

inside

Vol. 6 No. 10, May 2014 • \$4

HOKIESPORTS

The Official Magazine of Virginia Tech Athletics

WRAPPING UP SPRING FOOTBALL

Demitri Knowles and the Hokies concluded spring practice with the annual Maroon-White game and now they gear up for summer workouts in preparation for the 2014 season

WHAT'S INSIDE:

Martina Schultze has quietly established herself as one of the most decorated track and field athletes ever at Tech

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Published by the Virginia Tech Athletics Department

Inside Hokie Sports (ISSN 8750-9148, periodical postage paid at Blacksburg Va. 24060 and additional mailing offices) covers Virginia Tech athletics and is published 11 times annually - monthly from August through June. The publisher is the Virginia Tech Athletics Department, 165 Spring Rd., Blacksburg, VA 24061.

SUBSCRIPTION PRICES: \$37.95 for one year (11 issues) and \$69.95 for two years. You can get an online subscription for \$25 and both the online and the print version for \$50. Mail all subscription inquiries, renewals, address changes, written inquiries and complaints to Inside Hokie Sports, Jamerson Athletic Center, Virginia Tech, 165 Spring Rd., Blacksburg, VA 24061 or call (540) 231-3908.

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ATTN POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Inside Hokie Sports, P.O. Box 11101, Blacksburg, Va. 24061-1101.

Printed by Southern Printing Co., Inc., of Blacksburg, Virginia

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CELEBRATING A SWEEP

The Virginia Tech softball team was fired up before its doubleheader against in-state rival Virginia and then celebrated afterward, knocking off the Cavaliers by scores of 8-2 and 6-0. The Hokies completed the sweep the next day and went on to win their final eight home games of the season to finish with a 16-5 mark at home.





THE STUDENT-ATHLETE EXPERIENCE

“Thank you for making Hokie Nation a special home. I am blessed to be a Hokie.”

Kylie McGoldrick
Junior | Softball

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Maggie Tyler
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Eric, Dorothy & Jessica Long

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Dorothy (B.A., 1979; M.S., 1984)

FAMILY:

Jessica (daughter; B.S. in 2009)

Q&A

Q: A Hokie is real ...

A: When you meet anyone from Virginia Tech, there is a special bond and pride that is not as readily evident with other colleges and universities.

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

A: Sharing time tailgating and viewing football games with our daughter and her friends while she was a student.

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

A: We wanted to give back to the university by giving a student-athlete a scholarship. We also started a local Hokie Club to keep Hokies in our area connected to Virginia Tech.

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

A: The success our teams have achieved on and off the field of play and the respect our university has garnered because of its outstanding academic standing.

Q: Do you have any tailgating traditions, and if so, what are they?

A: Having a huge tailgate every home football game for friends and students, past and present.

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

A: Providing financial assistance has the potential to help create better results on and off the field for our student-athletes. That, in turn, can engender a higher degree of pride and respect for our university.

Q: What are your favorite Virginia Tech sports?

A: Football and swimming (Eric was a swimmer).

Q: Who are your favorite all-time Virginia Tech players?

A: Brandon Frye and Bruce Taylor. Both are Myrtle Beach High School graduates and wonderful young men.

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- *Referral points are not continuous, and are awarded for calendar year they were received only.*
- *Referrals will be checked for accuracy and priority points will only be awarded for verified referrals.*
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To submit a referral: Visit hokieclub.com to submit a Hokie Referrals Reporting form





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Wolff and staff add two more

Tech women's basketball coach Dennis Wolff and his staff signed two prospects to letters-of-intent during the spring signing period, adding 6-foot-3 forward Regan Magarity and 6-3 forward Dominique Powell to the program.

Magarity, from Norrkoping, Sweden, played club basketball for SBBK from 2011-14. She earned all-star honors for Sweden's under-15 and under-16 teams in 2010 and 2011, respectively. She was a member of the under-16 national team and was named the top Swedish player by FIBA in the U-16 European Championship. Her father played basketball at Georgia before playing professionally in Europe, while her mother played for the Swedish national team. Her brother, Will, plays at Boston College. She chose the Hokies over Georgia Tech, BC, Mississippi and Providence among others.

Powell, from Capitol Heights, Md., has spent the past two years at Gulf Coast State College

in Panama City, Fla. She earned first-team All-Panhandle Conference honors as a sophomore this past season, averaging 11 points and 11 rebounds per game. She also ranked second in the nation with 3.5 blocked shots per game.

Those two join the three recruits who signed with the Hokies last fall – 6-2 Brielle Blair from Salisbury, N.C., 5-11 Rachel Camp from Forest City, N.C., and 6-2 Khadedra Croker from Suffolk, Va. Blair averaged 14.3 points per game in eight games before tearing the ACL in her right knee and undergoing surgery that cost her the remainder of the season. She should be ready to go this fall, though.

Camp scored 42 points in her final high school game (a regional semifinal loss), averaged 28.4 points per game, and finished with more than 3,000 career points. She was a first-team all-state selection by The Associated Press. Croker averaged 19.9 points, 15.5 rebounds and 8 blocked shots this past season.

Golf team finishes in fourth at ACC Championship

The Virginia Tech golf team shot 7-under-par and finished in fourth place at the ACC Men's Golf Championship held April 25-27 at the Old North State Club in Badin Lake, N.C.

Georgia Tech claimed the championship with a team score of 25-under-par. The Yellow Jackets defeated Florida State by six strokes and Clemson by 12.

For the Hokies, Scott Vincent finished in

sixth place in the individual race at 5-under-par. Bryce Chalkley came in ninth at 3-under-par, while Trevor Cone finished 18th at 1-under-par. Maclain Huge finished 35th and Joey Lane came in 47th.

The Hokies received their eighth straight bid to the NCAAs and head to Auburn, Ala., for NCAA Regional action, which runs from May 15-17.

Tennis squads fall in ACC Championships

The Tech men's and women's tennis teams each won a match at the ACC Championships, but both fell in the next round of the event, which was held in late April at the Cary Tennis Center in Cary, N.C.


The men's team, ranked 40th in the Intercollegiate Tennis Association (ITA) national rankings, upset No. 31 Wake Forest 4-2 in the first round to advance to the quarterfinals. The Hokies lost the doubles point against Wake, but got singles wins from Amerigo Contini, Andreas Bjerrehus, Joao Monteiro and Hunter Koontz. Bjerrehus' 6-3, 6-3 win over Adam Lee clinched the match for Tech.

Against No. 11 Duke, the Hokies lost 4-3. Duke won the doubles point and then

won three of the singles matches. Contini, Bjerrehus and Jai Corbett recorded singles match wins for Tech.

On the women's side, Tech beat NC State 4-3 in the first round, winning the doubles point and getting singles wins from Kelly Williford, Raluca Mita, Isel Martinez-Marcos and Sansitha Nandakumar in the No. 3-6 spots. Mita's 6-3, 6-7, 6-2 victory over Nicole Martinez secured the win for the Hokies.

In the quarterfinals, the Hokies fell to Georgia Tech by a score of 4-0.

Following the league championships, the men's team received its eighth straight bid to the NCAA Men's Tennis Championship. The women's team finished its season with a 13-13 overall record. 

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Takeaways from yet another important spring football practice

To get a feeling of what Tech football coach Frank Beamer thought of his team's spring, consider his comments following the annual Maroon-White game that concluded spring practice.

"We're going to go through some growing pains probably next year, but we're going to go through them full speed," he said. "Those are the kind of kids we've got, and I like that ... we're going in the right direction."

Tech took a step in the right direction a year ago, hiring three new coaches and winning one more game than the previous season. But the Hokies lost some quality players this past season, and that made this spring important.

Despite the spring game – and fans shouldn't make a broad generalization on a spring game – the Hokies appear to be in good shape moving forward. They look really good at tailback and tight end. The receivers are more experienced. The offensive line looks improved. The defensive front dominated the last 10 days of spring, and the defensive backfield is loaded.

The issues – and they are big ones – center on the quarterback spot and at kicker. Those two things highlight this writer's five takeaways from spring practice:

• **FINDING "THE" QUARTERBACK** – This is the biggest issue that the staff needs to tackle for obvious reasons. Mark Leal and Brenden Motley showed flashes, but lacked consistency. Andrew Ford is probably a year in the weight room away from being able to help.

Michael Brewer, the transfer from Texas Tech, arrives May 28, and freshman Chris Durkin arrives around the same time. Can they learn the offense by Aug. 30?

Ideally, a coach wants a starter coming out of spring practice. But Tech offensive coordinator Scot Loeffler did not sound worried.

"This isn't the first time we've had to pick a starting quarterback in the fall," he said.

• **KICKING SITUATION UNSETTLED** – Michael Branthover appeared to be in the lead midway through spring practice, but then Beamer moved Remington Hinshaw into the top spot on the depth chart. In the spring game, Eric Kristensen, one of four kickers used last season, made the lone field goal.

The Hokies missed 11 field goals last season, most of them very makeable. Arguably, kicking cost them the Duke game and perhaps the Maryland game – and a shot at the ACC's Coastal Division crown.

Michael Santamaria arrives this summer, along with two walk-ons. Someone desperately needs to emerge.

