumni staff, many of whom remain good friends.

Q: What makes the Franklin County Hokie Club such a great community for the Hokies?

A: Franklin County is a large agricultural region and is also known as "The Land Between the Lakes." Our Hokie Club has sponsored many scholarships to deserving county high school students. Our meetings, socials and golf outings, and our great bus trips are well publicized and we have great attendance. Many new people have moved to Smith Mountain Lake and we have gained new Hokies from that area. One of their community civic clubs also offers student scholarships for Tech students. Our unofficial motto is probably "if you're not a Hokie, we can make you one!" (Note: Johnny served as president of the Franklin County Hokie Club.)

Q: Do you have a specific moment when you realized that you were a fan of Virginia Tech athletics and knew without a doubt that you were a Hokie?

A: When I used to go to Roanoke to see the VPI vs. VMI games. My parents gave me \$2 for the ticket and the cost had gone up to \$2.50, so I sat next to the elevated railroad tracks nearby and watched the game.

Q: Virginia Tech athletics has undertaken tremendous facilities growth and renovations. Do you have a favorite project?

A: Lane Stadium and all the improvements. But we chose to stay in our same seats that we have had since the stadium opened.

Q: My all-time favorite Virginia Tech student-athletes are ...

A: Michael Vick - My favorite memory of Vick is his long run to set up a field goal to beat West Virginia in Morgantown at the last moment.
Bruce Smith - He was an outstanding college player and it was evident he would go far in professional football.
Bobby Stevens - My favorite memory of Stevens is when his last shot of the game defeated Notre Dame to win the NIT. (My wife recalls me actually jumping up in the chair I was sitting in and yelling and jumping up and down. I was SO excited!)

Interesting Hokie fact ...

"Johnny is a proud member of the German Club and still supports its goals. He has been a member of the Old Guard for 20 years and has served as president and secretary. Regrettably, his health will prevent him from attending his 70th class reunion this year. We have ordered season tickets for fall of 2011 in hopes that we can attend a couple of games. If not, we can give them to our children or our good friend, George, and hope for televised games. If not, we always enjoy the radio broadcasts with our all-time favorite, "The Voice of the Hokies", Bill Roth. The Hokies will always be part of our lives." – Jeanne Hall Bernard

The Annual Fund:

Keys to understanding its role in the importance of Virginia Tech athletics

The Annual Fund is a critical piece to the fundraising efforts of the Hokie Club. Approximately 90 percent of the 11,100 members give at one of the seven Annual Giving levels. The Annual Fund is the key to the growth and success that the Hokie Club has achieved. As Lu Merritt, Director of Development for Intercollegiate Athletics said recently, "The Annual Fund truly is the lifeblood of the Hokie Club. Without the majority of our members contributing each year, we would not be able to generate the needed funds to provide scholarships for our student-athletes."

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED IN THE HOKIE CLUB'S ANNUAL GIVING EFFORTS?

There are many ways to give:

- (1) outright gifts including gifts of cash, real estate, securities, and gifts in kind.
- (2) deferred giving including bequests, life income gifts, charitable lead trusts, retirement account gifts, life insurance gifts, and retained life gifts
- (3) matching gifts from your employer
(Please check with your Human Resources staff to see if your company matches gifts to athletics.)
- (4) online giving using your credit card via hokieclub.com



ANNUAL GIVING LEVELS

The Hokie Club has seven annual giving levels. Membership for annual giving levels is for 12 months. All annual giving levels must be renewed to remain ACTIVE and to obtain benefits.

- Hokie Club • \$100-249**
- Orange & Maroon Hokie • \$250-499**
- Bronze Hokie • \$500-999**
- Silver Hokie • \$1,000-1,999**
- Golden Hokie • \$2,000-4,999**
- Platinum Hokie • \$5,000-9,999**
- Diamond Hokie • \$10,000 & up**

UPGRADING YOUR MEMBERSHIP HELPS EVERYONE

Benefits for all Hokie Club members are based on the Hokie Club Point Priority System. This system uses a formula to rank all Hokie Club members as seen on the Point Priority Guidelines sheet each member received in February. Your rank is based on points earned for you:

- (1) current gift
- (2) cumulative giving
- (3) years of continuous membership
- (4) volunteer involvement points
- (5) tickets purchased through the Virginia Tech Athletics Ticket Office.

So, upgrading your membership not only increases the support you are giving to our 500+ student-athletes, but it also improves

your Hokie Club rank and the benefits associated with your membership.

FINDING NEW MEMBERS IS NOT ONLY RESERVED FOR HOKIE REPS

Since its inception in 1986, the Hokie Rep program provided the Hokie Club with a volunteer base that has helped to spread the word on Virginia Tech athletics, and as a result, has generated more money and new members to the Hokie Club.

However, we are always looking for new members. Anyone can spread the word about the Hokie Club, not just Hokie Reps. Take a moment to think about your friends. Are they Hokies? Do they love Virginia Tech athletics? Are they Hokie Club members? If

they aren't members, take a moment to tell them about the Hokie Club and encourage them to join us. What better cause can there be than to support Virginia Tech's student-athletes!

DON'T WAIT UNTIL DECEMBER, RENEW ON YOUR ANNIVERSARY MONTH

If you are a Hokie Club member, please remember to renew on your anniversary month. To encourage you to renew on your anniversary month, the Hokie Club provides each active Hokie Club member with Virginia Tech athletics' monthly magazine, *Inside Hokie Sports*. However, this amazing perk of Hokie Club membership is only provided to active members, all the more reason to renew your membership on time!

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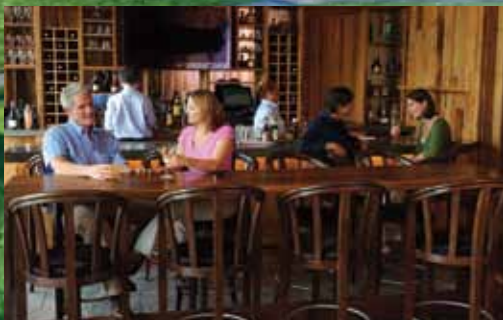
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NEWS & NOTES

**DRAGER AND SIMON
RECEIVE SKELTON AWARDS**

Chris Drager and Laura Simon received the Skelton Award for Academic Excellence in Athletics – the highest designation handed out by the Tech athletics department – at the annual Athletics Director's Honors Breakfast held April 2 on the Tech campus.

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

Drager, a tight end on the football team from Jefferson Hills, Pa., graduated last year with a degree in human nutrition, foods and exercise. The rising fifth-year senior is currently in the master's program. Simon, a sophomore swimmer from Greenville, S.C., is majoring in biochemistry. She competes in the distance freestyle events and the individual medley events.

In addition to the Skelton Award recipients, the members of the 2010 Athletic Director's Honor Roll were also recognized. The AD Honor Roll is designed to pay tribute to student-athletes who have achieved a grade-point average of 3.0 or better during one or both semesters in the preceding calendar year. This year, 362 student-athletes made the AD Honor Roll.

The ACC also sponsors an award to outstanding senior student-athletes. Each institution establishes criteria for the award, and Virginia Tech has chosen to honor seniors who excel in balancing the academic and athletic demands of intercollegiate athletics. This year's ACC-VT Male and Female Scholar-Athletes of the Year are Kelly

Phillips and Pedro Graber.

The ACC provides student-athletes with financial support for postgraduate endeavors through the ACC Postgraduate Scholarship Program. Phillips and Graber, along with women's soccer player Jennifer Harvey, are recipients of the 2010-2011 ACC Postgraduate Scholarship Awards, also known as the Weaver-James-Corrigan Graduate Scholarship.

The Weaver-James-Corrigan scholarships are awarded to three student-athletes from each conference institution who intend to pursue a postgraduate degree. Each recipient receives \$5,000 to contribute to his or her postgraduate education. Harvey and Phillips both plan to attend medical school. Graber is currently pursuing a master's degree in industrial systems engineering at Tech and hopes to pursue a career in operational research.

**SEVERAL TECH ATHLETES
RECEIVE NATIONAL STRENGTH
AND CONDITIONING HONOR**

Six Tech student-athletes received All-American Strength and Conditioning Athlete of the Year honors from the National Strength and Conditioning Association on March 31. The NSCA awarded 247 collegiate and high school athletes from 96 schools with this award, which recognizes student-athletes' dedication to strength and conditioning.

The list includes football standouts John Graves and David Wilson, basketball player Terrell Bell, softball catcher Courtney Liddle, women's soccer star Jennifer Harvey, and baseball standout Michael Seaborn.

Graves increased his bench press from 350 pounds to 425, and he recorded a front

squat of 420 pounds during his last testing. His 36-inch vertical jump is a record for a Tech defensive tackle.

Wilson was the fastest football player in recent testing, recording a time of 4.29 seconds in the 40-yard dash. He also led the team in the 10-yard sprint (1.63 seconds) and the NFL shuttle run (3.85 seconds).

Harvey and Seaborn both have earned Elite status in Tech's strength and conditioning program on three occasions. Bell recorded a 300-pound bench press and a 385-pound back squat in recent testing. He also had a 38-inch vertical jump. And Liddle finished with a bench press of 150 pounds and a squat of 230 pounds in the most recent testing.


WILLIAMS HEADS TO ARIZONA

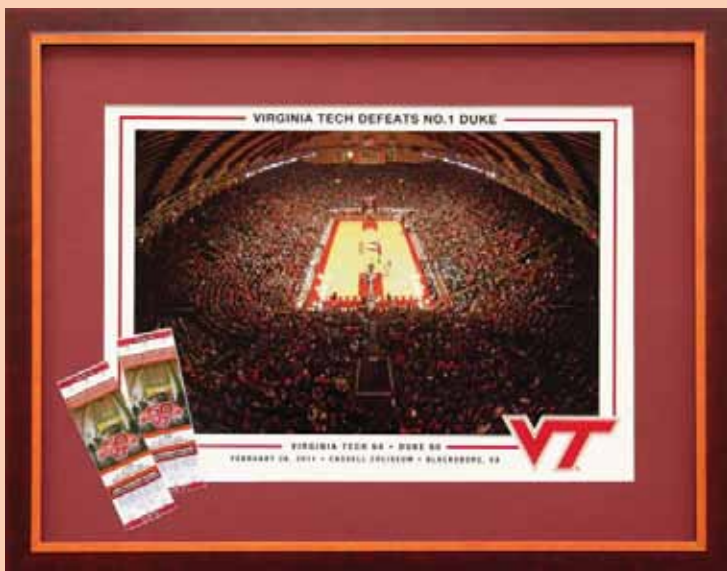
Tech tailback Ryan Williams, who decided to forego his final two seasons at Tech and declare for the NFL Draft, realized a dream when the Arizona Cardinals selected him in the second round of the league's annual draft on April 29.

As a redshirt freshman, Williams set Tech single-season records by rushing for 1,655 yards and 21 touchdowns. He rushed for 477 yards this past season, missing four games with a hamstring injury.

Williams was one of three Tech players to get drafted. The Houston Texans selected Rashad Carmichael in the fourth round, while the Baltimore Ravens selected quarterback Tyrod Taylor in the sixth round.

The group brings the total to 83 players drafted since head coach Frank Beamer took over in 1987. It also extended the streak of having at least one player drafted, to 18 consecutive years.

None of Tech's other players have signed free agent deals because of the ongoing NFL lockout. 



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TECH WITH A LOT OF PLEASANT SURPRISES THIS SPRING

The annual Maroon-White football game wrapped up spring practice, and following this year's game, a friend surmised that, "the Logan Thomas kid is better than I thought."

Of course, the reference is to Tech's starting quarterback, who takes over for Tyrod Taylor. Thomas threw two touchdown passes in the spring game, and he threw six this spring in scrimmages compared to just three interceptions. At halftime of the game, he took home the George Preas Award for the offense's most valuable player of the spring.

Not sure that Thomas' performance came as a surprise to many, but my friend's deduction illustrates some of the essence of spring football – surprises spring forth out of Tech's roster.

In keeping with that theme, your editor reserves this space each May for the surprises of the spring. Here is this person's take from the completed 2011 spring ball:

Tariq Edwards – In pads, this guy looks like Xavier Adibi. He's 6-foot-2, 230 pounds, and he runs well. He made plays last fall when he got into games, but he never fully won over defensive coordinator and linebackers coach Bud Foster's trust because of some inconsistent practice habits.

This spring, he was all over the field. The redshirt sophomore played like he really understood his role in Tech's defense, and his emergence enables Foster to keep All-ACC linebacker Bruce Taylor at the mike linebacker spot.

"Tariq has all kinds of ability," Foster said. "He's long, and he's got quickness. We

haven't had a guy with his type of speed at the backer spot since Xavier, or maybe Purnell [Sturdivant]."

David Wang – Wang got all the reps with the first-team offense this spring after Greg Nosal missed spring practice while recovering from a shoulder injury. Nosal should be back by the time practice starts in August and figures to slide right back into his starting role at left guard.

But Wang's smarts and his footwork drew raves, and he played well enough this spring to deserve a starting job. He goes into the fall as the top backup at both guard spots. Offensive line coach Curt Newsome told him to learn both spots to provide him some flexibility.

"He needs to be on the field," Newsome said.

Thanks to the development of Wang and a few others, Tech is finally getting some depth on the offensive line.

Derrick Hopkins – This guy isn't your prototypical defensive tackle at 6 foot and 298 pounds, but he plays with a ton of effort, and most of Tech's interior offensive linemen struggled to block him this spring.

"I don't want to get out of whack, but I know this: The kid doesn't stay blocked," defensive line coach Charley Wiles said.

It's also worth noting that Derrick made two positions better this spring – his brother, Antoine, appeared motivated by all the attention Derrick got and picked his game up significantly at the other tackle spot. With James Gayle and J.R. Collins, Tech's first-team defensive line appears to be talented.

Jeron Gouveia-Winslow – It was so refreshing to see this young man enjoy some success after struggling at times last fall. G-W looked like a different player this spring. He looked like he knew what he was doing out there, and every movement came naturally.

"Everything's a lot slower, not too sporadic, where you're out there and your head's all over the place like, 'What do I do? What do I do?'" Gouveia-Winslow said. "I get out there and make my reads, feel confident in my calls and go from there."

Foster wants more plays made out of that spot, and in the spring game, G-W had a sack and two hurries. He and Alonzo Tweedy figure to split time at the spot, but G-W came out of spring No. 1.

Telvion Clark – Clark was maybe the biggest surprise of the spring. He made nine tackles in the spring game and that served as a microcosm of his spring. He spent quite a bit of time around the football. He recorded five and eight tackles, respectively, in the two scrimmages leading up to the spring game.

"He's maturing," Foster said. "He's got a lot of potential and tools."

How big of a surprise was Clark's spring? Well, consider this – he played five snaps last fall. That's it.

Between Clark and Edwards, backer went from a point of weakness a year ago to one of potential strength.

There were other surprises this spring. Honorable mention honors go to James Gayle and Mark Leal.

Will there be more in the fall?

Let's hope so. 

Bud Foster's Lunch Pail Defense Foundation



The purpose of The Lunch Pail Defense Foundation, a recently formed non-profit corporation headquartered in Blacksburg, VA, is to annually fund a need-based academic college scholarship to an eligible student from the New River Valley. In short, the eligible student will personify the focus and fortitude embodied in the spirit of "The Lunch Pail" by demonstrating hard work, good character and determination to succeed in all areas of life.



To find out more about the scholarship and eligibility please visit <http://lunchpaildefense.com>.



SOLID SPRING BY THE HOKIES SHOULD HAVE FANS EXCITED ABOUT UPCOMING 2011 SEASON

Logan Thomas took command of Tech's offense this spring and will be looking to lead the Hokies to another ACC title this fall.



Several hours following Virginia Tech's 2011 spring football game, a group of Hokie fans continued their weekend-long tailgate party outside Lane Stadium.

"We're not leaving," one partier exclaimed.

Details notwithstanding, the group was in a faculty/staff lot, one that is a high donor parking spot on fall game days. And, oh yeah, the season opener is more than four months away.

But those facts did little to dampen their enthusiasm and passion.

"We're gonna stay right here ... all summer," he continued. "Can't wait for the season to start. Logan was awesome, man!"

So let the anticipation begin, eh?

Logan – that would be Virginia Tech's redshirt sophomore quarterback Logan Thomas – was terrific in the spring game, throwing two marvelous touchdown passes and sprinting for a spectacular 31-yard run.

"I thought he'd be good," our longtime radio network analyst Mike Burnop said during the game broadcast. "But he's better than I thought he'd be."

During the course of spring practice, which included three full scrimmages and three "mini-scrimmages," Thomas was 50 of 91 passing (54.9 percent) for 743 yards, six touchdowns and three interceptions. His game management skills were solid as well.

"He's done everything he needs to do to become a very good quarterback," Tech head coach Frank Beamer said. "He learns very quickly. He's a very smart guy who doesn't make the same mistake twice. He makes good decisions. He's everything that you want in your quarterback."

The Hokies are replacing Tyrod Taylor, the



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school's record-shattering quarterback who led the Hokies to three Orange Bowl appearances and is the school's all-time winningest quarterback. And Thomas, with his size 18 cleats, will be the guy to fill Taylor's shoes.

"His personality is a lot like Tyrod's," Beamer said. "Great kid, great person ... but he's 6-6. Some of the throws are a little easier for him because of his height."

Thomas has also been brought along gradually in Tech's program, which gives him a great advantage as he prepares for his first start this fall - Sept. 3 against Appalachian State.

Remember, Taylor was forced into action during his true freshman season at Tech. He was playing against eventual national champion LSU in Baton Rouge before he ever got his first homework assignment at Tech.

Conversely, Thomas redshirted his freshman year at Tech, traveled with the team that season and sat in every quarterbacks meeting in 2009. Then he served as Taylor's backup and learned during the 2010 season. He's been brought along at a pace that quarterbacks coach Mike O'Cain would prefer.

As a result, you can see the confidence in his game, and perhaps just as importantly, in his teammates' eyes. You hear words like 'special' and 'leader' and 'poise' from the guys on the sidelines during the scrimmages. He's got his teammates' attention and their respect heading into the season.

But Thomas isn't the only one who made his presence felt this spring.

Beamer challenged his whip linebackers following the Orange Bowl, saying it was time for someone to step up and play consistently at a vital position.

"G-W [Jeron Gouveia-Winslow] is much better at whip than he was last year, and [Alonzo] Tweedy brings some real athletic ability at that position," Beamer said. "I think

we've really helped ourselves there. And with guys like Nick Dew and [Dominique] Patterson, we're deeper. We've got to work out some alignment mistakes and see where their eyes are as a play develops, but overall, we've got some real talent there."

At backer, Beamer suggests the injuries to Jack Tyler and Bruce Taylor allowed other guys to get some serious reps this spring.

"Tariq Edwards and Telvion Clark are two good kids who can really run," Beamer said. "Plus, they look like linebackers."

So Tech will enter 2011 hoping for more depth at those two defensive positions.

Another guy who really continues to be impressive is J.R. Collins, the sophomore from Stafford, Va., who showed a lot at two positions, both defensive end and tackle.

"He's an interesting player," Beamer said of Collins. "We're definitely going to play him inside [at tackle] some. He has great speed for a tackle, and he's strong enough to handle that position."

Beamer was very excited about the Hopkins brothers [Antoine and Derrick] and Kwamaine Battle at the tackle spots, but said he expects "a freshman or two to help us there" in the fall.

Two other players who really elevated their games in the spring were Marcus Davis and James Gayle. Davis, who caught two touchdown passes during the spring game, has always had tremendous athletic ability and had a great spring. As for Gayle, he's an exceptionally quick and explosive defensive end who won the Excalibur Award during offseason workouts. He was named the defensive MVP for the spring.

There are still plenty of question marks to be answered heading into August. Who will be the Hokies' backup quarterback? Mark Leal and Ju-Ju Clayton both had their moments, but Leal seemed to have the bet-

ter spring overall. That will be decided in August. And while receiver Danny Coale showed nice punting skills, it's possible the Hokies' 2011 punter is still in high school.

Accurately forecasting the season in May can be dicey, but it looks like Tech will be a better defensive team in 2011 because of overall experience and greater depth up front and at linebacker. Offensively, it will be hard to match last year's output. The 2010 Hokies led the ACC in scoring (33.9 points per game), touchdowns (59), and yards per play (6.2 per snap). Still with a veteran offensive line and receivers and David Wilson returning in the backfield, they appear to be solid.

It comes down to Thomas. And judging by what we've seen over the past 24 months, he could be very special.

As you've read here before, there are so many good players in Beamer's program right now. It can lose guys like Taylor, Williams and Evans, and still be one of the favorites in the ACC. In fact, after closely examining the schedules and returning talent in the conference, it would be shocking if Tech (Coastal) and Florida State (Atlantic) weren't the pre-season divisional picks again in 2011, setting up another Hokies-Seminoles title game in Charlotte.

Regardless, the buildup to the 2011 season will be tremendous during the coming four months.

As for those Hokie fans who were tailgating in Lot 1 at the spring game, they had vacated their prime party spot by the morning following the game. While they may have exhausted their supply of cold beverages, they should be able to get through the summer with their enthusiasm.

And they'll be back - with plenty of company - in September. 

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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, senior assistant AD for compliance:

Q: *Just wondering if you've been following this Perry Jones case at Baylor. Perry got suspended because his mom borrowed money from his AAU coach when she was having health issues. She's already paid the money back – and the kid was a sophomore in HIGH SCHOOL. He wasn't an NCAA athlete yet, and he didn't know about the loans. Can you explain the NCAA's logic?*

- Gary in Denver, CO

TP: "Let's go back to the beginning. Perry Jones is a basketball player at Baylor – and a very good one. His mother received three 15-day loans from her son's AAU coach while her son was in high school. She paid those loans back in a timely manner. Her son knew nothing of the loans.

"But what often fails to get reported is that Perry Jones received a trip to San Diego for a preseason NFL game in August before he arrived at Baylor. Jones' AAU coach paid for that trip as well.

"In all, Jones and his family received \$4,100 in benefits. This violates the NCAA's amateurism rule (Bylaw 12.1.1.1.4.3) and for this, Jones received a six-game suspension.

"Now some have compared this case with the case of Auburn quarterback Cam Newton, who was allowed to play in the national championship game after telling NCAA investigators that he knew nothing of his father's demands for money in

return for Cam's services. However, there was no evidence of benefits received by Cam or his family. In the Jones case, benefits were clearly provided."


Q: *I've heard from sources inside the athletics department that recruiting services are your favorite topic these days. What is the NCAA legislation concerning recruiting services and does Virginia Tech use these services?*

- Marc in Philadelphia, PA

TP: "Your sources are good, except they left out the word 'least' in front of the word 'favorite.' Seriously though, the current issues/discussions stem from an amendment that we (the NCAA membership) voted to adopt last year. The problem originated when bogus 'recruiting services' began to spring up across the nation, targeted at college basketball coaches. The information provided by these bogus 'recruiting services' was minimal at best, and the services were very expensive, but since they were produced by individuals who controlled access to top prospects (e.g. AAU coaches), many college coaches felt compelled to purchase them.

"In response to this, an NCAA committee drafted a legislative amendment that defined a 'recruiting service' and listed several requirements that a service must meet in order for an intercollegiate athletics department to subscribe to it. The

original amendment was directed solely at the sport of basketball, and if we had kept it that way, this issue would not currently be my least favorite. However, in an effort to maintain consistency in the area of recruiting, the proposed amendment was modified to include recruiting services in all sports. Combine that expansion with the fact that the effects of the actual wording of the amendment (now new bylaw) were not considered carefully enough, and we find ourselves – coaches and compliance staff members – wrestling with numerous unintended consequences.

"Recruiting services are used by every school in some capacity, and Virginia Tech is no different. A legitimate recruiting service saves time and money, keeps coaches from traveling more than they already do, and saves them a lot of hours compiling tape. It also helps coaches because it gives them a more comprehensive list of prospects from around the country. The new bylaw allows colleges to subscribe to a recruiting service involving prospective athletes, provided the service is made available to the public at the same rate as coaches and the information provides individual analysis of players beyond demographic information or rankings. Also, if the recruiting service offers video, it must be restricted to regularly scheduled high school, prep school or two-year college events." 

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SPRING GAME

FOOTBALL



Cornerback Jayron Hosley was a leader and a playmaker this spring, including this punt return for a touchdown in the Maroon-White game.

THE FUTURE APPEARS BRIGHT, AS THE HOKIES WRAP UP 2011 SPRING PRACTICE

On the surface, the annual Maroon-White game can best be described as an ordinary scrimmage, or for fans, tailgating practice.

But the knowledgeable Tech fan knows better, at least when discussing this year's game.

The 2011 Maroon-White game gave Tech fans a peek at the future. The football program unveiled two new assistant coaches, including the Big Whistle's son, and a new play caller. The new quarterback made his debut as the man in charge after serving as a caddy last season. The Hokies' 2011 recruiting class, for the most part, attended the game, and nearly 100 recruits were on hand as well. At halftime, they all got to see the athletics department recognize a dozen former Tech players now playing in the NFL, a testament to the success of head coach Frank Beamer's program the past 18 years.

And all this happened on a day when the weather was practically perfect.

"Yeah, I don't think it's any question. Having a bunch of recruits, a bunch of your signees ... having those NFL guys back, and then having a great crowd that shows they're enthusiastic about Virginia Tech football, I think we made a good statement today," Beamer said following the game. "The weather was good and the crowd was good and the play was good enough. So I think it's a good day."

Most left feeling confident about the future of Logan Thomas, the Hokies' 2011 signal caller. Thomas, who backed up Tyrod Taylor a year ago and played in seven games, showed command of Tech's offense all spring, and he guided his Maroon team to an easy 27-0 victory over the White squad.

Thomas completed 10 of 21 on the afternoon, with two touchdowns and

two interceptions, and he also rushed for a game-high 37 yards. His touchdown passes covered 26 and 21 yards, both to receiver Marcus Davis.

In the scrimmages this spring and the Maroon-White game, Thomas completed 50 of 91 for 743 yards, with six touchdowns and three interceptions.

"I knew that I had to get a lot better and progress a lot more to gain the confidence of my teammates and have them believe in me," Thomas said. "I think I did so. I think I played pretty well today, and I think I showed that I'm capable of carrying this offense."

"I thought Logan had a couple that got away from him a little bit, but for the most part, threw it very well, like it's been all spring," Beamer said. "He's been very good. He's done everything he needs to be a really good quarterback."

Another star this spring was Davis, the

2011 SPRING PRACTICE AWARD WINNERS

• Paul Torgersen Award

(top newcomers during spring practice)

Offense: Andrew Miller

Defense: Derrick Hopkins

• President's Award

(players who demonstrate the most outstanding leadership during the offseason program and spring workouts)

Offense: Danny Coale

Defense: Eddie Whitley

• Dr. Richard Bullock Award

(players who show the most improvement during spring workouts)

Offense: David Wang

Defense: Tariq Edwards

• Frank O. Moseley Award

(players who exhibit the most hustle during the offseason and spring workouts)

Offense: Andrew Lanier

Defense: Jeron Gouveia-Winslow

• Coaches Award

(players who had an exceptional spring)

Offense: Jarrett Boykin

Defense: Jayron Hosley

• George Preas Award

(MVP's of spring practice)

Offense: Logan Thomas

Defense: James Gayle

• Don Williams TEAM UNITED Award

(the offensive and defensive player who put the team first)

Offense: Blake DeChristopher

Defense: Barquell Rivers



Jeron
Gouveia-Winslow

6-foot-4, 231-pound receiver who led all receivers with six catches for 61 yards in the game. He caught 23 passes for 297 yards and four touchdowns combined in the Hokies' scrimmages and the Maroon-White game.