• **SPEED ON DEFENSE** – Tech's staff always recruits speed, but the 2014 defense may just be the fastest in recent memory. Along the defensive line, Dadi Nicolas, Ken Ekanem, Corey Marshall, Chase Williams and Deon Clarke are all faster than the guys they replaced. All the secondary guys returned bigger, stronger and faster as well.

The question is will the additional speed equate to last year's production? It certainly appeared that way this spring.

Tech will be lighter on defense, much lighter. But given the way football continues to be played these days – with an emphasis on passing – coaches will take speed over girth any day.

• **TIGHT ENDS EMERGING** – We wrote this in this same space a year ago, but then Ryan Malleck

got hurt, Duan Perez-Means gave up football and Zack McCray wasn't a consistent performer. Tech's staff ultimately went to a true freshman, Calvin Cline, at the spot.


Malleck returns, and Cline became a threat last year. Both sat out this spring because of injuries, more as precautions, and both figure in heavily next fall. So, too, does Bucky Hodges, who, in this writer's opinion, was one of the Hokies' top offensive weapons this spring. This young man possesses star quality.

It would be really surprising if Tech's offense didn't look much different this fall – with these guys playing a huge role.

• **MARSHAWN MANIA** – There is a lot to like about 230-pound freshman tailback Marshawn Williams, who possesses a unique combination of vision, balance and toughness. He's a load to bring down – just ask Tech's defenders – and like Hodges, stood as one of the Hokies' best offensive weapons this spring.

It's no secret that Tech needs to run the ball better, and Williams figures to be able to alleviate some of those red-zone problems that the Hokies suffered from last fall. Between Williams and Trey Edmunds, the Hokies have 450 pounds worth of tailback to take care of short-yardage and goal-line situations.

A powerful running attack would be the best tonic for an inexperienced quarterback, and the staff knows this. A good running game and a strong defense ... the staff has cooked up many wins in the past with that exact recipe.

How all these five takeaways play out in August will go a long way in determining the number of wins for 2014. 



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Graduation day important for former Tech great

On May 16, thousands of Virginia Tech students will walk across a stage at Lane Stadium and receive their diplomas during the university's commencement ceremony. However, for one member of the Tech class of 2014, it will be a welcome return to the stadium where he dazzled fans during his football playing days. Kevin Jones, wearing a cap and gown – not his iconic No. 7 jersey – will receive his diploma 10 years after he left school early to begin his NFL career.

KJ, as most of us know him, had an All-America career at Tech, rushing for more than 3,400 yards and 35 touchdowns. He left school early following the 2003 season, and he was a first-round pick of the Detroit Lions in the 2004 draft. He spent five seasons with the Lions and two seasons with the Chicago Bears before retiring because of injuries.

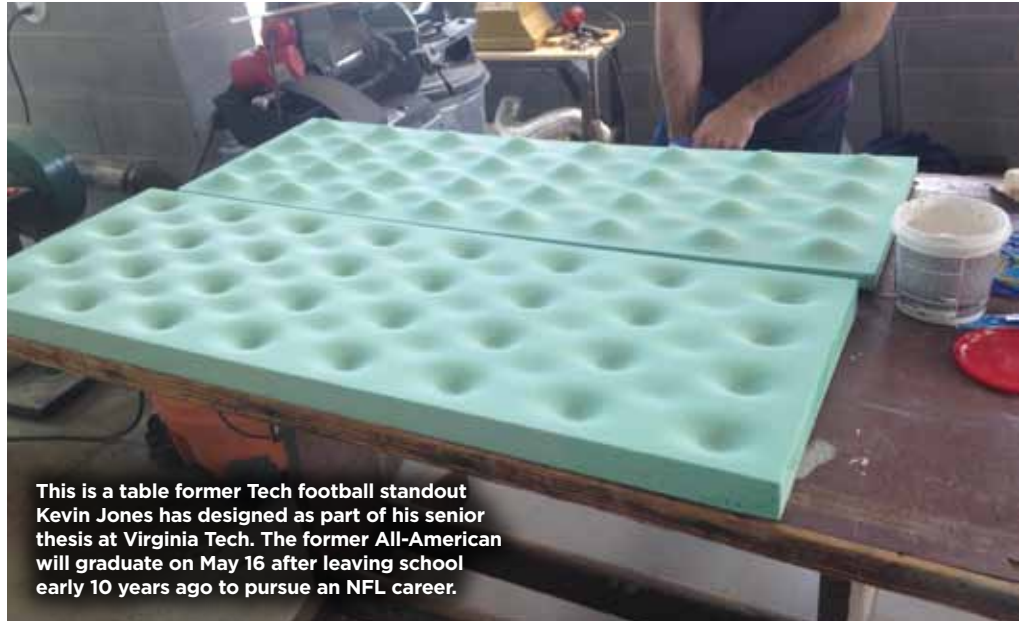
KJ ultimately returned to Blacksburg, along with wife Robyn and their three children – Kevin, Jr. (7), Kennedy (5) and Kensington (5) – to finish his degree in industrial design.

I visited with KJ to discuss his academic goals and his upcoming return to Lane Stadium.

BR: Why did you decide to come back?

KJ: “I always wanted to get my degree. I just didn't know when. The desire was always there. Coach [Billy] Hite and I kept our relationship after I left, and when I got hurt in Chicago, he told me that he thought I should come back and get my degree. The last three years that I was playing, it was something I thought about often.”

BR: How satisfying and emotional will it be for you to be back at Lane Stadium, but this time in cap and gown and not a



This is a table former Tech football standout Kevin Jones has designed as part of his senior thesis at Virginia Tech. The former All-American will graduate on May 16 after leaving school early 10 years ago to pursue an NFL career.

helmet?

KJ: “It's a big deal for me. I've been working so hard on my thesis now. I've been focused on that, so it probably hasn't hit me yet. I'm in the middle of a project, and I'm enjoying what I'm doing.”

BR: Tell us about your degree. It's a tough one.

KJ: “I'm studying industrial design in the College of Architecture. It's basically product design. I feel like all my life I've been training, just as an NFL player and a dominant athlete, and now I'm trying to use the platform that I've gained through sports and transfer that into design and see how I can combine those two traits and be of service to people.”

BR: Specifically, what would you like to design?

KJ: “My major is so broad. I want my hands on everything, but on the design side, this past summer, I had two internships in Switzerland – one with a modular furniture company called USM and the other one was Scott Sports. They do Tour de France bikes, snow goggles, ski helmets ... stuff like that. So from both ends of the spectrum, I like both.”

Right now for my thesis, I am designing a piece of furniture. But in terms of sports, one of the reasons I came back to school was so that I could give back, and guys can see me and say, ‘See, look at him. He played in the NFL, and he

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came back.' I think that can be inspiring to a lot of people. I can combine sports and design together, whether it be through strategies and administration, or to help design a product to get a player back on the field and keep him healthy."

BR: Not many NFL players would do what you are doing. Most NFL guys, once they have their money, they're done, at least academically. Why?

KJ: "I think there are a lot of guys in the NFL who couldn't care less if they get a degree. They say to themselves 'I got the money,' but the fact is a lot of them don't know how to manage their money. I think a lot of guys are naïve to the fact and think the NFL is the 'end-all, be-all.' I think there's a misconception that, if you get to the NFL and you get your money, then that's the end. Actually, it's just really the beginning."

BR: That's deep, KJ.

KJ: "Football isn't the first thing in my life any more. I understand people know me for that, but I'm trying to show a different side and offer more than that."

BR: Many athletes, especially guys who have achieved so much success, have a hard time making that adjustment.

KJ: "It's super hard, but at the same time, I feel like God has blessed me with a big heart and an open mind. Because, yeah, I had those talents, but I'm able to produce other things outside of sports, too. Sports is the avenue, but the person has to learn to use those skills in other areas."

BR: With that in mind, who do you view as a role model? Who was a successful NFL player and then made a transition and had a second, completely different, post-football career?

KJ: "A lot of people don't know that Gale Sayers is extremely successful off the field. He actually has a company called Sayers 40 (<http://www.examiner.com/article/gale-sayers-20-20-vision-at-sayers40-inc>). When I was playing with the Lions, I went down and got a business certificate from Northwestern University, and Gale was one of the speakers. I was in his seminar, and he was so impressive. He speaks well. He presents himself well. And I had never seen an athlete do both. I think I was inspired by that early on, even though it was early in my career. I went down to Chicago and stayed on campus at Northwestern, and they had the seminar on business and entrepreneurship for NFL players. So there's good role model. And (laughing), I have that business certificate listed on my resumé!"

BR: So at the end of the day, are you going to be better at football or design?

KJ: (Laughing) "I've got to say football, man. I put in a lot of work in high school. I was basically a pro player in high school, with the hours I put in and the hours I spent with my dad, who was training me. I put in more hours in high school training than I did in college or in the pros. I was always primed to do that. But now, I'm priming myself to do more."

BR: What's next?

KJ: "In the future, I want to be involved in design and sports. Wherever that turns out, we'll see. Maybe administration. Coaching. Life skills. Mentoring. Design."


BR: I'm curious. How much of the holistic "Tech experience" influenced you to come back and finish this?