"I told him the other day he's getting ready to make a lot of money if he keeps going in the direction he's going," Beamer said.

Other standouts in the game – and this spring, for that matter – included cornerback Jayron Hosley, who returned a punt 61 yards for a touchdown; defensive end J.R. Collins, who recorded two sacks and forced a fumble; and whip linebacker Jeron Gouveia-Winslow, who had a sack and two hurries and also recovered a fumble.

All three of those guys played for the Maroon team and were three of eight projected defensive starters on that sideline. They held the White team to 83 yards of offense.

"I feel like we're playing and one guy is getting better and the next guy is getting better and the next guy is trying to top that guy," Collins said. "There's a lot of competition within the group, and as soon as we take the season on, we're going to put on a show."


For the White squad, Telvion Clark – who had a great spring – finished with a game-high nine tackles, including one for a loss. Detrick Bonner had five tackles and broke up a pass, and both Cris Hill and Wiley Brown had an interception.

James Gayle, named the defensive MVP of spring practice, had two tackles and a sack. Offensively, Mark Leal paced the White team, completing 3 of 6 for 34 yards.

Cody Journell and Conor Goulding connected on field goals to account for the remainder of the scoring. Journell is the favorite to win the placekicking job.

Next up for the Hokies – working hard throughout the summer in the strength and conditioning program and preparing for the season opener Sept. 3 against Appalachian State.

"I think the challenge every year is to get the chemistry right on this team and how good we can become and how quickly we can do that," Beamer said. "You hate to see those seniors leave, and we had some great ones leave, so there's the challenge with the guys we've got coming back.

"I do know this. Your team starts with your quarterback, and I feel like we've got a good one. We've got a good starting point with that quarterback position." 

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QUARTERBACKS

THOMAS TERRIFIC THIS SPRING AND SET TO BE THE HOKIES' SIGNAL CALLER IN 2011


Everyone expected Logan Thomas to claim the starting job this spring after serving as Tyrod Taylor's understudy a year ago, and the redshirt sophomore did exactly that, showing maturity, confidence, and most importantly, talent. In six scrimmages, including the Maroon-White game, Thomas completed 50 of 91 passes for 743 yards, with six touchdowns and three interceptions. He threw two touchdowns and two interceptions in the Maroon-White game.

"I don't ever want to under-sell a young man, but he's [Thomas] farther along than I thought he would be at this point in time," quarterbacks coach Mike O'Cain said. "I'm extremely happy. I couldn't be more pleased with his progress this spring. He picked up right where he left off in January, and you don't ever know when you take a three-month layoff if that will be the case. But he's thrown the ball well and he's made good decisions.

"Now, he's got some things that he's got to work on, some little things. He's got room to improve. But I can't be more pleased with where he's at right now. He's in a good place going into August."

The situation behind Thomas isn't as clear. Ju-Ju Clayton is No. 2, but Mark Leal closed the gap the final week. Clayton threw five interceptions and no touchdowns this spring, while Leal threw two touchdowns and no interceptions.

"I've been pleased with Ju-Ju and what he's been able to do having had very few reps," O'Cain said. "The negative with him is that he's had some interceptions, and we've got to eliminate that.

"I've been pleased with Mark's poise and his accuracy and overall decision-making. We'll get him some work in the early fall and see how much he's progressed. I think he's earned that." 



Mark Leal

QUARTERBACKS SPRING DEPTH CHART

- 3 Logan Thomas (6-6, 245, r-Soph.)
- 12 Ju-Ju Clayton (6-1, 220, r-Jr.)
- 6 Mark Leal (6-0, 199, r-Fr.)
- 16 Trey Gresh (6-0, 209, r-Fr.)
- 5 Ricardo Young (6-0, 176, r-Fr.)
- missed most of spring with injury

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WILSON READY TO TAKE OVER AT TAILBACK

David Wilson missed a portion of spring football practice while participating with the track and field team, but he certainly did enough during his time with his football teammates to impress new running backs coach Shane Beamer. Wilson, arguably the most explosive athlete on Tech's team, appears more than ready to take over for the departed Darren Evans and Ryan Williams.

"Early on, I was concerned," Beamer said of Wilson participating with the track team. "I was concerned about the mental aspect because we were installing different plays and different protections – stuff that was different from what we did last fall. But it didn't affect him. He handled everything maturely, which probably shouldn't be a surprise."

Coming out of spring, Josh Oglesby, James Hopper and Tony Gregory were in the mix to back up Wilson. Beamer put Oglesby slightly ahead at this point, but added the competition will continue in August.


Oglesby gives Tech a solid, experienced player behind Wilson. Still recovering from the torn ACL suffered last fall, Gregory only participated in specific drills, but he showed a lot of burst and quickness. Hopper, who was moved from rover by the staff before spring practice, also showed some burst and quickness. He and Gregory both need to get a little bigger and stronger.

"Josh is a good, solid tailback," Beamer said. "He was a leader. I'd like to see him become a more explosive guy, but I think that will come after a summer with Coach Mike Gentry."

"Tony did a lot, but nothing full speed. He's done an awesome job with the work he's put in, and I hope he'll come back even stronger."

"Hopper is smart and tough, and those are two of the many things you've got to have. He needs to get bigger and stronger. He can get into some mismatches in pass protection, but he knows that. He'll continue to get in the mix."

At fullback, Joey Phillips leads the brigade, with Martin Scales and Riley Beiro following him. Phillips injured his ankle in one of the final scrimmages and missed the Maroon-White game, but should be fine in the fall.

"They're all solid," Beamer said. "We don't use our fullbacks a lot, but some in specific situations, like on the goal line or in short yardage. They'll continue to compete, and we'll see where it goes in the fall." 



Josh Oglesby

RUNNING BACKS SPRING DEPTH CHART

TAILBACKS

- 4 David Wilson (5-10, 201, Jr.)
- 2 Josh Oglesby (5-11, 210, r-Sr.)
- 26 James Hopper (5-9, 181, r-Soph.)
- 22 Tony Gregory (6-0, 187, r-Soph.)

FULLBACKS

- 45 Joey Phillips (5-11, 214, r-Jr.)
- 39 Martin Scales (5-11, 216, r-Jr.)
- 32 Riley Beiro (5-9, 227, r-Fr.)

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OFFENSIVE LINE A TEAM STRONG POINT COMING OUT OF SPRING

For the first time in quite some time, the Virginia Tech offensive line features some depth. The Hokies aren't necessarily two deep at each position on the offensive line, but they also aren't far from it either.

At right tackle, Blake DeChristopher anchors the unit and will be one of the rare four-year starters on the offensive line. Winston Painter, who moved over from guard before spring practice started, backs up DeChristopher.

"Blake had a good spring," offensive line coach Curt Newsome said. "There's not much more to say that hasn't been said. He's just one of those rare guys who can start for four years.

"I thought Winston improved. I definitely think he's better at tackle, and that's the position for him. He's got to be more physical in the run game and improve on some technique issues, but I thought he was solid this spring."

At right guard, Jaymes Brooks also re-

turns and enjoyed a good spring. Redshirt freshmen Matt Arkema and Laurence Gibson back him up, making it imperative that the experienced Brooks stay healthy.

"Jaymes really had a purpose this spring," Newsome said. "He worked on the little things. He had some footwork issues, and I thought he got a lot better in that area.

"Laurence got off to a good start, and then Matt bypassed him, but Laurence caught back up toward the end of spring. Those two had a good competition going, and we'll see where it goes."

At center, Andrew Miller takes over for Beau Warren, and he established himself as an up-and-coming player. Behind him, Michael Via, who played mostly tackle a year ago, moved back to center, where he played two years ago. Caleb Farris and Bo Gentry round out the group.


"I think Andrew has a chance to be really good," Newsome said. "I think we hurt Michael a little by moving him back and

forth, but he was too good not to help us somewhere. I think center is his best spot, but I want to get him more physical."

At left guard, Greg Nosal will be back in the fall after missing the spring with a shoulder injury. But David Wang took advantage of the reps. Wang figures to be the top backup at both guard spots.

"He's been my biggest surprise," Newsome said of Wang. "He's been physical, and he's intelligent. He's got good footwork. I'm excited about what he can do to help us."

Finally, at left tackle, Andrew Lanier and Nick Becton battled it out all spring. Lanier came out slightly ahead at this point. Mark Shuman, a redshirt freshman, is a prospect to keep an eye on down the road.

"Andrew was exceptional this spring," Newsome said. "He really worked at it. And Nick has all the tools. Those guys are going to continue to compete. I like what they're all about." 

OFFENSIVE LINE SPRING DEPTH CHART

RIGHT TACKLES

- 62 Blake DeChristopher (6-5, 312, r-Sr.)
- 71 Winston Painter (6-6, 296, r-Jr.)

RIGHT GUARDS

- 68 Jaymes Brooks (6-2, 307, r-Sr.)
- 64 Matt Arkema (6-3, 290, r-Fr.)
- 60 Laurence Gibson (6-4, 299, r-Fr.)

CENTERS

- 74 Andrew Miller (6-4, 290, r-Soph.)
- 67 Michael Via (6-7, 285, r-Jr.)
- 79 Caleb Farris (6-3, 306, Fr.)
- 63 Bo Gentry (5-9, 254, r-Jr.)

LEFT GUARDS

- 75 Greg Nosal (6-6, 281, r-Sr.)
– missed spring with an injury
- 76 David Wang (6-1, 301, r-Soph.)
- 59 Courtney Prince (6-2, 286, r-Jr.)
- 77 Dale Davis (6-2, 292, r-Fr.)

LEFT TACKLES

- 72 Andrew Lanier (6-5, 282, r-Sr.)
- 54 Nick Becton (6-6, 313, r-Jr.)
- 69 Mark Shuman (6-7, 301, r-Fr.)



David Wang



TECH RECEIVING GROUP LOADED WITH SIZE, TALENT AND EXPERIENCE

The strength of Tech's 2011 team may be the receivers, a group that features three seniors and two juniors – and all of them possess the ability to change a game and showed it this spring.

Jarrett Boykin came out of spring in the top spot at the split end position, with D.J. Coles right behind him. Both possess the height and speed a coach wants at the position, and both played well this spring.

"Jarrett had a great spring," receivers coach Kevin Sherman said. "He's faster, and he was physical in the run game. He's worked hard to take his game where he wants it to go, and I think he can be even better.


"D.J. had a good spring. He got a lot of reps, which he needs because he's missed time in the past with injuries. He was productive, and he showed some things. He needs to be a little more consistent, but I like what he's about."

On the other side, Danny Coale and Marcus Davis lead the way. Coale always plays consistently and productively, and this spring was no different. Davis turned out to be the offensive standout of the spring, catching 23 passes for 297 yards and four touchdowns combined in the Hokies' scrimmages and the Maroon-White game. He caught two touchdown passes in the Maroon-White game.

"Danny had a good spring and was productive," Sherman said. "Marcus had a good spring, too. His confidence level is sky high. Part of it goes back to how he played the second half of last season when he played well. He always had the ability do those types of things, but now, he knows he can do them.

"Now, he needs to do them on a consistent basis. I want him to work on the little things. If he attacks the little things, then that will help the big things come."

Dyrell Roberts did not participate in practice this spring as he attempts to recover from compartment syndrome in his thigh that he suffered late last fall. But he should be ready in time for fall practice.

"Overall, I like this group," Sherman said. "They've worked hard this spring on getting the timing down with Logan [Thomas], and we still need to work on that and work on deep balls. Can we be better? Yes. But I like where we are and where we're headed." 

WIDE RECEIVERS SPRING DEPTH CHART

SPLIT ENDS

- 81 Jarrett Boykin (6-2, 219, Sr.)
- 18 D.J. Coles (6-3, 225, Jr.)
- 85 E.L. Smiling (6-3, 194, r-Fr.)
- 83 Corey Fuller (6-2, 188, r-Fr.)

FLANKERS

- 19 Danny Coale (6-0, 196, r-Sr.)
- 7 Marcus Davis (6-4, 231, r-Jr.)
- 11 Dyrell Roberts (6-2, 185, Sr.)
– missed most of spring practice
- 82 Willie Byrn (5-10, 176, r-Fr.)





DRAGER TOPS AMONG TIGHT ENDS AFTER MOVING OVER FROM DEFENSIVE END


Offensive coordinator Bryan Stinespring, who doubles as the tight ends coach, expressed worry heading into spring practice about his tight ends. He wanted to avoid a platoon situation heading into the season, where one player plays when a passing play gets called and another when a running play is called.

"I still am concerned," he said. "But I do think now we have two guys who can be every down guys in Chris [Drager] and Eric [Martin]. They'll benefit from having those receivers around them. If you're not aware of them [tight ends], they'll find some space and catch the ball. You've got to be aware of them. They can hurt you, and I think we've shown, as a group, that we can be effective in the running game and the passing game."

Drager came out of spring at the top of the depth chart despite spending the past two seasons at defensive end. He showed a little rust, but it didn't take him long to revert back to the form that made him a top tight end coming out of the 2009 spring practice.

"Playing defense has helped him," Stinespring said. "He knows both sides of the ball, and he uses that to his advantage. He's tough and physical and smart. He understands the game."

Martin showed better quickness and speed than last fall when he dealt with a knee problem. Stinespring called him "one of the more reassuring aspects of spring."

Randall Dunn figures more into an H-back role, while George George should see time on special teams. Jerome Lewis and Fuller Hoepner, a walk-on, are two guys who need to improve, but could figure in down the road. 



TIGHT ENDS SPRING DEPTH CHART

- 33 Chris Drager (6-3, 256, r-Sr.)
- 86 Eric Martin (6-2, 261, r-Soph.)
- 13 Randall Dunn (6-2, 243, r-Jr.)
- 88 George George (6-4, 261, r-Jr.)
- 80 Jerome Lewis (6-3, 240, r-Fr.)
- 87 Fuller Hoepner (6-2, 227, r-Fr.)

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FIRST-TEAM DEFENSIVE LINE TREMENDOUS THIS SPRING, BUT DEPTH IS A CONCERN

Following spring practice, defensive line coach Charley Wiles liked what he saw from his group, but summed up things as a whole with this statement:

“We’ve got depth issues,” he said.

The starting unit of ends James Gayle and J.R. Collins and tackles Antoine and Derrick Hopkins played fantastic football throughout the spring. Gayle, who finished with six sacks combined (scrimmages and the Maroon-White game), was named the defensive MVP of the spring.

“He had a very good spring,” Wiles said. “He’s gotten a lot of attention, and he deserves it. But at the same time, he’s got to do it this fall. That’s what I want him to remember.”

Collins got off to a bit of a slow start, but played great in the final scrimmage and in the Maroon-White game, when he had two sacks. He got a few reps at defensive tackle, and the staff’s plans for having him do that are ongoing.

“It was just hard to get him a lot of work there,” Wiles said. “We were working on a lot of different stuff, and he needed to work on things at end. I do think he gives you something there, but he’s going to have to know everything at

that position to play there. We can’t limit our defense.”

The Hopkins brothers played well. In particular, Derrick stood out after playing last season as a true freshman. He recorded three sacks and five tackles for a loss combined (scrimmages and the Maroon-White game) and was named the defense’s top newcomer of the spring.

“He was phenomenal,” Wiles said of Derrick Hopkins. “He was active and was a playmaker. I think he made Antoine better, too. Antoine’s got a lot of ability. He needs to work on his practice habits, but when the lights went on, Antoine was very good, too.”

There is a bit of the unknown behind those first four, though. At tackle, Kwamaine Battle, coming off a torn ACL, figures to be the third tackle.

“I admire what he’s done to get


back,” Wiles said. “It shows character and toughness. Now, he needs to get in shape, and he will.”

Dwight Tucker, Isaiah Hamlette and Nick Acree round out the group at tackle. But Wiles wants to see what incoming recruit Kris Harley can do.

“He’s going to get some reps,” Wiles admitted.

At end, Duan Perez-Means and Tyrel Wilson are the backups behind Gayle and Collins right now. Quillie Odom, Zack McCray and Justin Taylor round out the group.

“Perez-Means was good,” Wiles said. “He needs to improve and get stronger, but he showed he can make plays.”

“Tyrel needs to gain 10 pounds and play a little bigger. He plays bigger than his size, but he tends to get engulfed in there sometimes.” 

DEFENSIVE LINE SPRING DEPTH CHART

STUDS

- 99 James Gayle (6-4, 251, r-Soph.)
- 90 Duan Perez-Means (6-4, 252, r-Fr.)
- 38 Quillie Odom (6-1, 242, r-Jr.)

ENDS

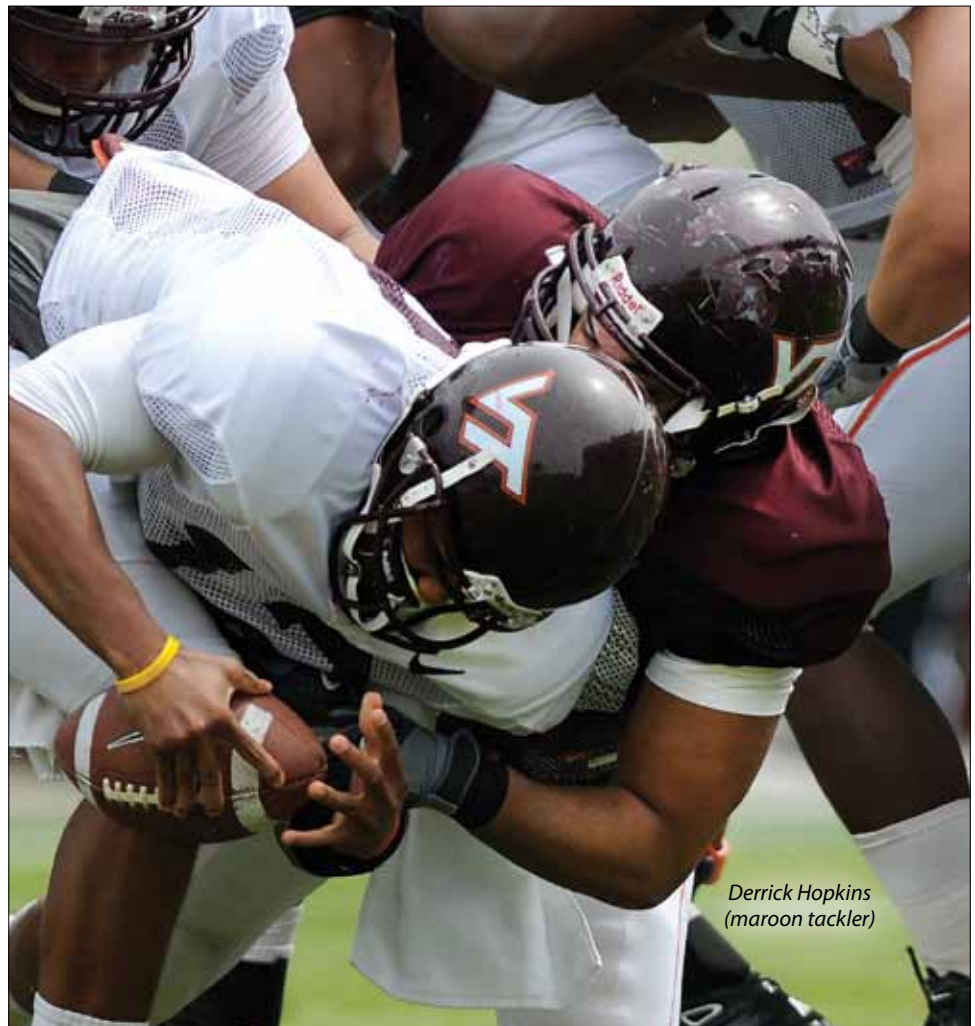
- 42 J.R. Collins (6-2, 253, r-Soph.)
- 66 Tyrel Wilson (6-1, 214, r-Soph.)
- 95 Zack McCray (6-5, 248, r-Fr.)
- 87 Justin Taylor (6-2, 220, Fr.)

NOSE TACKLES

- 98 Derrick Hopkins (6-0, 298, Soph.)
- 93 Kwamaine Battle (6-0, 301, r-Sr.)
- 53 Dwight Tucker (6-1, 273, r-Jr.)

TACKLES

- 56 Antoine Hopkins (6-0, 299, r-Jr.)
- 55 Isaiah Hamlette (6-4, 274, r-Jr.)
- 92 Nick Acree (6-5, 276, r-Fr.)



Derrick Hopkins
(maroon tackler)



EDWARDS SHINES AS MOST IMPROVED PLAYER ON DEFENSE THIS SPRING

Tech defensive coordinator Bud Foster doubles as the linebackers coach, and he really liked what he saw out of his two linebacker spots during spring practice.

For starters, Tariq Edwards started living up to his immense potential. Then, Telvion Clark showed some maturity and talent. And finally, Barquell Rivers looks to be getting closer to the linebacker he was two years ago.

At mike linebacker, Foster listed Bruce Taylor ahead of Rivers even though Taylor missed most of spring practice after injuring his shoulder early on. Foster expects him back by the time practice starts in August. Also, mike linebacker Jack Tyler missed the entire spring with a back injury. His status is a little murkier.

The injuries, though, allowed Rivers and Chase Williams to get a lot of reps, which helped both of them.

"I've seen flashes of what he was two years ago," Foster said of Rivers. "He's not in good shape, and that will be the big thing for him this summer. But he's heady and tough and physical, and I trust him more than anyone I've ever trusted. He's getting close."

"As for Chase, he is going to be a guy who can play both spots for us. I think that will help him, and it will help us. I like what he did this spring."


Edwards, though, was the star of the linebackers this spring. Stronger and more experienced, he made plays in space and had a couple of interceptions. He earned

the defense's most improved player during spring practice.

"We really needed him to step up," Foster said. "That's a playmaking spot, and we ask that position to do a multitude of things. Tariq always did some things in games, but he had to show me in practice, and he didn't, so I was always a little apprehensive to play him."

"But he's made a commitment. He's got all kinds of abilities – he's long and he's quick and he can run. If he can be consistent, with that ability and explosiveness, then that's exciting."

Clark got better as the spring went along, and toward the end, he played like someone who wanted to be a starter. In the final three outings, including the Maroon-White game, he recorded 22 tackles, including three for a loss.

"Just maturity," Foster said of Clark's progress. "He took to coaching and applied it, but mostly, he has matured. He's always had the ability, but he focused on learning and being coachable. I'm proud of him. Now, he's got to be consistent from here on out, but he's got a lot of potential and tools." 



Tariq Edwards

LINEBACKERS SPRING DEPTH CHART

BACKERS

- 24 Tariq Edwards (6-2, 229, r-Soph.)
- 57 Telvion Clark (6-1, 214, r-Soph.)
- 36 Chase Williams (6-1, 223, r-Fr.)
- Jonathan Halfhide (5-10, 209, r-Fr.)

MIKE LINEBACKERS

- 51 Bruce Taylor (6-2, 252, r-Jr.)
– missed most of spring with injury
- 52 Barquell Rivers (6-0, 241, r-Sr.)
- 58 Jack Tyler (5-11, 220, r-Soph.)
– missed the entire spring with injury
- 36 Chase Williams (6-1, 223, r-Fr.)
- 47 Brian Laiti (6-3, 205, r-Fr.)



STARTERS SOLID, BUT DEPTH A CONCERN AT SPOTS IN THE SECONDARY

Tech defensive backs coach Torrian Gray came out of spring practice feeling pretty good about his cornerbacks and concerned about a lack of depth at both safety and rover.

His projected starting corners are two good ones in Jayron Hosley, who led the nation in interceptions last fall, and Kyle Fuller, who played well as a true freshman. Hosley missed the last week of spring with symptoms of a concussion, but other than that, he played well, refusing to rest on the work he put in last year.

“He didn’t rest on his laurels,” Gray said. “He was conscious of his technique and fundamentals, and he was focused. Sometimes, guys will zone out after a great season like he had, but he was consistent.”

“Kyle was consistent, too, for the most part. He was focused. He lost a little of that the last couple of practices, so he’s got to learn to sustain it, but overall, he had a good spring.”

Cris Hill and Detrick Bonner head out of the spring as the back-ups at the corner spots. Hill had another good spring, but Gray wants to see it carry over to the fall. Bonner, a redshirt freshman, was one of the surprises of the spring on defense.

“He surprised me,” Gray said. “I wasn’t sure if he could run with wideouts and make plays. But he did a good job. He’s smart, and he picked up things quickly. I’m pleased with his progress.”

On the back end of Tech’s defense,


Eddie Whitley mans the safety spot, while Antone Exum takes over at rover. Both are excellent players, with certain things to work on over the summer. Gray wants to see Whitley make a few more plays, and he wants to see Exum familiarize himself with Tech’s schemes even more.

“Eddie had a good spring alignment-wise, just getting us lined up,” Gray said. “But I want to see him make more plays. He needs to do that to take that next step, and that’s what I expect from a guy with his football IQ.”

“Antone has come a long way mentally. He’s not all the way there, though. He’s not as precise and exact as I want him to

be. But he’ll get there. He and Eddie give us a solid tandem.”

The Hokies, though, lack experience behind them. Theron Norman, a redshirt freshman, backs up Whitley, but missed a portion of spring with an injury. Adeboye Aromire – a true freshman who enrolled in January – is the backup at rover.

“We’ll see how these guys do over the summer and in August,” Gray said. “They have time to get better and learn, and I’m confident they will. We also have some freshmen coming in who might be able to help us. The good thing is we have some time. We’ll see how everything works out.” 



Detrick Bonner

DEFENSIVE BACKS SPRING DEPTH CHART

FREE SAFETIES

- 15 Eddie Whitley (6-1, 187, Sr.)
- 21 Theron Norman (6-3, 209, r-Fr.)

BOUNDARY CORNERS

- 20 Jayron Hosley (5-10, 170, Jr.)
- 9 Cris Hill (5-11, 176, r-Sr.)

FIELD CORNERBACKS

- 17 Kyle Fuller (6-0, 185, Soph.)
- 8 Detrick Bonner (6-0, 183, r-Fr.)

ROVERS

- 1 Antone Exum (5-11, 217, r-Soph.)
- 30 Adeboye Aromire (5-11, 195, Fr.)



GOUVEIA-WINSLOW HEADS UP THE WHIPS AFTER SPRING BALL

Perhaps no position received more scrutiny this spring than the whip linebacker position, and Tech coaches felt comfortable with what they saw from returners Jeron Gouveia-Winslow and Alonzo Tweedy this spring. Gouveia-Winslow, who struggled at times last season in his first as a starter, played fast and looked much more comfortable at the position. He came out of spring in the top spot at whip.