KJ: "Virginia Tech is unique. Blacksburg is unique. Both Coach [Frank] Beamer and Coach Hite treated me well. Even though I played early, I had to earn my stripes. It wasn't like I came in and was the starter from day one. I just wanted to make sure I was kicking A-double-S, and they treated me so well and made me comfortable here. I met my wife here, and the entire coaching staff always makes sure I've been welcomed when I come back. Blacksburg has been a great place to raise kids. A lot of [NFL] guys struggle because they don't know what they want to do, and some don't have a place to go back to. I do."

BR: Yeah, you do. Congratulations on coming back to Virginia Tech. We're proud of you and looking forward to your return to Lane Stadium and to seeing what's next in your life.

KJ: "I'm excited about Round Two."

A "Thank You" to Hokie Nation

As many of you recall, two years ago, Virginia Tech started an endowment to honor my sister, Lynda, and my broadcast partner Mike Burnop's wife, Ellen, who both lost their battles with cancer within weeks of each other in 2012. Well, Hokie fans were amazingly generous (of course!), purchasing these commemorative prints (<http://www.hokiesports.com/billandmike/endowment/>) at \$25 each. That money was invested, and Virginia Tech freshman Bucky Hodges from Virginia Beach, Va., will be the first recipient of this scholarship. I'm excited for Bucky – who has a great future both academically and athletically – and proud that such a terrific young man will receive this scholarship. He has the spirit and character that both Lynda and Ellen would love. Thanks to Virginia Tech athletics for honoring the memories of Lynda and Ellen and to the Hokie Nation, friends, and fans everywhere who made this possible. 

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Keeping up *with* Compliance

The compliance corner answers questions concerning the governance of intercollegiate athletics and its impact on our athletics department. Have a question? Please send it to inside@hokiesports.com and we'll answer it in upcoming issues. Now, here are a couple of questions that we've received from Tech alums and fans over the past few months, with responses from Tim Parker, Associate AD for Compliance:

Q: How in the world does Kentucky not get banned from the NCAA tournament with all their players usually leaving after a year? Last year, UConn was banned – and not because any of their players went to the NBA. I just don't understand it. Help me, please. Thanks, Camden in Christiansburg, Va.

TP: “Sure – and good question because I don't think many people understand the Academic Progress Rate (APR), which is the NCAA metric used to determine if a team's players are in good academic standing.

“A team's score gets docked when a scholarship player leaves school in poor academic standing at the end of a semester, or if a player isn't academically eligible at the end of a semester.

“A perfect score is 1000. A score of 925 was determined to be roughly equivalent to a 50 percent graduation rate. In the year that UConn got punished, the benchmark was 900, and UConn got an 889. APR scores cover a rolling four-year window, so last year's UConn team was punished for the program's academic performance between 2007-11. UConn also had fair warning – it was penalized with a scholarship reduction before the 2011-12 season.

“Regarding Kentucky, the players don't necessarily have to graduate to earn the APR points. They just need to pass their classes. Kentucky hits the APR benchmark because its players are in good academic standing when they leave for the NBA.”

Q: The Hokie Club has been out attending events as part of the Orange & Maroon Tour, which occurs each spring. Could a student-athlete attend an event as part of this tour, or is this an NCAA violation? Thanks, Heather in Blacksburg.

TP: “Yes, a student-athlete could attend such a function, receive a meal, and even be provided actual and necessary expenses associated with the event (transportation, for instance).


“Virginia Tech has used football student-athletes in such roles in the past, most notably, with the kickoff dinners each August (Richmond and Roanoke). However, the Hokie Club has not used student-athletes on the Orange & Maroon Tour, and the simple reason is that nearly all of these functions occur during the week, when student-athletes are in class and engaging in practice.”

Q: There just seems to be way too much transferring in college basketball – and I would say that even before the news hit about Trevor Thompson leaving. Has the NCAA looked at this issue, and is anything being discussed? Thanks, Rachel in Blacksburg.

TP: “I think most people feel that there is too much transferring in college basketball – more than 400 players transferred last season – and an NCAA transfer issue subcommittee has been studying this issue.

A little background: In many sports, a transferring student-athlete may compete immediately at his/her new school by utilizing what is known as the “One-Time Transfer Exception.” This exception, however, does not apply to participants in the sports of basketball, football, baseball and ice hockey. For these individuals, NCAA regulations mandate a one-academic-year residence requirement (commonly known as “sitting out”). As a result, a transferring student-athlete in one of these sports must apply for a waiver to compete right away.

“What has troubled coaches and administrators is both the high percentage of waivers approved (why even have the rule if half the applicants receive a waiver?), and the perceived inconsistency in the waiver process. Add to these concerns the difficulty in confirming that the reasons for transfer put forward in each appeal are real and legitimate, and you have widespread support for change.

“In January, the subcommittee proposed two recommendations – one affecting undergraduate transfers and one affecting graduate transfers. In both cases, there would be no possibility of immediate eligibility. Since that time, the graduate proposal has been taken off the table, while the undergraduate proposal appears headed for adoption. The NCAA Board of Directors will make the final call, and if adopted, the directive will not take effect until August 1, 2015.” 



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DEFENSE OWNS THE DAY

There was little scoring in the annual Maroon-White game, as both defenses controlled the line of scrimmage and left fans optimistic that the Hokies have reloaded on that side of the ball heading into the fall

by Jimmy Robertson

At the conclusion of last season, Tech defensive coordinator Bud Foster thought the Hokies had a championship defense, but coming into this spring, he fretted over the loss of four very good defensive linemen and two outstanding linebackers.

If spring practice was any indication, the Hokies are returning to form rather quickly on the defensive side of the ball.

Showing perhaps more speed than a year ago, Tech's defenses bottled the offenses in the annual Maroon-White spring game, holding them to a combined 10 points in a 7-3 affair captured by the White team at Lane Stadium on April 26. The game wrapped the Hokies' 2014 spring practice.

The game continued a trend of stellar play by Tech's defense. After a shaky second full scrimmage on April 12, that unit dominated play, culminating with a great spring game performance. In that one, the defenses recorded five sacks and 15 tackles for a loss to go along with interceptions by Kendall Fuller and Donovan Riley. The two offenses combined to go 0 of 17 on third-down conversions.

Chuck Clark and Detrick Bonner led the White team with six tackles each, while walk-on Sean Huelskamp led the Maroon squad with nine tackles. Dadi Nicolas and Dewayne Alford each had a sack and walk-on Jeremy Haynes recorded 1.5 sacks.

"I think we answered questions about the front seven," said defensive tackle Luther Maddy, who recorded two tackles and half of a sack. "The two linebackers, Chase [Williams] and Deon [Clarke], definitely stepped up. Corey Marshall is probably an All-ACC player, Dadi improved ... we all just got better. We were all trying to get to the quarterback and make plays. The competition is there. I think we'll be one of the top defenses again next fall."

The offenses combined for 306 yards in the spring game, though one-third of that came on the first drive of the game. The White team got the ball first and got into scoring position thanks

to a 52-yard gain by Demitri Knowles on an end-around that got the White squad to the Maroon 25. Two plays later, tailback Joel Caleb burst up the middle and took it 27 yards to the end zone. Remington Hinshaw's extra point gave the White squad a 7-0 lead with 7:05 left in the first quarter.

Caleb's run capped a five-play, 87-yard drive. The rising redshirt sophomore from Midlothian, Va., was the most productive tailback in the game, finishing with 43 yards on six carries. He will be one of seven tailbacks vying for playing time next fall, a group that includes injured players Trey Edmunds (broken leg) and freshman Shai McKenzie (ACL), both of whom sat out this spring while rehabbing their respective injuries.

"I feel it was a great spring for the running backs," Caleb said. "We took a lot of big steps. I feel like I've got a lot of things I can do and a lot of things I need to improve on. We've got a lot of talented guys, and all we can do is put in the work that the coach asks us to put in, and then let the coach come out with the end result."

After that initial drive, the offenses combined for just 219 yards and an average of just 3.1 yards per play. The only other score in the game came toward the end of the first quarter.

Taking advantage of good field position following a short punt by A.J. Hughes, the Maroon team moved from the White 37 to the White 11, but on third-and-8, quarterback Mark Leal completed a 3-yard pass to Carlis Parker. The Maroon squad settled for a 28-yard field goal by Eric Kristensen to cut the lead to 7-3 on the final play of the first quarter.

That marked the end of the scoring for the game. In fairness, the offenses played without potential starters Edmunds, offensive lineman Augie Conte and tight ends Ryan Malleck and Calvin Cline (depending on the offensive set).

Also, the staff split the roster into two teams, which doesn't allow a unit much of an opportunity to get into rhythm. And the quarterbacks weren't allowed to be hit, which took away the opportunity for making big plays

after escaping the pocket.

"The last scrimmage, we wanted them [the quarterbacks] to handle pressure and so forth," Tech coach Frank Beamer said. "We got a lot of pressure, a little more than we wanted, and we got both of them nicked up. I was still hoping we could let them go live [in the spring game], but both of them are still gimping around. I thought if I put a gimpy guy out there against some of those Corey Marshalls and Dadi Nicolases, I might have a lawsuit on my hands [laughing]."