"He's been productive," new whips coach Cornell Brown said. "He's got football savvy. He understands the defense, and he made the plays that we expect him to make.

"Alonzo's very similar. He's got knowledge of the defense, and he's comfortable out there. He's letting his athletic ability come through, and he's making plays. You can play either one of those guys and do whatever you want to do defensively."

Nick Dew and Dominique Patterson are two young guys who got a lot of work this spring. Dew came out of spring practice a little ahead on the depth chart because he made fewer mistakes.


"Nick's very similar to Tweedy," Brown said. "He flashes a lot of speed. He's just got to get comfortable with the defense.

"Dominique's got the body type you want. He can run, but I think he was holding himself back. He was learning the

defense, and I think his mind was tying up his feet. As he gets more comfortable, he'll attack more. I like both those guys. I think you'll see a lot of both of them on special teams."

As for Brown, he used the spring not only to coach, but also to get comfortable re-learning Tech's defensive schemes. He served as a graduate assistant several years ago, but defensive coordinator Bud Foster has tweaked some things since then.

"He's changed some things coverage wise since I was here," Brown said. "I think Torrian [Gray, Tech's defensive backs coach] found some things he liked, so I had to learn, too. But they helped me. Bud has that linebackers knowledge, and Torrian helped me with coverages. I give them a lot of credit for helping me not only understand the defense, but also how to coach it.

"Now, I'm ready to go. I like my guys and their potential, and I'm excited to see what they can do." 

WHIP LINEBACKERS SPRING DEPTH CHART

- 43 Jeron Gouveia-Winslow (6-2, 195, r-Jr.)
- 28 Alonzo Tweedy (6-2, 185, r-Jr.)
- 27 Nick Dew (6-2, 194, r-Fr.)
- 14 Dominique Patterson (6-2, 223, r-Fr.)



Alonzo Tweedy

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JOURNELL LEADING IN THE BATTLE TO BE THE FG KICKER

Tech head coach Frank Beamer spent most of his spring analyzing the kickers and punters in hopes of continuing the Hokies' recent trend of excellent kicking. Coming out of spring practice, Cody Journell held the lead in the battle for the kicking job, while the punting job remained wide open.

Journell booted a 26-yarder in the Maroon-White game, and he made most of his attempts this spring. But he never made anything beyond 33 yards in the scrimmages. Still, none of the other contenders challenged his consistency.

"I think Cody Journell is going to be our field-goal guy," Beamer said. "We'll continue the competition [in the fall]. I think he's a good, steady kicker. He's been coached well. Our kicker the last three or four [seasons] has been a senior that's been around, had a lot of kicks, and now I think Cody's kind of fitting into that [as a redshirt sophomore], that experience thing, that confidence thing."

Justin Myer will continue his duties as the kickoff specialist. He blasted two of his four



Cody Journell

kickoffs into the end zone for touchbacks in the Maroon-White game.

Still, Beamer wants Myer to remain in contention for the field-goal job because of that strong leg.

"I don't want to give up on him because you saw him boom those kickoffs," Beamer said. "He's got such a strong leg, and he gets the ball up so high. If he could just ever find his consistency, he'd be a great kicker."

The punting job remains up in the air.

SPECIAL TEAMS SPRING DEPTH CHART

KICKERS

89 Cody Journell (5-11, 167, r-Soph.)

48 Justin Myer (6-1, 212, Sr.)

Tyler Weiss (5-10, 169, r-Sr.)


PUNTERS

19 Danny Coale (6-0, 196, r-Sr.)

Ethan Keyserling (6-2, 203, r-Fr.)

Scott Demler (5-11, 194, r-Jr.)

Receiver Danny Coale may be the favorite. He averaged a game-best 44 yards per punt on three punts. 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. "He needs to get down to a two-step kicker. He's a little bit of a slow three-stepper right now, but he's athletic, and I think he can do it." 

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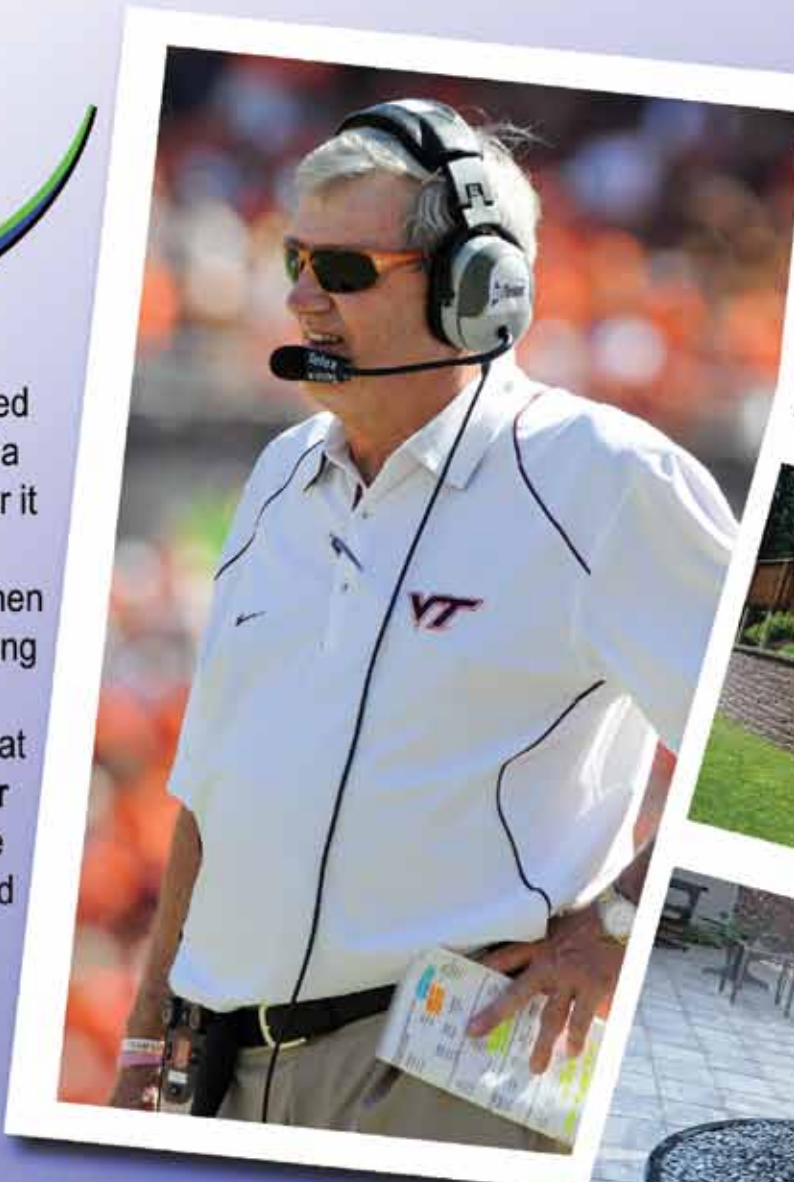


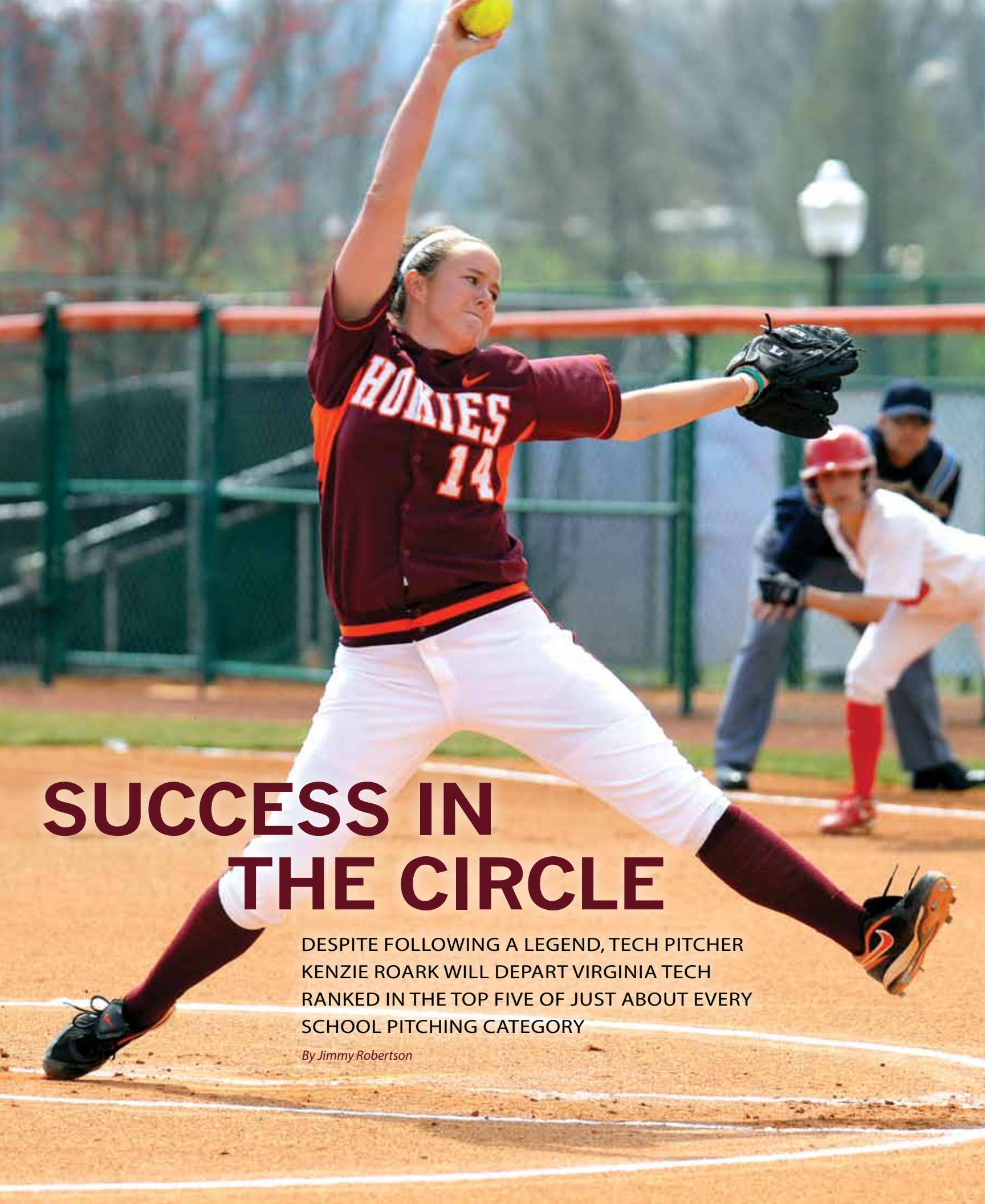
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SUCCESS IN THE CIRCLE

DESPITE FOLLOWING A LEGEND, TECH PITCHER
KENZIE ROARK WILL DEPART VIRGINIA TECH
RANKED IN THE TOP FIVE OF JUST ABOUT EVERY
SCHOOL PITCHING CATEGORY

By Jimmy Robertson

In 2007, an 18-year-old girl from a small town east of Nashville arrived on Virginia Tech's sprawling campus, invited to the party that ended up being the 2008 softball season.

It was a five-month stretch that was as exhilarating as it gets. There was the stunning, world-captivating victory over the USA national team in an exhibition, snapping the Americans' 185-game pre-Olympic domination of opponents. There was the ACC championship, a second straight coronation in a league that had been ruled by the queens from places such as Georgia Tech and Florida State.

And there were thrilling victories over Tennessee (in the NCAA Regional) and Michigan (in the NCAA Super Regional). Before last call at this bash, this young college student and her Tech teammates found themselves in uncharted territory, making the school's first trip to the Women's College World Series.

She made small contributions when asked, but mostly she learned from Angela Tincher, the program's greatest player of all time and the belle of this particular ball. It made for quite a fun time – and the memories of the festivities remain tattooed in her brain.

"It was fun, winning an ACC championship and going to a College World Series and winning at UT [Tennessee]," Tech pitcher Kenzie Roark said. "My first year was so fun.

"It was a learning experience for sure. Every person is the standout from where they're from, and once you're a freshman, you have to blend in. In my case, Angela Tincher was here, and she was just phenomenal. It was a learning experience."

Now, four years later, Roark finds herself in a similar position. She is a couple of months shy of 22 years old. She's a senior and a captain. She, along with teammate and reserve Alicia Field, are the last threads from that wonderful season.

Roark, a native of Mount Juliet, Tenn., has made the most of her final campaign. She is 16-9, with a 3.13 ERA and 132 strikeouts in 176.2 innings heading into the ACC Championships held in Atlanta in mid-May. The Hokies, featuring a lineup comprised of a lot of freshmen and sophomores playing major roles, led all but one league team in total victories, yet inconsistency in league play has them in the middle of the pack in the race for the conference crown.

This season has been the latest installment of an up-and-down career for Roark, who came to Tech after Hokies' head coach Scot Thomas found her at an ASA

(Amateur Softball Association of America) tournament in Seattle. She knew nothing of Virginia Tech at the time, but used the Internet to educate herself on the institution and the Hokies' softball program.

"My initial thought was that he [Thomas] was really nice, and I wanted to look up the school," Roark said. "My dad was like, 'They've got a pretty good football team.'

"But when I looked up stuff on the softball team, I was like, 'Mom, Dad, this team is *good*. This would be a good spot.'"

Perhaps unfairly, many expected her to replace Tincher and her school-record 123 career wins. Tincher, the 2008 national player of the year by USA Softball, owns just about every record in the Tech record

book, and in a fitting tribute to her, the Tech athletics department retired her No. 1 jersey less than four months after her departure.

Trying to shrug off the pressure of replacing a legend, Roark responded in the first year post-Tincher with a respectable 22-18 record and a 2.73 ERA as a sophomore, but no one could live up to Tincher's legacy.

"You don't find pitchers like Tinch," Roark said. "She's a one-of-a-kind pitcher. You'd be fighting with yourself night and day if you try to be like her.

"I push myself to be as good as I can be. That's what any pitcher does. But I don't expect to throw 72 miles per hour, like she does. That's not me. Physically, I'm never

“ My initial thought was that he [Thomas] was really nice, and I wanted to look up the school. My dad was like, 'They've got a pretty good football team.' But when I looked up stuff on the softball team, I was like, 'Mom, Dad, this team is *good*. This would be a good spot.' ” – Kenzie Roark



going to throw 72 miles per hour, but I'm going to push myself to the best of my ability."

Roark and the Hokies went into last season, her junior year, expecting big things. The year marked the 15th of the program, with festivities planned to honor that anniversary. Not to mention, Blacksburg was serving as the host for the ACC Championships. On the field, the Hokies also got back the services of Misty Hall, a gifted slugger who sat out the 2009 season because of university-sanctioned suspension. Things looked rosy.

But the bloom died quickly. Hall got hurt and missed time, and so, too, did four other starters. The Hokies finished with a 25-33 record, bowing out of the ACC Championships with a season-ending 5-3 loss to Florida State.

"It's been a rollercoaster," Roark said of her career. "It started off pretty good, and then my sophomore year, it got kind of tough when we lost our catcher [Hall], and our middle infield was weak.

"Last year, we were plagued with the injury bug. It was crazy. Once everyone got healthy toward the end of the year, we saw what type of team we could be. We took two from Florida State [in the regular season] and beat UVa in the ACC tournament [a game she won, pitching a shutout]. We had huge things happen when we were healthy. It was just disappointing last year because we all feel if we had had that team on the field the whole year, it would have been a different story."

Her senior year has been more of what she wanted and expected. She got the Hokies out of the gate quickly, winning eight of her first nine decisions, and she kept the Hokies in the ACC race with



Kenzie Roark has been a leader for the Hokies in the circle this season, and she plans to get into coaching once her playing days are over.

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some terrific performances, including a couple against league contender Florida State.

In the first game of that series in Tallahassee, she went 10 innings and gave up one run – unearned – as Tech rallied to a 2-1 win. In the second game, she came on in relief of Jasmin Harrell and gave up just one earned run in 3.2 innings, getting the win when the Hokies scratched a run across in the eighth for the 4-3 victory.

These are the types of games that Tincher won with regularity. Roark keeps finding herself with the same opportunities, and with the exception of the occasional blip, continues to produce.

“Her work ethic, for sure,” Roark said of what she learned most from Tincher. “The one thing about pitching is that you have to go the extra mile because every other pitcher is going the extra mile and doing that extra stuff to get better. As you get older, these coaches have seen you, and they’re coaching their team how to hit you, so you have to outsmart the hitters every year.”

She may not be on the same level as Tincher, but she quietly rates as one of the best ever to pitch at Tech. She ranks in the top five statistically at Tech in appear-

ances, games started, complete games, ERA, wins, shutouts, saves and strikeouts.

She admits her most memorable moment came during that freshman season when she pitched against her home state Tennessee Volunteers. Proving her mortality, Tincher struggled in the second game of that series, and Tech trailed the Volunteers in the second inning (and ultimately lost the game). Thomas pulled Tincher and inserted Roark to face All-American Tonya Callahan, who still ranks as Tennessee’s all-time home run leader.

“I told Tiff [then pitching coach Tiffany McVay] before the game that I wanted to win this game so bad, and that I wanted to go in,” Roark said. “I hoped something would happen so that I would get to go in because I wanted to pitch against UT.”

“I ended up getting put in during the second inning and pitched the remainder of the game. I came in and there were runners on base, and the first person I had to pitch to was Tonya Callahan. I was like, ‘Great.’ But I got her to ground out.”

“That was a lot of fun. It was my home state, and it was the postseason. It was a lot of fun.”


Her softball fun may not be ending any time soon, though her playing career ends

with the conclusion of this season. Roark plans on spending next year finishing up work toward her degree in interdisciplinary studies while working as a volunteer coach with the Tech softball team. She’s already giving lessons to young kids in her spare time and wants to get into coaching once she gets her degree.

“I’ve been giving lessons for a while, and I love that,” she said. “The age [of the kids receiving lessons] ranges from probably 9 to 14 or 15. A couple of them are kids from back home [in Mount Juliet], and then a couple came to me when Tiff left. She had been giving a few lessons, and when she left, she told them to call me. The rest of them have been from other lessons where people have talked to some of my other kids.”

“Ultimately, though, I want to coach at the Division I level. I like the idea of fine tuning people and molding them.”

She’ll probably make a great coach. She’s been playing since the age of 6, and she learned a lot her freshman season from one of the nation’s best.

Playing softball has been fun, and she finds teaching it fun as well. So maybe the party isn’t going to be over for Kenzie Roark. Maybe it’s only beginning. 

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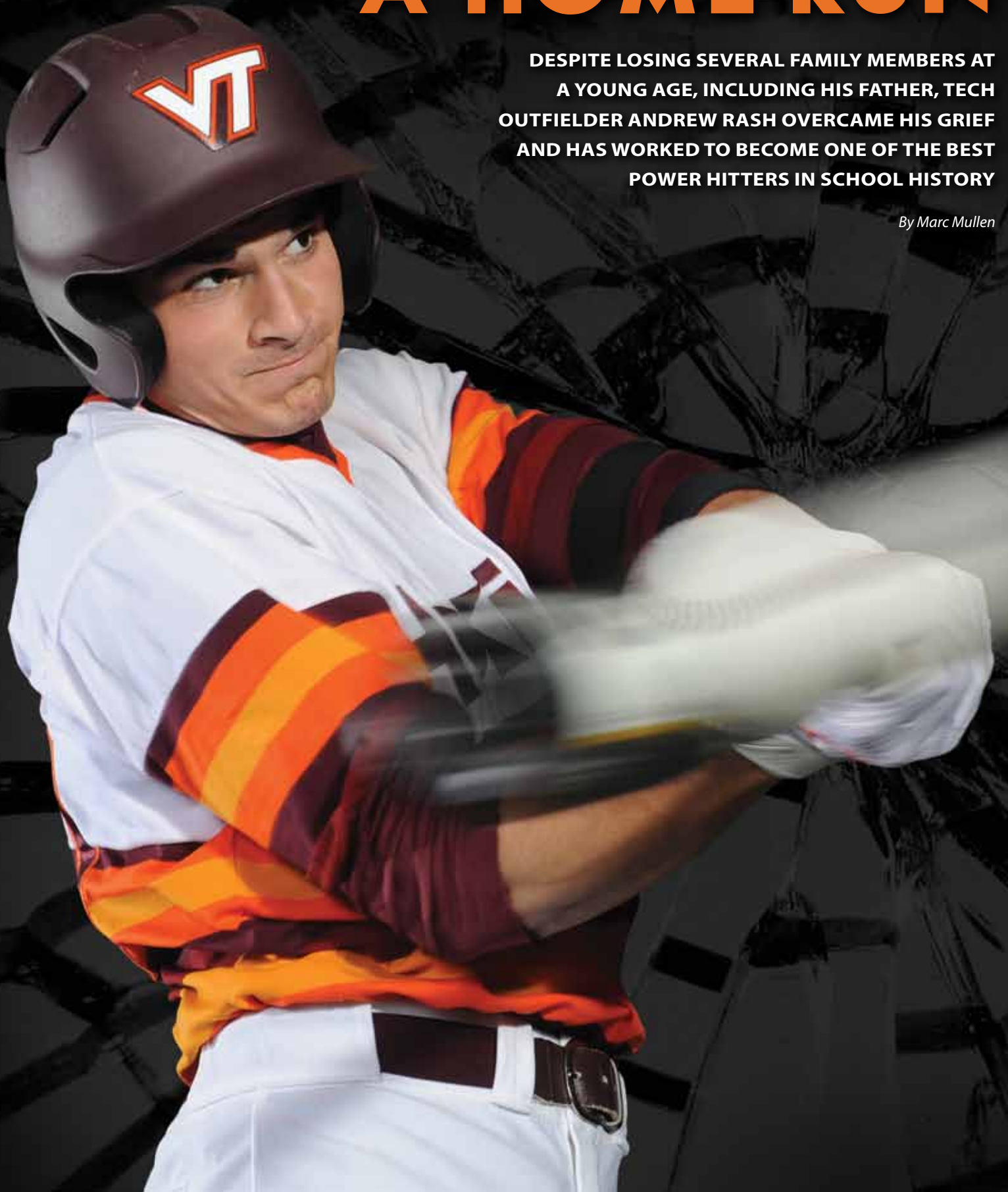


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RASH'S CAREER A HOME RUN

DESPITE LOSING SEVERAL FAMILY MEMBERS AT A YOUNG AGE, INCLUDING HIS FATHER, TECH OUTFIELDER ANDREW RASH OVERCAME HIS GRIEF AND HAS WORKED TO BECOME ONE OF THE BEST POWER HITTERS IN SCHOOL HISTORY

By Marc Mullen



Everyone is aware of the numbers. But just to refresh your memory, as of May 1, Andrew Rash was leading the Atlantic Coast Conference with 16 home runs, 120 total bases and a .759 slugging percentage. At the time, those numbers put him in the top 10, respectively, in the nation in those categories.

Numbers like that – in the face of the new bats being used this season – have not been seen in Blacksburg since Kevin Barker was patrolling center field. Back in 1996, Barker was proving he was the man for the Hokies, hitting 20 home runs, collecting 160 total bases and producing a .792 slugging percentage. He was the last Tech player to hit at least 15 home runs in a single season and finish a season slugging over .700.

Coincidentally, during that same time, a 5-year-old boy living in Anderson, S.C., was quickly becoming a man himself. On May 21, 1996, Alan Rash lost a six-month battle to prostate cancer and left behind a wife, two daughters and a son, Andrew. If losing a father at such a young age weren't hard enough, Andrew would see both of his grandfathers pass away within a year.

"When I was 5, my dad was diagnosed with prostate cancer. He had to go to

Houston, Texas, for treatments, and he was there for approximately four or five months," Andrew recalled. "My mom was down there and never left his side, except for Christmas. So my older sisters and I lived with my grandmother, who lived just two blocks from our house, from October through February.

"Through that whole time, it was tough, and I was so young. I really didn't know what was going on, but through all of that, it made me a lot tougher. I grew up a lot faster than I probably would have if I still had my dad here because at that time I was like, 'I really got to take care of my family. I got to look out for my sisters. I got to look out for my mom.'

"It's still hard today. I'm sure it will be hard later on with what else I want to accomplish in life. I really would love to have my dad here, but I'm not sure if I would be here playing college baseball if he were here. I know that sounds weird, but it [the situation] made me a harder worker and made me not take things for granted because of what all took place then."

Rash's family is very important to him and that is one reason why he chose to come to Virginia Tech out of a number of schools actively recruiting him out of high school.

Anybody who has attended a Tech baseball game over the past five years since head coach Pete Hughes has taken over in the dugout can understand why Rash made the decision. During any home contest, or away game for that matter, those in attendance will see two, sometimes three, shorter Hokies wearing the same Tech gear as the players in the mix during pregame batting or infield practice – the coach's sons, who are openly welcomed on the team.

"I saw how Coach Hughes was around his own family, and how he was a great father figure for his boys and how he puts family first," Rash said on his decision to come to Tech. "And with what I had gone through in my life, I wanted that. I wanted someone that put family first. You only have one family, and at any moment in time, they can be taken away from you.

"I knew if I ever needed anything, if I ever needed to go home because of family things, he would be understanding because he and I were on the same page with where family is in our lives. Coach [Mike] Gambino [now the head coach at BC] is the same way, and he stuck with me through thick and thin and never gave up on me. I really have to give a lot of credit to both of them because they gave me a chance to



Andrew Rash leads the ACC in home runs and was the ACC player of the week for the week ending April 24 when he hit three homers and drove in six, including a two-homer game against Maryland.

play in the ACC and not a lot of people did.”

Not getting the chance to play in one of the top baseball conferences is one thing. But being held back from playing for a travel team when he was 10 is another.

Rash, who admittedly didn't like playing baseball at first – “I played in the outfield and didn't really pay attention. I also played catcher some, and I always just played in the dirt, and my mom would get very mad at me” – was more interested in a future in basketball.

“I played basketball up until I was 12,” he said. “I thought I was going to have a chance to play basketball because I loved playing it, and that was my dad's sport. My dad loved basketball, and that's probably the one sport that I worked the hardest on. I just loved it. He loved it. We always watched it together.”

A man named Buck Hall changed all of that. He was the coach of a travel team in Anderson and called Rash's mother, Frances, a number of times trying to get the okay for Andrew to play on his team.

“My mom was like, ‘No, I just don't think so,’” Rash said. “Finally, I can still remember that day. My mom and I had come home from eating and there was a message on the answering machine from him, and he said ‘Hey, we are playing over in Greenville and I really want Andrew to come play with

us this weekend. It's a doubleheader on Saturday, and if he doesn't like it, I'll leave you alone and I'll never bother you again.’

“So, I begged my mom, and she finally let me go play with him, and I loved it. His son and I became good friends, and I loved the other guys on the team as well.

“I still give my mom a hard time about that. I tell her that if she never let me go play with him, I probably would never be playing college baseball. And she says, ‘I know.’ She didn't know what to do at the time because it was so close to my dad passing away, but it was good for me. I could get away, and it gave me a father figure in my life.”

According to Rash, Hall was the biggest influence when it came to learning the game of baseball.