"Nah, I wanted the guys to finish the game. I wanted to see them play. I was concerned if we made them live, then they would play a little bit and not finish the game. So both of them finished, and that part was good, and we only blew the whistle [to stop the play] a couple of times."

Despite the stats, the offenses actually had some opportunities. Brenden Motley scored on a 19-yard run that ended up being called back because of a holding penalty. Also, Motley overthrew tight end Bucky Hodges for what might have been a touchdown, and Leal's Maroon squad couldn't punch it in after having first-and-goal at the White 2 late in the first half. The White went for it on fourth down, but Leal couldn't connect with Parker in the end zone.

Leal and Motley put up similar numbers. Leal completed 10 of 18 for 90 yards, with an interception, while Motley completed 6 of 11 for 72 yards, with an interception.

Neither came out of spring practice as the starter at quarterback, as Tech's staff plans on evaluating Texas Tech transfer Michael Brewer and incoming freshman Chris Durkin before making a call. Both of those guys arrive at Tech in late May.

"We'll talk [as a staff]," Beamer said. "Both of our new quarterbacks will be here the first session of summer school, and they'll have a chance to throw to our receivers quite a bit."


"I think we've got to take a direction pretty quickly in the fall. Whoever it is going to be needs to get a lot of reps in preseason practice

and whoever is second needs to get a lot of reps. So we'll decide on those two, and those are the guys who will get the reps."

Tech's fortunes next fall probably hinge on how much the offense improves, and in particular, young players like Hodges, Parker, Marshawn Williams and Deon Newsome. Hodges led all receivers with three receptions in the spring game, while Parker caught two and ran once for 26 yards on an end-around play. Williams rushed for 11 yards on six carries, while Newsome caught a pass for 37 yards and ran once for 18 yards.

Given their improvement, Beamer remains optimistic about his team heading forward.

"I like the way we practiced this spring," he said after the game. "I thought the effort was good today. When you divide the team up, you don't get the execution that you want a lot of times. But I think we're an up and coming football team.

"We're going to go through some growing pains probably next year, but we're going to go through them full speed. Those are the kind of kids we've got, and I like that. We've got some questions, and certain parts of our football team need to get better, but we're going in the right direction." 

2014 SPRING AWARD WINNERS

PAUL TORGENSEN AWARD (the top up and comer during spring practice)
Offense - Marshawn Williams
Defense - Deon Clarke

PRESIDENT'S AWARD
 (players who demonstrate the most outstanding leadership during the offseason program and spring workouts)
Offense - Sam Rogers
Defense - Luther Maddy

DR. RICHARD BULLOCK AWARD
 (players who show the most improvement during spring workouts)
Offense - Augie Conte
Defense - Desmond Frye

FRANK O. MOSELEY AWARD
 (players who exhibit the most hustle during offseason and spring workouts)

Offense - J.C. Coleman
Defense - Derek Di Nardo

COACHES AWARD
 (players who had an exceptional spring)
Offense - Bucky Hodges
Defense - Dadi Nicolas

DON WILLIAMS TEAM UNITED AWARD (players who put the team first during spring workouts)
Offense - Joshua Stanford
Defense - Corey Marshall

GEORGE PREAS AWARD (most valuable performers of spring practice)
Offense - Caleb Farris
Defense - Kendall Fuller

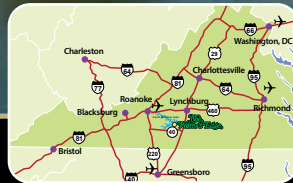
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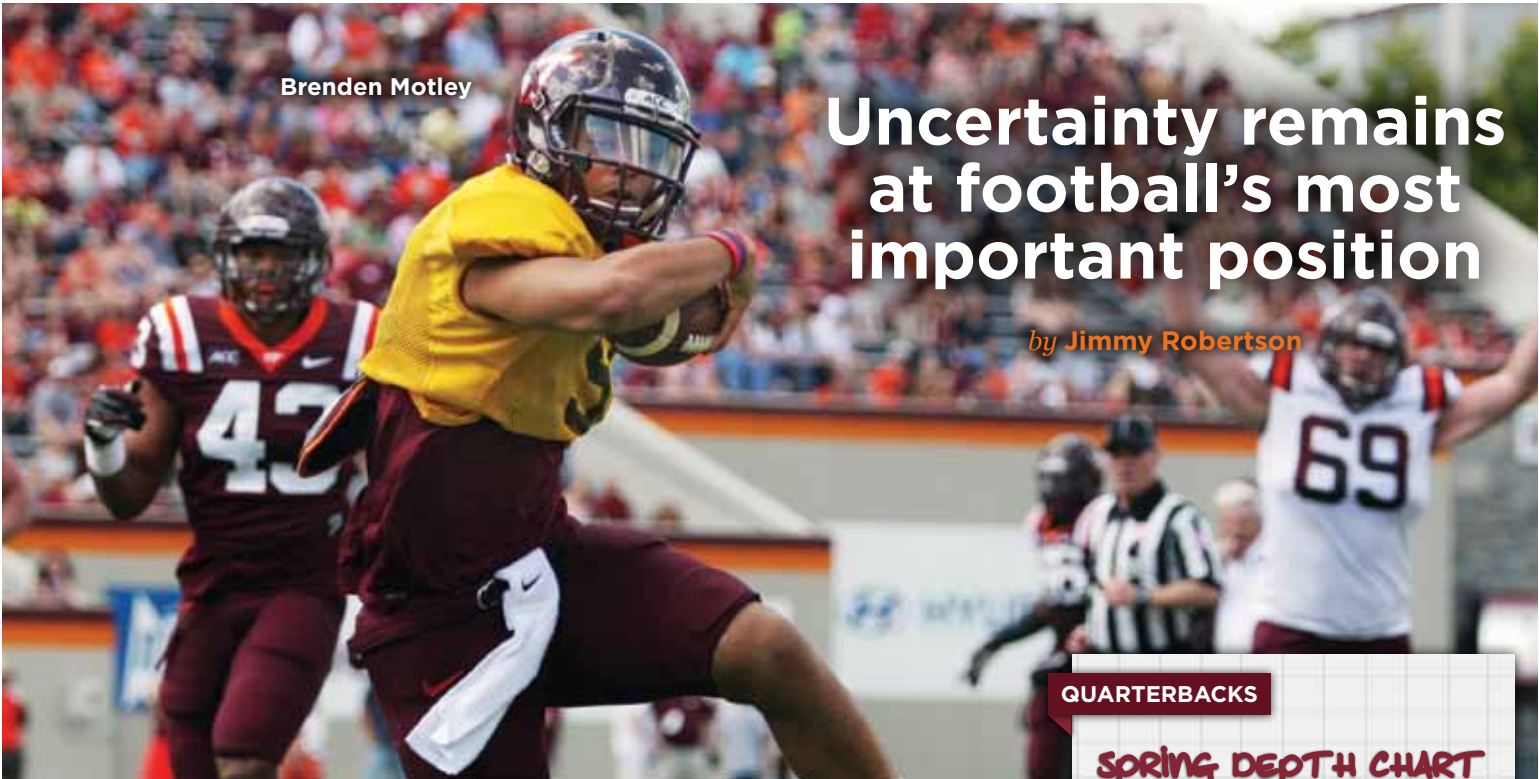
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Brenden Motley

Uncertainty remains at football's most important position

by Jimmy Robertson

QUARTERBACKS

SPRING DEPTH CHART

- 9 Brenden Motley (6-4, 219, r-So.)
- 6 Mark Leal (6-1, 218, r-Sr.)
- 17 Andrew Ford (6-3, 195, Fr.)

Tech's 2014 spring practice ended with the annual Maroon-White game held April 26, so what do fans now know about the quarterback position heading into the fall?

Well, not too much.

"We're so far away from being ready to play at that position," offensive coordinator Scot Loeffler said days before the spring game. "We've got a lot of work to do to get to where we need to be at the quarterback position."

Loeffler never planned on naming a starter at the conclusion of spring practice because he wanted to get an evaluation of two incoming quarterbacks this summer – Texas Tech transfer Michael Brewer and freshman Chris Durkin. Both are expected to be on campus in late May.

Those two, in addition to Mark Leal, Brenden Motley and Andrew Ford, give Loeffler five options to choose from when practice kicks off in early August. He expects to make a decision quickly.

"You can't rep five guys," Loeffler said. "It's impossible to rep five guys. We'll get it down to the top two, top three, wherever we're at. That's not the first time we've had to pick a starting quarterback in the fall. We'll get a great evaluation over the next couple of months and make a decision."

In the final depth chart before the spring game – the coaching staff did not do a depth chart following the game – Motley held a tentative grip on the top spot at the position. He did not play a snap last season, but showed flashes of talent this spring – and also flashes of

inexperience.

He completed 6 of 11 for 72 yards, with an interception in the spring game. His best performance this spring came in the second scrimmage, when he completed 12 of 20 for 163 yards and a touchdown.

"He's improved," Loeffler said. "Obviously, he was getting reps for the first time. Last year, he didn't get a lot of reps because No. 1, he wasn't in spring football (knee injury), and No. 2, I got Logan [Thomas] as many reps as I possibly could and Mark received the rest. We didn't rep a third last year.