“When I started playing with him, all I could do was play defense, and, at that time, I was a terrible hitter,” he said. “I worked really hard with him, and today, he is still my biggest critic. He knows how to get to me, but he motivates me a lot. Honestly, I got to say, if it wasn't for him, I wouldn't be here because he taught me so much and really helped me so much with the baseball aspect of things.”

So Hall helped mold a kid who used to throw a baseball against a huge wall on

the side of his house until it was totally dark with only a floodlight on into an ACC prospect. [Side note: Hall also helped his own son, Brooks, become a fourth-round selection (136th pick) of the Milwaukee Brewers in the 2009 MLB Draft.]

But when Rash arrived in Blacksburg, he found playing on the ACC team a bit overwhelming.

“I had a terrible fall here. It was quite miserable. Baseball-wise, it was just awful. I probably couldn't hit a beach ball that fall,” Rash said. “I feel like if you took someone off the street in New York – a tourist – and took him to the stock market and let them walk through there and see all those people running around – it's like that to a high school player coming into college and going out to a practice for his first time.

“It's new. There are a thousand things going on. The upperclassmen that have been here know what's going on. So they're running here, and you're like ‘Well, should I go run with them or should I go over here with this group?’ There is just so much going on.

“The game speeds up. Even in practice, it's so fast! You're doing this for 30 minutes and then you're going over here. Half the guys are up in the cages hitting. Other guys are down here doing defensive stuff. It's hard as a freshman to slow things down and just

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Thanks to countless hours in the batting cages with former Tech assistant Mike Gambino, Andrew Rash has become the best power hitter in the ACC.

relax because you want to do so well coming in and you want to have a great freshman year. Actually, I made it even faster because I was so nervous."

Now, it was time for Rash, who carries a cross that his father held in his hand through his cancer treatment with him in his wallet, to lean on another father figure when he struggled in his first year at Tech. That man turned out to be Gambino. Rash spent a lot of time with him in the cages that first year trying to simplify his swing, eliminate the holes and bring out the best of his tools.


"During my freshman year, I sat down with Coach Gambino and talked to him [about my struggles]," Rash said. "He's like 'You've been through so much more. Your dad passed away when you were 5.' Once I thought about it, this is nothing. And that is what I go to now when I struggle. I tell myself, 'It's nothing, I've been through worse and I can get through this.' And it's really helped me, and I think it is really going to help me get to where I want to get to in life."

And wherever he ends up, he will always be as close as he can to his family. He is still very close to his sisters, Alanda (29) and Alexa (25), and owes so much to them as well.

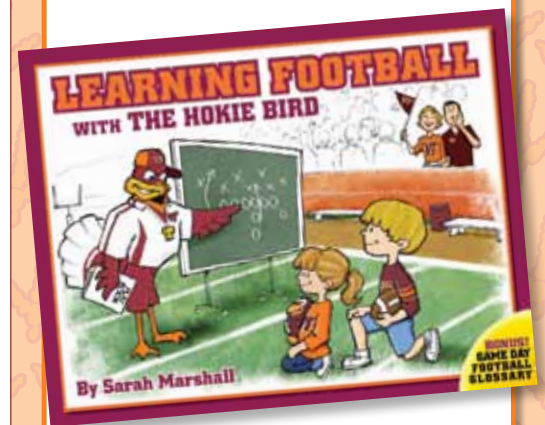
"I've got two great sisters who have had a great deal to do with where I am today," he said. "They both took me to practice because my mom worked. I have to give them some of the credit, too, because they helped me by going to practice and by picking me up to get me to where I am today."

Now, as much as he can be, he is there for them. He stepped in and walked each down the aisle on their wedding days, and he serves as probably the greatest uncle to his three nieces – ranging in ages from 4 to 1.

After his monster season, Barker was named a second-team All-American by *Baseball America*. He was also a third-round selection in the Major League Baseball Draft, taken with the 73rd overall pick by the Brewers. He played 14 seasons as a professional and spent five seasons in the major leagues with four different teams.

Rash, who will be draft eligible this upcoming summer, only says this in regards to his future, "I'm just kind of going with the flow. I want to take it one day at a time and see what happens. I try not to get caught up in it because it can all change tomorrow. I think back, and what has happened in my life, it kind of has helped me out to get me to where I am today." 

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ACC CHAMPIONSHIP

TRACK & FIELD

TECH MEN'S TRACK AND FIELD TEAM CLAIMS SECOND AT ACC MEET

The Virginia Tech men's track and field team claimed the ACC's indoor crown back in February, but couldn't turn the double, finishing second at the ACC's outdoor meet held in late April at Wallace Wade Stadium in Durham, N.C.

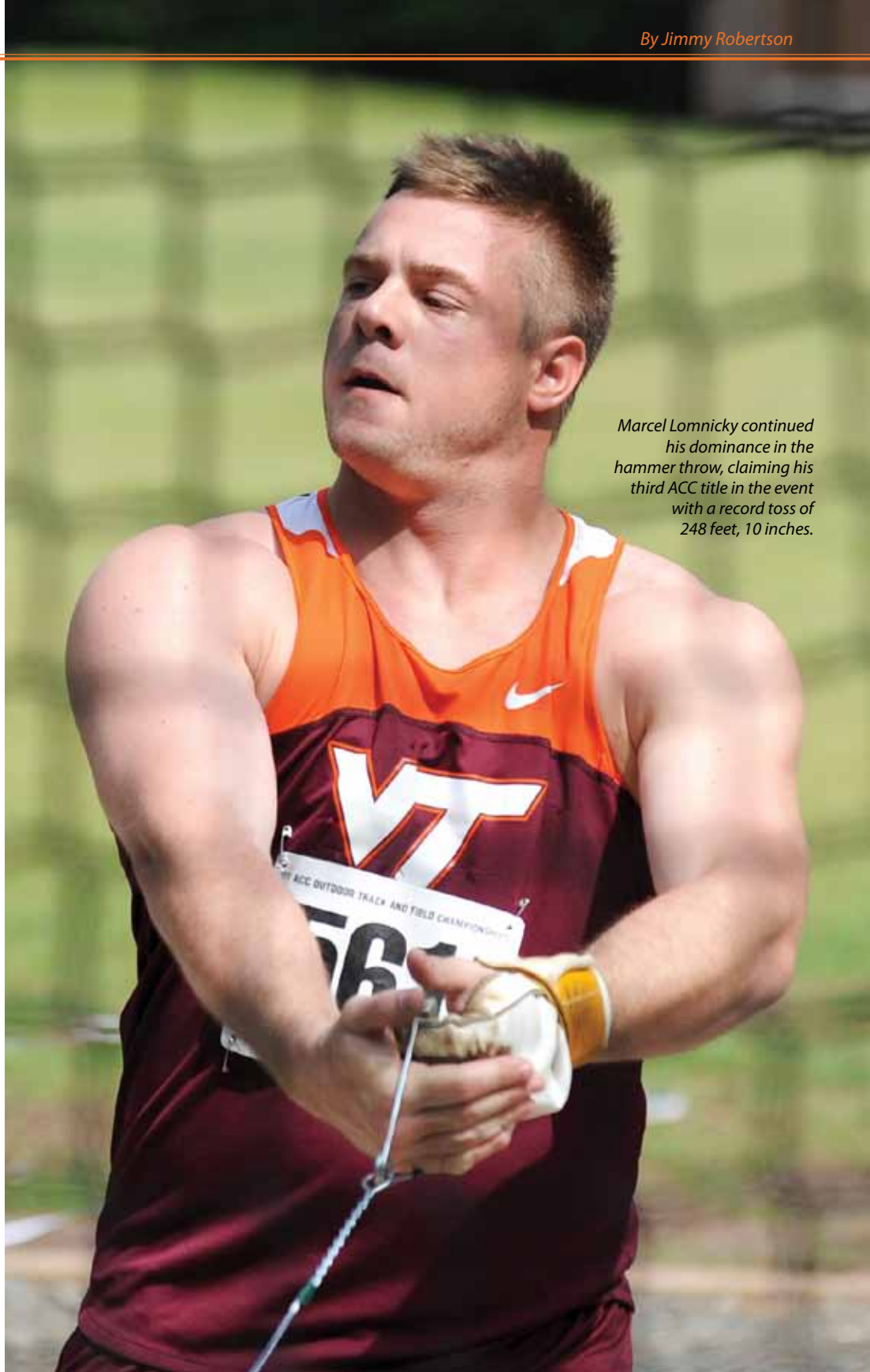
The Tech men finished with 153.5 points, while Florida State took the crown with 174.5. It marked the Seminoles' sixth consecutive men's outdoor title.

Still, the Tech men had some outstanding performances, including four ACC champions.

Marcel Lomnický turned in the most impressive performance for the Hokies, winning the hammer throw. He set a school record with a toss of 248 feet, 10 inches – a mark that ranks first in the nation. He broke his own school record and the ACC meet record of 235 feet, 6 inches.

Lomnický won the ACC title in the hammer throw for the third straight time. Teammates Alexander Ziegler and Denis Mahmic helped the Hokies sweep the event, finishing second and third, respectively.

The other three winners for the men were Hasheem Halim, Jared Jodon and Matthias Treff. Halim won the triple jump with a leap of 52 feet, 10 inches, helping Tech claim its first ACC triple jump title and the first triple jump crown since 2004 in the Big East. Jodon won the pole vault with a vault of 17 feet, 2.25 inches, and the title was the first of his career. Treff won his second career ACC title in the javelin, besting the field with a toss of 239 feet, 6 inches.



Marcel Lomnický continued his dominance in the hammer throw, claiming his third ACC title in the event with a record toss of 248 feet, 10 inches.

Several other members of the men's team finished second. In addition to Ziegler, David Wilson (triple jump), Joe Davis (pole vault) and Will Mulherin (5,000-meter run) claimed silver medals. Michael Hammond finished third in the 1,500, along with Jeff Artis-Gray, who finished third in the long jump. The 400-meter relay team of Wilson,

Keith Ricks, Darrell Wesh and Ebenezer Amegashie claimed bronze as well.

On the women's side, Tech finished in seventh place with 53.5 points. Clemson took home the gold with a program-best 202 points.

Two Tech women won individual championships at the meet. Samira Burkhardt


continued what has been a stellar freshman campaign, winning the shot put competition with a throw of 52 feet, 3.25 inches. She is only the second Hokie to win an indoor and outdoor ACC title as a freshman (Marcel Lomnický in 2009).

Dorotea Habazin won the other title for Tech. She won in record-breaking fashion, winning the women's hammer throw with an all-time ACC record toss of 224 feet, 3 inches on her first attempt – over 42 feet farther than the second-place finisher. She beat the previous record of 220 feet, 6 inches set by Clemson's Jamine Moton in 2002.

This is Habazin's third career hammer throw title and her fourth conference title overall. She also set a new school record, beating her own previous record of 218 feet, 11 inches.

The Tech women's other top performance came from the women's 400-meter relay team, which finished second in a stellar neck-and-neck race with conference leader Clemson. The squad of Ebony Scott, Funmi Alabi, Zakiya Tyson and Ogechi Nwaneri crossed the line with a season-best finish of 44.68 seconds, a time that ranks fourth all time at Tech.

Following the meet, the Virginia Tech men's team moved to seventh nationally in the USTFCCA (U.S. Track & Field and Cross Country Coaches Association) rankings, and Florida State moved to No. 3. Texas A&M and LSU are the top two teams in the nation, respectively.

Tech track and field athletes will now attempt to qualify for the NCAA Regionals held May 26-28 in Bloomington, Ind. The NCAA Outdoor Track and Field Championships will be held June 8-11 in Des Moines, Iowa. 



Dorotea Habazin won her third ACC hammer throw title, setting an ACC and a school record with a toss of 224 feet, 3 inches.



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WHERE
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HELPING THE HELPLESS

FORMER TECH SOFTBALL
PLAYER LAURA FLOWERS
LOVES HELPING ANIMALS AS
A VETERINARIAN

Some young adults spend their lives searching for a career that makes them happy. Some know very early on just exactly what they want to do.

Count former Tech softball standout Laura Flowers in that latter category.

Flowers, who is married and goes by the last name of Rosenthal, has been an animal lover for a long time, and during her junior and senior years of high school, she worked at a veterinary clinic in her hometown of Silver Spring, Md.

In fact, when it came time to make a decision on where to go to college, she factored in veterinary schools more than she factored in softball.

"I looked at colleges that had vet schools," she said. "Actually, up until late in my senior year, I was going to go to Maryland and not play softball, partly because of finances. I got into the honors program at Maryland, and I was prepared to focus on academics and getting into vet school there."

But thanks to a partial scholarship from Tech softball coach Scot Thomas and a small academic scholarship, Rosenthal ended up at the school she wanted to go to all along – Virginia Tech. She played softball for four years, graduated with an undergraduate degree in animal science in 2000 and then went to the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine on the Tech campus, where she graduated in 2004.

Today, she and her family live in Jefferson, Md., and she works as an associate veterinarian at a clinic in Leesburg, Va.

Thomas, hired in 1995 to oversee Tech's



Photo provided by Laura (Flowers) Rosenthal

Now a veterinarian in Northern Virginia, Laura Flowers (now Rosenthal) played on Tech's second team, and she started 131 of 133 games her final two seasons in Blacksburg.

fledgling softball program, saw Rosenthal play in a tournament in South Carolina the summer before her senior year. With limited scholarship money available, he couldn't offer her a partial scholarship, at least not right away. He came up with some dollars later that spring, and that, combined with an academic scholarship from Tech, the vet school and her fondness for the campus, convinced her to come to Tech.

"I think I flipped out," she said when Thomas offered her the scholarship. "My mom and I were screaming and happy. Signing day was a proud moment. All the pieces of the puzzle were fitting in perfectly."

Rosenthal played on Tech's second team in 1997. In her sophomore year in 1998, the Hokies recorded their first winning season

with a 32-31 record and just missed an NCAA berth when they lost to UMass in the championship game of the Atlantic 10 tournament.

That marked the first of three A-10 championship game appearances for Tech – all of which ended in losses to UMass. In her junior season, the Hokies won 54 games, which still stands as a school record. She started all 70 games and finished second on the team with six homers. In her final season, Tech won 41 games, and she started 61 of 63 games.

Interestingly, the fondest memory of her career wasn't a game or a season.

"I think it was the first time we played at the new field," she said. "My first year, we played on the rec field [next to the Burrows-Burleson Tennis Center]. Our fence was an orange, plastic fence, and there was straw

in the dugout because of the mud. The Marching Virginians often practiced right next to us. Having that new complex was a huge step up for the program.”

Perhaps more importantly, though, softball opened doors to her future. Thomas’ neighbor works as a large animal surgeon at the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine, and he offered her an opportunity to gain some experience by working on a couple of research projects during her undergraduate days. That proved pivotal in enabling her to get into the vet school.

“To get in, you have to have the grades and the GRE [Graduate Record Examination] scores, but also you have to have some practical experience,” Rosenthal said. “You have to have worked in some aspect. Scot got me hooked up with one of the vets there, and I was able to work in the large animal clinic with him. It was through that connection with softball that I was able to get the experience I needed, which was fortunate for me.”

After one’s first year in vet school, he or she picks a track. She chose small animal medicine, and today, she works mostly on dogs and cats, though she sees the occasional ferret or guinea pig.


“I’ve always been an animal lover,” she

said. “And I enjoy relating to people. I love seeing the relationship between people and their pets. Most people treat their pets like members of the family, and that’s neat to see.”

While in vet school, she got married, and her husband, a Maryland native, moved to Blacksburg and worked at Tech while she finished school. In 2004, she graduated, and together, they moved to Reading, Pa., where she worked at a clinic for two or three years. The family’s next stop was in Waynesville, N.C., where she worked for a couple of years. After the birth of their daughter, they decided to move back to Maryland to be closer to family.

She’s only been back to Blacksburg once since she left – for the 15-year anniversary of the birth of the Tech softball program. That may not change any time soon, as she is expecting the couple’s second child in late May. So she won’t have many boring times in her house.

Or at work, for that matter.

“It’s a lot of fun,” she said of being a vet. “Every day is something new and different. It’s definitely not monotonous.” 

Laura Rosenthal used her softball connections to gain some practical veterinarian experience, which enabled her to get into vet school.



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AWESOME ATMOSPHERE

AN OUTSIDE COMPANY CRITIQUES TECH'S GAME DAY OPERATION AND FAN EXPERIENCE, AND THE ATHLETICS DEPARTMENT RECEIVES HIGH MARKS

Quiz Tech fans about their experiences at Lane Stadium, and one would be hard pressed to find much in the way of negativity. Question them about their experiences at Cassell Coliseum, particularly for big ACC games – the Duke game this year comes to mind – and one figures to get a similar response.

The game day experiences for Tech fans rate among the best in the country. Fans say it, television broadcasters say it, and perhaps most impressively, folks from the opposing side say it.

But the Tech athletics department refuses to take the game day experience for granted. On the contrary, administrators are trying to make it even better.

Last fall, the athletics department hired a company called VenueChek to come to a

football game and a basketball game to critique everything about the game day experience at Tech. This company looks for areas that need improving, while also promoting the positives that an administration does for an event. It makes suggestions, with the understanding that some of these obviously may fall outside the operations budget and others simply can't be incorporated for logistical reasons.

"You never want to take anything for granted," Tom Gabbard, Tech's associate AD for internal affairs, said. "This was an opportunity to bring someone in who had never been to a game at Virginia Tech, so you're getting a cohesive, thoughtful and unbiased look at our game day operations."

The VenueChek representative who came to Lane Stadium and Cassell Coliseum was

Bill Lavelle. His first trip came when he attended the Thursday night football game against Georgia Tech last fall, and then he came to the Hokies' basketball game against Purdue on Dec. 1.

VenueChek grades everything on an evaluation point system it created. Basically, a "7" is an exceptional score in which no adjustments need to be made. A "6" is a good score, but not quite up to exceptional status. A "5" means fair and that improvements need to be made, and a "4" means poor, which means that this particular area needs addressing immediately.

"He looked at things like how easy was it to get here, how easy was it to park, how easy is it to get through the gate and find your seat, do the ushers know where everything is, how efficient are the concession stands,

how does our pricing compare – things like that,” Gabbard said. “It’s a comprehensive report on what it’s like to come to Lane Stadium or Cassell Coliseum if you’ve never been. Overall, it was a positive report.”

Lavelle started the process by ordering a ticket for the games online through hokietickets.com, and then he ordered one over the phone. He wanted to test the ease in which fans order tickets through the ticket office.

On his visit to Cassell, Lavelle gave the athletics department overall high marks. His only suggestion was to include more memorabilia in the concourse area, with an example being photos of former athletes.

“We’ve talked about that,” Gabbard said. “We just haven’t put it all together yet and come up with something that we like. But that’s on our radar.”

The more interesting critique came from Lavelle’s visit to Lane Stadium for the Thursday night game. The athletics administration runs into more issues related to football games at Lane Stadium simply because of the sheer volume of people who squeeze into a relatively small area.

For starters, on his way to Lane Stadium, Lavelle jotted notes down on the signs directing one to various parking lots. Then he made his way to the stadium, again taking notes on how long he waited to get inside the stadium and how the event people, more commonly known as ushers, treated fans.

He also visited some of the areas that sell merchandise and the concession areas, checking out the length of the lines, the quality of customer service, the cleanliness of the area, the pricing, and in the case of the concessions, the actual taste of some of the food. Lavelle noted that the cheeseburger he ordered tasted better than others at previous venues he had visited.



BEST OF VENUECHEK

The Tech athletics department and Lane Stadium scored among the best in the nation from the football schools analyzed by VenueChek in the following categories:

TICKETING – “Outside will call windows, two staff members were positioned in a location that allowed them to direct fans to the appropriate ticketing windows.”

PARKING – “Virginia Tech offered a very strong major route signage package. The signs on the interstate allow fans to follow the most direct path to the venue.”

ENTRY – “This venue [Lane Stadium] offered the most “big game” and “dramatic” feel of entry points. The entrances were clean and had a great atmosphere.”

SECURITY – “At every football venue that we are at, security is in place. However, at Virginia Tech, the staff had a dominant position – sometimes well outside the immediate turnstile entrance. This created a nice visual of a secure building.”

GUEST SERVICES – “Virginia Tech concourses are well marked and strategic placement of signage that outlines ‘Hokies Respect.’ They support this with a pregame presentation by a former Hokie with the message being about ‘Hokies Respect.’”

CORPORATE MARKETING/PROMOTIONS – “The strongest team entry, in our opinion, was when the Hokies entered the field to *Enter Sandman*. Not only was the student section bouncing up and down, but also the entire stadium was doing the same. This was a highly emotional entry.”



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Interestingly, the Tech athletics department received high marks for pricing. Lavelle noted on his report that the pricing for cheeseburgers and hot dogs were on the low side compared to other venues he's visited. The athletics department also received high marks for cleanliness, the ease of finding a concession stand and the quick service. Lines ran eight deep at some point, and Lavelle timed how long people waited. Most waited less than five minutes.

On the flip side, he noted some of the menu signage was outside the concession stand, and that made it difficult to read if one was waiting in one of the "middle" lines. He suggested moving the signage inside the stand, as is done at most places.

"Now, that's something we probably wouldn't have noticed," Gabbard said. "So we'll take a look at that and see if we can improve it."

Additionally, Lavelle critiqued the cleanliness of the stadium's concourse area and bathrooms. He noted that, "The concourse area held up well for much of the event, but as the game worked into the second half, the concourse started to take a hit."

"That's something we were already aware of," Gabbard said. "At halftime, there's a flood of people going to the concession areas for food and drinks, and to the bathroom,

and the trash gets backed up. We take out the trash after halftime, but we're looking at ways we can do a better job of keeping those concourse areas cleaner."

Overall, the Tech athletics department received high marks in the following areas: game day ticketing, security, parking, entry to the stadium, guest services and corporate marketing and promotions (*see graphic on page 43*). In fact, Tech was named a "VenueChek MVP" among the schools it has visited for the categories of security and game day atmosphere. Lavelle commented that the team's entrance into the stadium to the blasting of "Enter Sandman" ranked among the best he had seen.

Lavelle wrote up a brief report following the game, and then later submitted a longer report to the athletics administration.

"Again, I think it's good to have an independent source evaluate your customer service," Gabbard said. "This is our attempt to make sure we provide the best possible game day experience for fans. We want to use this to make corrections and to enhance where we can."

In addition to pointing out negatives and positives, Lavelle offered up some suggestions based on what other universities are doing on game day. For example, the University of Michigan sets up informa-

tion kiosks throughout its concourse areas to help fans, and also, Wolverine ushers rank among the nation's best according to VenueChek because of their knowledge of everything within the stadium.

"Some things may not work for us," Gabbard said. "The kiosk idea probably wouldn't work for us because our concourse areas are a little narrow as it is.

"But I do think that we need to continue working on training our event staff members. Every event staff member should know where the first-aid station is, where 'Lost and Found' is, the restrooms, ADA seating, the ticket office – things like that. We need to make our signage more visible outside the stadium, too.

"I do like some ideas that he pointed out. At Notre Dame, they greet people when they come into the stadium and when they leave afterward. We do it when they come in, but not afterward. We may change that. It's all about taking our great game day experience and making it even better. We're willing to do whatever we possibly can to do that."

There is a lot that goes into making a great game day atmosphere. Most agree that the Tech athletics department has done a tremendous job of making Cassell Coliseum and Lane Stadium terrific game day venues.

Now, it's just a matter of perfecting it. 



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Duo helps Tech end 28-year NCAA dry spell

By Jimmy Robertson
 (Reprinted from Vol. 14, No. 33 edition
 of the Hokie Huddler, June 9, 1997)


In a year where Tech athletics accomplished so much, outfielder Matt Reynolds fired off one last salvo to cap off an unbelievable athletics season.

Reynolds' solo homer – his second of the game – in the top of the ninth inning broke a 2-2 tie and led the Tech baseball team to a stunning 3-2 win over Southern Cal in the first round of the South II Regional tournament played in Tuscaloosa, Ala.


The Hokies (34-28) bowed out of the double-elimination tournament two days later after losing to NC State 12-6 and Southern Cal 6-2 in a rematch. But Reynolds' rip completed a miraculous run for the boys of summer, who barely got into the A-10 tournament and then won



Matt Reynolds' solo homer in the ninth inning of a 1997 NCAA regional game enabled Tech to win its first NCAA Tournament game in nearly 30 years.




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it in convincing fashion to advance to the NCAAs for just the second time in head coach Chuck Hartman's 19 years.

"He'd [USC starter Scott Henderson] been working me outside with some pitches and he threw me a high fastball," Reynolds said. "I knew that one was going out as soon as I hit it."

How big was Tech's win over Southern Cal? It marked the Hokies' first win in the NCAA Tournament since 1969 when they knocked off Furman 6-3. To put that in perspective, the writer of this article hadn't been born yet. And to top it all off, the Hokies beat a team with 11 national championships, 18 College World Series appearances and 30 regional berths on its resumé.

"It's one of the biggest wins at Tech in the baseball program," said Hartman, whose Tech team lost to Auburn 7-0 and The Citadel 4-3 in the 1994 regional. "I feel like I'm about 25 years old. It was very exciting. It really was. The players can tell ya I get excited."

"I'm so proud of our kids. They stayed calm, kept their composure, kept battling and battling and then Matt happened to strike the big blow. And Denny went out there and showed a lot of intestinal fortitude."

Ah, yes. Denny Wagner. He of the rubber arm. The right-hander pitched a complete game, scattering eight hits and allowing two runs. He walked three and struck out seven. And threw a career-high 140 pitches.

"Probably the most I've thrown in college is somewhere around 120," Wagner said. "I got tired. I got real lazy on breaking balls. Started flipping 'em up there instead of pulling through. I still had a good fastball and I was locating it pretty well. And the split-finger was working pretty good for me."

Hartman added, "If I'd known it was that many [pitches], I'd have probably taken him out. I didn't know it was quite that many. I looked, and I knew he was in pretty good shape in the seventh inning."


Wagner (10-4) gave up both USC runs in the fifth when he allowed a one-out homer to Jeremy Freitas and a two-out RBI single to Marc Mirizzi as the Trojans took a 2-1 lead. Barry Gauch's sacrifice fly in the sixth, though, tied the game and then Reynolds' homer gave Tech a 3-2 lead heading to the bottom of the ninth.

In the bottom of the ninth, Wagner allowed a one-out double to Brad Ticehurst and then walked Wes Rachels to put runners at first and second. He thus induced a visit to the mound by Hartman.

"He told me he was a little tired when I went out there in the ninth," Hartman said. "And I said, 'Well, do you want 'em?' and he said, 'I want to finish this thing.' And I said, 'Okay, let's go with it.'"

"When I went out there in the ninth, I had almost made up my mind unless it got real wild and he started making some poor pitches, I was going to stick with him."

Wagner then struck out Mirizzi and got Greg Walbridge to fly out to end the game.

"I thought it was a great game," Hartman said. "You saw two teams play it right to the hilt. We just happened to get the big lick [Reynolds' homer]." 



Matt Reynolds had two homers in the win over Southern Cal – the first and only two-homer game of his collegiate career.



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