"I'd like to get it that way with these five guys. I'd like to get it to two guys who I think have a shot and rep them to death and see where this thing goes. But Brenden's improved."

Leal, the lone senior in the group, was at the top of the depth chart during the early part of spring. But he missed the team's second scrimmage because of a knee/hamstring injury, and Motley jumped him after his strong performance.

Ford, who enrolled in January, took advantage of an opportunity in that second scrimmage with Leal on the sideline. He completed 12 of 15 for 150 yards, with a touchdown and an interception. He was sacked several times, and he got off to a slow start, but got better as the scrimmage went along.


Leal's return limited the number of reps that Ford received the rest of spring practice. However, Loeffler was able to get a good evaluation of him.

"He's a guy right now that should be hanging out in high school," Loeffler said. "He needs to physically get bigger. He needs to work on technique some. He's going to be a guy that will do all of the above. He's going to gain 15 pounds, no doubt. He's a smart kid. He'll fight his tail off to get where he needs to be. But it's going to be a process."

Brewer represents an intriguing option. He was set to be the starter at Texas Tech last season, but an injury allowed two others to jump him, and he decided to transfer to Blacksburg. Durkin, at 230 pounds, will be the biggest quarterback on the roster, but he also can run.

In fact, all five of the contenders possess that trait – which Loeffler likes.

"Football has changed in terms of you better have a guy who can extend a play because it's not always perfect," he said. "You want it perfect, but it's not always perfect. So having a guy back there who can get out of trouble is an advantage, for sure.

"All the guys we have here have enough speed and athletic ability to get themselves out of trouble, and that's what we want. We want a guy that can first throw the football, but not just throw the football. We want a guy that can throw, extend a play, have some athleticism to run some spread runs and go from there." 



Marshawn Williams

Coleman, Williams lead contingent of running backs this spring

by Jimmy Robertson

Following signing day this past February, a day in which Virginia Tech's coaching staff signed two of the best tailback prospects in the country, Tech fans found themselves wondering how things would shake out with all those tailbacks on the roster.

But Hokie Nation can rest easy, as running backs coach Shane Beamer has a plan.

"We've got a top three coming out of spring, and we want those top guys working with the first-group offensive line [in August], so they'll get the majority of the work," Beamer said. "Then the rest of those guys will work with the next group. You can't rep seven guys. I might be able to get away with getting them all reps that first week of practice, but after that, we need to narrow it down."

Coming out of spring, J.C. Coleman, Marshawn Williams and Trey Edmunds stood as the top three tailbacks on the depth chart.

Edmunds, of course, missed spring practice while recovering from the broken leg that he suffered in the Virginia game last November. He started 10 games last season and led the Hokies with 675 yards and 10 rushing touchdowns. Tech's sports medicine staff expects Edmunds to be 100 percent by the time August practices start.

"In our minds, Trey has earned the right to be in the top three based on what he did last year," Beamer said. "We've got to see how he comes back, but we expect him to be 100 percent, and he'll have the opportunity to show that he is."

Coleman served mostly as Edmunds' backup a year ago. He finished third on the team in rushing with 284 yards and a touchdown. This spring, he took on a leadership role, mentoring Tech's stable of young backs. There is only one senior in Tech's backfield – walk-on fullback Greg Gadell.

"J.C. didn't have a bad day this spring," Beamer said. "He was so consistent. He tried to be a leader and played with a lot of effort and energy. He did a good job."

The talk of spring, though, was Williams, the 232-pound freshman who enrolled in January after graduating early from Phoebus [Va.] High School. As expected, he ran through tackles and ran over defenders, but he is more than that.

Williams possesses an uncanny ability to make people miss, which belies his size. His vision enables him to see holes quickly and then explode through them. Those attributes surprised Tech's staff this spring.

"I didn't know he had that much make-you-miss ability," Beamer said. "I didn't know he had the balance that he has. He's a big guy to begin with, and even if people have a clean shot on him, he's hard to bring down. Even if they hit his legs, he's got great balance and is able to stay on his feet. He really picked up the offense, too. It's important to him. He reminds me of J.C. when J.C. was a freshman. He watches a lot of video and picks stuff up. I can only think of a handful of busted assignments this spring."

"We've got to continue to keep his weight under control and get him faster and get him quicker. We'd like to get him in that 225-230 range. He needs to have a great summer with Coach [Mike] Gentry in the weight room and run his butt off and come back in great shape. But I'm excited about his potential."

The other tailbacks in the mix include Joel Caleb, Chris Mangus, Jerome Wright and Shai McKenzie, who, like Williams, graduated from high school early and enrolled at Tech in January. McKenzie missed spring practice while recovering from a

RUNNING BACKS

SPRING DEPTH CHART

TAILBACKS

- 4 J.C. Coleman (5-7, 191, Jr.)
- 14 Trey Edmunds (6-1, 217, r-So.)
- 42 Marshawn Williams (5-11, 232, Fr.)
- 15 Joel Caleb (6-2, 205, r-So.)
- 28 Chris Mangus (6-0, 182, r-So.)
- 39 Daniel Dyer (5-10, 208, r-Sr.)
- 25 Jerome Wright (6-2, 224, So.)
- 22 Shai McKenzie (5-10, 212, Fr.)

FULLBACKS

- 45 Sam Rogers (5-10, 215, So.)
- 47 Greg Gadell (5-10, 214, r-Sr.)
- 46 Griffin Hite (5-11, 234, r-Jr.)
- 44 Mike Wandey (5-11, 223, r-Fr.)

torn ACL suffered last September. Beamer plans on getting McKenzie work in August practices to get a gauge on where he is in his rehab from the injury.

Beamer liked what he saw from the other tailbacks, but not quite enough to lift them to the top of the depth chart.

"I thought Joel had a really good spring," Beamer said. "He will have the opportunity in the fall to get back in that top three. He brings a lot to the table. Right now, as far as being an every-down tailback, those other three guys are ahead of him, but I think he's made a lot of strides. I'm not disappointed in Joel at all."

"Chris needs to be more consistent – on and off the field. He's got tons of ability. He's got speed. He's got a burst. But he needs to get stronger."

At fullback, Sam Rogers returns and enjoyed a terrific spring. His versatility as a runner, receiver and blocker appeal to the staff, as well as his instincts. He knows the offense, and football just makes sense to him.

"I think we could put him at any position on our team except for maybe offensive line or defensive line, and he'd find a way to get it done," Beamer said. "I look out my office window, and half the time, he's on the practice field working on something. He's going to get every single ounce out of his ability and body that he can, and he's just a really good football player."

The Hokies averaged 120 yards rushing per game a year ago – not up to their usual standards. But the talent and depth are in place, and hopefully that number rises substantially this fall.



Deon Newsome

Receiving group this spring a nice blend of veterans and younger players

by Jimmy Robertson

Tech's struggles in the running game a year ago have been well documented, but some of those issues came about because of the Hokies' inability to make big plays in the passing game.

Last season, the Hokies hit on just three passing plays of 50 yards or more, and their inability to stretch the defense clogged things for the running game. So receivers coach Aaron Moorehead went into this spring focused on getting his receivers to make more big plays.

"I think we did a good job of that this spring," he said. "Demetri [Knowles], Josh [Stanford] and Carlis [Parker] have gotten behind the defense. It's just something that, with a new quarterback, those guys have to time that stuff up. The quarterback has to know what they're thinking, and they have to know what the quarterback is thinking.

"When you look at last year, Demetri played some the year before, but none of those other guys did. We're hoping with the development of Deon Newsome, who can run, and Josh and Carlis and Demetri all can run ... we're hoping we have a nice vertical passing attack next year. We should be greatly improved, and as an offense, we need to have that to be successful."

With the exception of D.J. Coles, the entire receiving group from last season returned. And as expected, Stanford and Knowles came out of spring practice in the top spots on the depth chart at their respective positions, with Willie Byrn as the third receiver and the slot receiver.

Moorehead especially liked what he saw from Stanford, whom he said had the best spring among his group. He expects to get more out of Stanford this upcoming season – he only caught one touchdown pass a year ago.

"He's a guy with playmaking ability," Moorehead said. "He runs good routes and gets open, whether it's press coverage or off coverage. He's proved this spring that he's going to be a playmaker. He's been more consistent, and that's a word we've used with Josh a lot. He's been able to make the plays he's supposed to make, and he's made plays that he wasn't supposed to make.

"That's a big challenge for our whole group. We've got to go from a group that's not just making the plays we're supposed to make to a group that's helping out the quarterback and making the plays that you're not supposed to make."

Byrn and Knowles led the Hokies in receiving a year ago, with Byrn catching 51 passes and Knowles hauling in 45. Moorehead liked what he got from both of them this spring. He especially liked the effort that Knowles displayed when it came to blocking in the running game – a previous issue.

Tech's younger receivers showed a lot of promise this spring, with the trio of Newsome, Parker and Charley Meyer getting a lot of reps. But they're still relatively young. Newsome took a redshirt season last fall, and while Parker played in 10 games last season as a true freshman, he did not catch a pass (though he ran six times for 40 yards in the Sun Bowl). Meyer, a rising redshirt sophomore, played in 11 games and caught one pass.

Meyer fits in as a backup to Byrn in the slot role, while Moorehead expects to see big plays coming from Newsome and Parker.

"Deon Newsome showed some flashes of big-time ability," Moorehead said. "That's not surprising. We saw that in the fall. He just didn't

WIDE RECEIVERS

SPRING DEPTH CHART

FLANKERS

- 80 Demetri Knowles (6-1, 178, r-Jr.)
- 82 Willie Byrn (5-10, 183, r-Sr.)
- 20 Deon Newsome (5-11, 186, r-Fr.)
- 37 Michael Brainard (6-0, 188, r-Jr.)

SPLIT ENDS

- 5 Josh Stanford (6-1, 196, r-So.)
- 16 Carlis Parker (6-3, 195, So.)
- 83 Charley Meyer (6-1, 211, r-So.)
- 85 Austin Jones (6-2, 193, r-So.)
- 18 David Prince (6-1, 185, r-Fr.)

have a chance to learn the offense. I thought he picked up on it well this spring, and by the time he gets to the fall, he'll have a good understanding of what's going on. I think his role is still a work in progress, and that's not a bad thing. You want him to keep developing. Every time you're out there, you want to see him improving.

"Carlis is like Deon – every day is a work in progress. He's got some natural athletic ability and some natural wide receiver instincts, but he still needs to polish himself up to be an everyday player. I'm hoping he challenges for a starting role. He got a little taste of it this spring. He's a guy with a lot of ability and a lot of talent. He's our best blocker. He understands how to move his feet, and he's a tough kid. He's got a chance to be a good player for us this fall."

The depth chart at these spots isn't set in stone. Tech's staff signed four talented receivers last February – Cam Phillips, Isaiah Ford, Kendrick Holland and Jaylen Bradshaw – and all four are bigger than 6-foot and fast. They could make the depth chart interesting next August.



Offensive line moving in right direction under new line coach

by Jimmy Robertson

Caleb Farris

OFFENSIVE LINE

SPRING DEPTH CHART

LEFT TACKLES

- 71** Jonathan McLaughlin (6-5, 314, So.)
- 69** Mark Shuman (6-7, 312, r-Sr.)

LEFT GUARDS

- 57** Wyatt Teller (6-5, 296, r-Fr.)
- 75** Alston Smith (6-2, 281, r-So.)
- 55** Brent Benedict (6-5, 302, r-Sr.)
- 68** Marcus Mapp (6-4, 294, r-Jr.)

CENTERS

- 76** David Wang (6-2, 298, r-Sr.)
- 70** Adam Taraschke (6-5, 302, r-So.)
- 61** Kyle Chung (6-3, 281, r-Fr.)

RIGHT GUARDS

- 79** Caleb Farris (6-3, 303, Sr.)
- 72** Augie Conte (6-6, 293, r-So.)
- 74** Braxton Pfaff (6-5, 307, Fr.)
- 62** Ross Ward (6-3, 313, r-Jr.)

RIGHT TACKLES

- 63** Laurence Gibson (6-6, 274, r-Sr.)
- 67** Parker Osterloh (6-8, 321, r-Fr.)
- 64** Andrew Williams (6-0, 268, r-Fr.)

Normally, coaches are teachers, and the players serve as their students, but this spring, Stacy Searels found himself doing as much learning as his players.

Hired in late January to be the offensive line coach, Searels used the NCAA-allotted 15 spring practices getting to know his players, getting to know their strengths and weaknesses, and probably most importantly, finding out who fit in best at what spot.

“I think every day was,” Searels said of his learning experiences. “I think every day was about finding out how they’re going to respond when things don’t go good because, in the season, things aren’t going to go good at times. How are they going to respond when things are going good? Are they going to get too loosey-goosey and not pay attention to detail?”

“The thing I keep coming back to is we want consistency and a high level of competition every day regardless of the situation, whether we’re behind or ahead. We want to play the same way every day.”

Like most line coaches – and Searels is Tech’s third in the past three seasons – they tend to juggle guys at different spots throughout spring practice.

A player may play left guard one practice, right tackle the next and right guard in a scrimmage. That allows a line coach not only to see where that player best fits, but also who plays well around him.

Unfortunately, injuries messed with some of Searels’ plans. David Wang, a center, was in and out of the lineup with an ankle injury, while Kyle Chung, the backup center, injured a shoulder early in spring ball and missed the rest of the spring (surgery is pending). That forced Searels to move Caleb Farris to center on occasions and also to move guard Adam Taraschke to the backup role at center – a position he had never played. At times, issues with snaps created problems with the timing of particular plays.

In addition to those injuries, Jonathan McLaughlin missed some time with an ankle injury, Alston Smith missed quite a few practices with an ankle injury, and Augie Conte injured his hamstring in the final full scrimmage before the spring game. So Searels found himself juggling a little more than he probably would have liked.

“You want to have as much consistency as you can, and that means putting the same five guys out there over and over and over,” he said. “Then they

know how the guy beside them is going to react and how he is going to play.

“It all fits like a glove. You can’t have individuals on the offensive line. We’ve all got to fit together. Having to roll guys around, you want to get the five best out there, and the spring is the time to experiment with that. But we need to start building consistency and continuity.”

A first unit started to emerge toward the end of spring ball. That group featured McLaughlin at left tackle and Laurence Gibson at right tackle, with Farris and Wyatt Teller at the guard spots and Wang at center. Wang’s injury issues usually resulted in Searels shifting Farris to center and playing Conte at right guard with the first unit.

Conte and Teller are two exciting young prospects who could work themselves into starting roles next fall. Both possess the size and strength for it, as both dominated in the weight room this past winter. Teller tends to get all the publicity because of his status as a highly regarded recruit out of the 2013 recruiting class, but Conte arguably played better on the field this spring.

“Wyatt’s got a long ways to go,” Searels said. “He’s working hard. I’m on him hard. I hope he’s enjoying that. But he’s a work in progress. I think he’s got the ability to be a good player, and we’re going to spend the time with him to get him to be

a good player.

“They’re good kids, and they have a good attitude. They work their tails off. I think they’re going to be good players. They’re still a work in progress. Shifting over to new positions [both worked more at tackle last fall], they’re still a work in progress.”

McLaughlin and Gibson give the Hokies two solid tackles, though McLaughlin, with his size and athleticism, possesses the potential to be much better than solid. Gibson, too, possesses athleticism, but Gibson lost a ton of weight during the offseason, around 15-20 pounds, and Searels wants him to return to his previous weight, somewhere in the neighborhood of 290-300.

“A good player doesn’t necessarily have to weigh 300 pounds, but it seems to be a common trend that all the NFL guys are 300 pounds,” Searels said. “It seems to be a common trend that all teams that are playing for the national championship have 300-pound guys. He [Gibson] has tremendous athletic ability and the frame to carry it very easily.”


Tech’s second unit currently features a mixture of veteran players, such as Mark Shuman and Brent Benedict, and younger players, like Smith, Chung, Taraschke and Parker Osterloh. Of this group, only Benedict has started a game – he

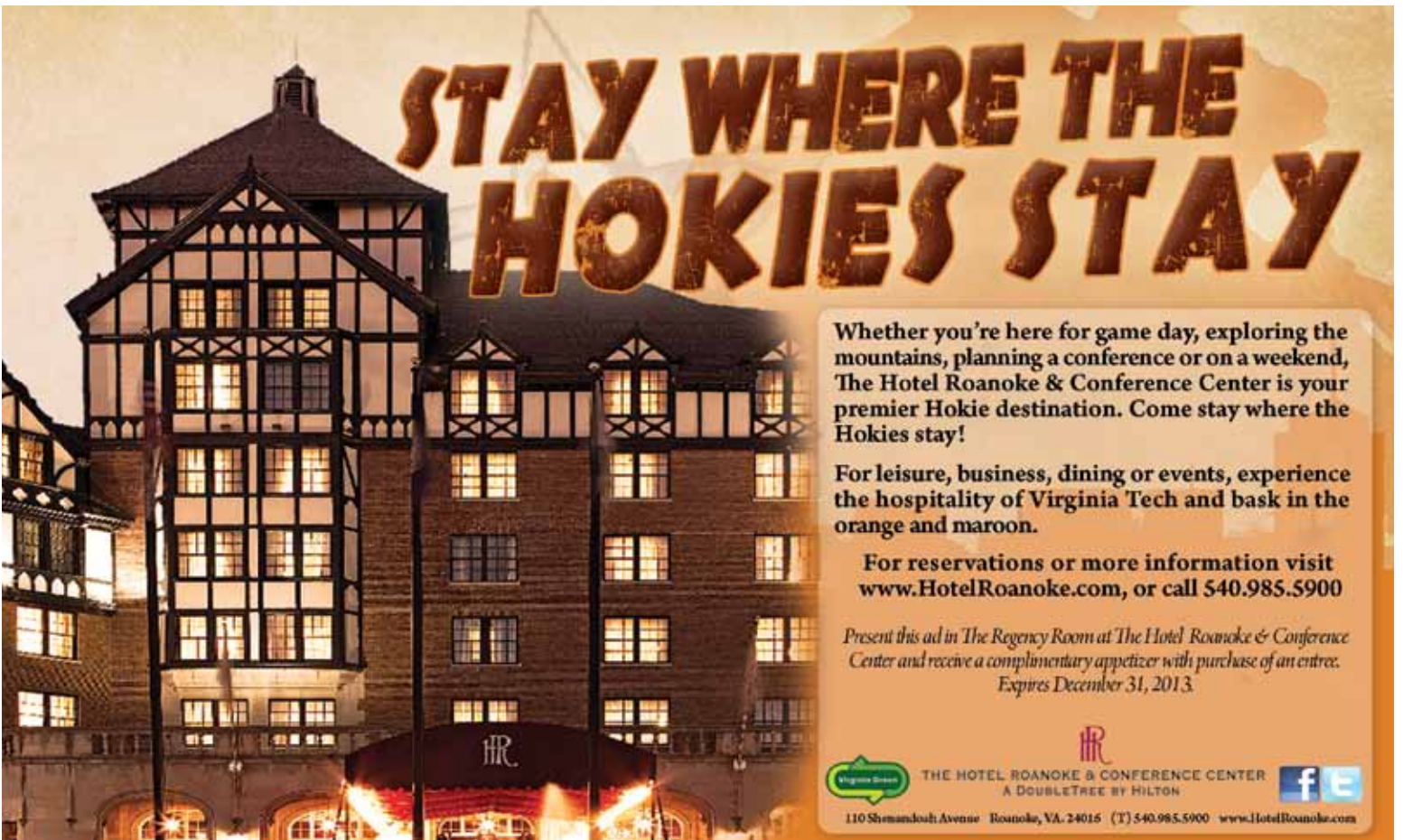
started seven a year ago and played nearly 600 snaps.

All of that second group worked at different spots along the line this spring, as Searels wanted to do more than develop depth. He wanted to develop versatility –and for good reason.

“Things are going to happen during the season and someone is going to be down, and I’m going to put in the next best player out there, not just the next best, say, right guard,” he said. “It might be the backup left tackle who is the sixth-best player. He’s got to be able to play multiple positions and fit in.”

As his group heads into summer workouts, Searels wants to see consistency – he said Farris was probably his most consistent performer this spring – and continued improvements in all areas. He hopes to see his linemen attack the weight room in the manner in which they attacked it over the winter, but he also wants more.

“We’ve got to get healthy and stay healthy,” he said. “Our guys did a great job in offseason in the weight room, and we’ve got to continue on that and there are a few others that could improve. But knowledge of the game and understanding situations and understanding assignments and techniques, we’ve got to get a lot better at those things.” 






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Bucky Hodges

Tight ends a strong part of Tech's offense coming out of spring ball

by Jimmy Robertson

Tight ends coach Bryan Stinespring has spent the past two years working around injuries to players at his position.

Two years ago, Randall Dunn and Eric Martin battled an array of injuries that limited them and their production. Last August, starter Ryan Malleck suffered a shoulder injury that required surgery, and he missed the entire season.

This spring, Malleck was in the latter stages of his recovery, and last year's starter, Calvin Cline, nursed a knee injury. So Stinespring held both of them out of any scrimmage work. He wanted his tight ends at full strength going into next fall, so why put that at risk?

"Both of them are still in the recovery aspect with their injuries," Stinespring said. "They're on the far end of it, but still, we wanted to be cautious."

All was not lost this spring for Malleck and Cline, though. Both spent the first six or seven practices working with the tight ends on drills, and in the case of Malleck, he knocked off the rust after not having played in nearly eight months. Both of them got enough work to know their roles this upcoming fall.

"I like where those guys are," Stinespring said. "We got them adequate work, the work that they needed. We introduced them to the three tight end sets, so they became familiar with what they were doing out of different sets, and that was important.

When they are out there, I believe it creates a lot of diversity with us as a position and as an offense."

The beneficiaries of Cline's and Malleck's absences from the scrimmages were Darius Redman, Bucky Hodges and Dakota Jackson. The three of them got more reps than even they probably expected.

Redman gives the Hokies size at 6-foot-4 and 272 pounds and also experience, having played in all 13 games a year ago. He fits into the role of a blocker in traditional pro-set formations, with an ability to catch a pass if needed.

The eye opener of the spring, though, was the transition of Hodges from quarterback to tight end. Stinespring knew he was getting a great athlete in Hodges, who runs a 4.4 at 6-6 and 243 pounds, but Hodges showed Stinespring a willingness to do the other things that the position demands – and do them well.

"There were aspects and concerns that I had about how long it would take him to transition," Stinespring said. "Those were quickly diminished or completely removed. The measurables – 6-6, 245, runs a 4.4 – those speak for themselves. But he was more physical than I thought he would be. He's got a willingness to mix it up in the run game. That was an unknown. I was surprised, not that I didn't think he would, but I thought it would be a gradual climb.

TIGHT ENDS


SPRING DEPTH CHART

- 88 Ryan Malleck (6-4, 241, r-Jr.)
- 89 Calvin Cline (6-4, 243, So.)
- 33 Darius Redman (6-4, 272, r-Jr.)
- 7 Bucky Hodges (6-6, 243, r-Fr.)
- 49 Dakota Jackson (6-3, 256, r-So.)
- 86 Jack Willenbrock (6-2, 215, r-So.)

"He's got things to learn. He's got to learn that he can't out-run everybody. He's got to learn certain routes better. He's got so much confidence that he can out-run people that he's not always trying to set up routes and getting a feel for it. He's got to work on his footwork, too, but that's just a matter of getting more repetitions. The advantage of Calvin and Ryan being hurt was that we were able to bring Bucky further along than we would have otherwise."

Like Redman, Jackson brings size to the position. At this stage in his career, he fits in more as a blocker and needs to work on his quickness.

Overall, the tight ends are arguably the strongest part of Tech's offense, and offensive coordinator Scot Loeffler plans on using them in multiple ways next fall.

"Between Bucky and Ryan and Calvin, they enable us to be flexible and be in different sets based on what they can do," Stinespring said. "That's a great commodity to have." 

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A lot happens over the course of the spring game weekend, starting with the HokieBird Festival, which was held across the street from Lane Stadium and was a hit with small children.



Children of all ages joined thousands of Tech fans to watch the annual Maroon-White game at the stadium.



Before the game, a spirit clinic was held at Cassell Coliseum for children ages 5-18, and those participating in it got to perform a routine on the Lane Stadium field before the Maroon-White game.



Donovan Riley (2) and the White team won the game 7-3, giving "honorary" coach Mike Goforth a win and a specially made hat.



Following the game, fans got to go onto the field for an hour-long autograph session with the players. Marshawn Williams' autograph was a popular item.





Ken Ekanem

First-team defensive line solid, but Hokies need for depth to emerge

by Jimmy Robertson

Outside of the quarterback position, no group of players received more scrutiny this season than Tech's defensive linemen, as line coach Charley Wiles began the process of finding replacements for James Gayle, J.R. Collins, Derrick Hopkins and Tyrel Wilson.

Coming out of spring practice, Wiles felt good about a first unit that included ends Ken Ekanem and Dadi Nicolas and tackles Luther Maddy and Corey Marshall. But he admitted the Hokies lacked depth up front.

"What we've got to get out of that second group, really, is more production," Wiles said.

"You see a lot of drop-off from the first group to the second group in terms of playmaking. That's my message to my guys. We need to make more plays. Don't be just a guy holding up in your gap. We've got to make more tackles and affect the game more. We're close, but there's still a drop-off there."

Wiles' first team enjoyed a good spring practice, particularly the inside tandem of Maddy and Marshall. In Maddy, the Hokies get an All-ACC player (third team), but the key to the front may be the play of Marshall, who took time away from the program for a brief period

DEFENSIVE LINE

SPRING DEPTH CHART

ENDS

- 4 Ken Ekanem (6-3, 245, r-So.)
- 43 Seth Dooley (6-5, 248, r-Fr.)
- 42 Laird Gardner (6-1, 227, Jr.)

STUD ENDS

- 90 Dadi Nicolas (6-3, 218, r-Jr.)
- 87 Dewayne Alford (6-2, 243, r-So.)
- 93 Jeremy Haynes (6-3, 222, r-So.)

NOSE TACKLES

- 96 Corey Marshall (6-1, 257, r-Jr.)
- 77 Wade Hansen (6-6, 291, r-Jr.)
- 99 Vinny Mihota (6-5, 249, Fr.)

TACKLES

- 92 Luther Maddy (6-1, 291, Sr.)
- 95 Nigel Williams (6-2, 289, r-So.)

last year to deal with personal issues and later ended up taking a redshirt year after head coach Frank Beamer let him return to the team.

Marshall, who was named the most valuable performer on defense this spring, played the role of disruptor on the field, creating havoc inside and easing the concerns of losing Hopkins, a productive player who worked well with Maddy. Marshall will stay at tackle. In fact, Wiles did not give Marshall a single rep at defensive end, where he played for most of his first two years.

“The best thing for our football team has been Corey’s attitude and approach,” Wiles said. “He’s been very team-oriented, and he really adds a lot of playmaking ability inside. He’s seeing that on video right now just how productive he is at defensive tackle. He’s very explosive.”

Explosive also describes the play of both Nicolas and Ekanem, particularly Nicolas, who played more than 300 snaps as a backup a year ago. He gives the Hokies a legitimate pass rushing threat off the edge and will assume the role vacated by Gayle. Ekanem moves into the role vacated by Collins.

“Dadi just has freakish ability,” Wiles said. “He’s as tough physically and mentally as any player I’ve coached. He plays the game with a lot of passion and plays hard. Hopefully, he can continue to get bigger. Who knows what he weighs? If he’s 225, he plays more like a 250-pound kid. If we could get him consistently to be 240 pounds, that would be outstanding. But he had a heckuva spring.

“There was a lot of talk about Ken this spring, and he really stepped up. Can he sustain that energy and level of play for 13 or 14 football games and be productive? I’m optimistic. I was pleased with how physical he was and his approach.”

The backups right now consist of ends Seth Dooley and Dewayne Alford and tackles Nigel Williams, Wade Hansen and freshman Vinny Mihota, who enrolled this past January.

Dooley and Alford generated a lot of buzz because they look the part. Both weigh more than 245 pounds, and both are long – with long arms. Their weight room numbers were similar. Alford possesses a little more strength, while Dooley gets the nod in athleticism – he ran a 4.58 in the 40-yard dash in testing and recorded a 35.5-inch vertical jump in testing.

On the field this spring, Alford was a little more consistent – and he should be. He is a year older than Dooley and played all 13 games last season, mostly on special teams.

“Dewayne quietly had a good spring,” Wiles said. “He’s been physical and given good effort. He’s been coachable. I like working with him, and I think he’s got some ability. He’s big enough, but I want him to get stronger. That plays a big factor in being able to execute and do the things we want to do.

“Seth was inconsistent. He didn’t play as hard as he needed to play, or has hard as the game demands to have success. Now, toward the end, he played faster on a more consistent basis, and that’s what we’re trying to get. He’s got a lot of ability. He’s a 6-5, 248-pound kid who runs a 4.6, but we only got a portion of that. We’re not getting all of that. When we get all of it, we’re going to get a really good player.”

Like Alford, Williams played in all 13 games last season, and he recorded two sacks. He got off to a bit of a slow start this spring, but he finished strong and possesses the ability to be a “third” starter.

Hansen transferred from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, a Division III school in


New York, last year and sat out last fall. This spring, a thumb injury hampered him, but he showed potential. Toward the end of spring, Mihota worked some with the second unit. Wiles thinks the 250-pound Mihota fits in better as a tackle.

“He’s tough and can run for a defensive tackle,” Wiles said. “I think we’ve got him in the best spot. Whether he redshirts or not depends on whether he has a big summer. He needs to get bigger, stronger and faster. I think he’s a heckuva prospect. He’s a rugged guy, and he’s athletic for a guy inside. He’s not as athletic at end, but I liked his progress.”

Keep in mind that Wiles did not have the services of Woody Baron this spring. Baron played last season as a true freshman, but underwent surgery on his foot and missed spring practice. He would give Wiles another option at defensive tackle.

Tech will be lighter up front this upcoming season than in years past. A year ago, Gayle weighed 30 pounds more than Nicolas’ current weight, and Hopkins weighed nearly 40 pounds more than Marshall’s current weight. But Wiles isn’t too concerned about being pushed around up front.

“Most of the time, people are spreading it around and throwing it around and running screens,” Wiles said. “I like being able to run, I know that. It hasn’t been an issue. If you go up against somebody who was going to run it down your throat, then it might become an issue.

“Right now, I like being athletic and on our feet and not on the ground. I like being able to rush the passer and chase the ball. We’ve got 11 guys out there who are playmakers and not a bunch of space eaters. I like having those athletes out there.” 



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Deon Clarke

Linebackers' progress eases concerns about departures of Tyler and Edwards

by Jimmy Robertson

Tech defensive coordinator Bud Foster lost two valuable cogs to his defense when Jack Tyler and Tariq Edwards departed after basically three years of terrific play.

How good were those two? Well, they combined for 59 career starts, 456 tackles, including 55 for a loss, and 15.5 sacks.

But Foster felt optimistic about his group of linebackers following spring practice, as all improved and consistently started making more plays. In fact, as spring practice rolled along, Chase Williams, Deon Clarke and Dahman McKinnon became more and more noticeable in scrimmages.

Faced with the unenviable task of replacing Tyler at the mike linebacker spot, Williams rose to the challenge this spring. Though not quite as instinctive as Tyler, he's just as athletic and his knowledge of the defense enabled him to get his teammates in the right positions. Behind his leadership, Tech's defense dominated in the final spring scrimmage, holding the offense to 106 total yards in more than 80 plays. He also helped his White team dominate in the annual Maroon-White game.

"He had an outstanding spring," Foster said. "He had his best spring since he's been here. We've got him at the mike spot. He's played both positions, but having him at one spot and having him get all those reps ... he played really, really well. I'm pleased with him. He did a good job of getting us lined up and being fundamentally sound. I'm pleased with where he is."

At the other linebacker spot – backer – Clarke and McKinnon waged quite a battle for the top spot on the depth chart. Clarke came out of spring practice on top, but the battle for the starting job will carry into next August.

Clarke resembles Edwards in terms of size and length, but he may be faster and more athletic. He needs to take care of business off the field – he was suspended twice last season – but he possesses the potential to be the next in a line of playmakers at the position.

McKinnon made a lot of plays this spring as well. One of the fastest players on the team, he recorded seven tackles and forced a fumble in the second scrimmage – his best performance of the spring.

In essence, Clarke and McKinnon are No. 1 and No. 1a at the spot.

"Deon really stepped up," Foster said. "He's been very active and made a lot of plays in the blitz game. In the last week, he really took a step forward. D-Mac [McKinnon] had a productive scrimmage in the first and second scrimmages, and he's been around the ball a lot. Both of those kids can really run.

"We've just got to be consistent. I think we've got two really good players right there. In the end, I'm not sure those aren't our two best guys. But we're going to keep it where it is right now as far as that competition and getting a good push and getting everything we need on and off the field."

Foster was asked about moving either Clarke or

LINEBACKERS

SPRING DEPTH CHART

MIKE LINEBACKERS

- 36** Chase Williams (6-2, 215, r-Sr.)
- 54** Andrew Motuapuaka (5-11, 241, r-Fr.)
- 56** Sean Huelskamp (6-1, 212, So.)
- 34** Josh Eberly (5-7, 219, r-So.)

BACKERS

- 40** Deon Clarke (6-2, 221, Jr.)
- 35** Dahman McKinnon (6-1, 208, r-So.)
- 50** Jameion Moss (6-1, 212, r-Fr.)
- 53** Drew Burns (6-3, 214, r-So.)

McKinnon to mike linebacker to get arguably his two best guys on the field at the same time. He said the staff may look at doing that down the road.

"We'll talk about it," he said. "They're [the mike and backer spots] similar positions and yet they're different. I don't want their heads spinning. I want them to be able to perform."

As it stood coming out of spring, Andrew Motuapuaka was listed as the backup behind Williams at the mike linebacker position, though he fractured a shoulder blade in the final scrimmage of the spring. Going into spring practice, Foster thought Motuapuaka could challenge Williams, but Williams' experience and knowledge put him ahead. Motuapuaka learned a lot this spring and figures to be someone to watch down the road.

"I think he's going to be a really good player," Foster said. "I really do. Physically, he has a lot of tools. He just needs to get there mentally. He saw everything. It's not like we were going through a progression. It was slowing down for him, but not as quickly as I wanted. He's going to be better for it. He saw a lot, and he showed flashes. I'm excited about his future and his potential." *VT*



Josh Trimble

Whips linebackers solid this spring, await return of Vandyke

by Jimmy Robertson

WHIPS

Spring Depth Chart

WHIP LINEBACKERS

- 32** Josh Trimble (6-0, 222, r-Jr.)
- 41** Derek Di Nardo (6-0, 207, r-Sr.)
- 1** Quinton Taylor (6-1, 208, r-So.)
- 16** B.J. Martin (6-1, 200, So.)

Tech's coaching staff worked more nickel defense, with five defensive backs, this spring than in previous spring practices, but the coaches have no plans on reducing the role of the whip linebacker position. With solid players returning at this spot, the coaches may actually increase the role this upcoming season.

Coming out of spring practice, Josh Trimble and Derek Di Nardo sat atop the depth chart after good, and more importantly, consistent play this spring.

"Those guys are interchangeable," whip linebackers coach Cornell Brown said. "They trade out back and forth. They're tied with what they bring to the table."

Truthfully, they do resemble each other as players. Di Nardo possesses a little more experience, while Trimble is a little bigger. Trimble started five games last fall and finished with 20 tackles. Di Nardo played in 13 games, mostly on special teams and had nine tackles. Both will figure in heavily on special teams again, as they did a year ago.

Brown thought Trimble's year of experience in the role enabled him to play much faster this spring and be more productive.

"I thought Josh did really well this spring," Brown said. "I thought he improved his overall intensity in playing the game. He showed a lot better understanding of the defense, which allowed him to be more productive. He was a factor on the field. You really noticed him. He showed an ability to cover guys better as well. He got off blocks and beat guys and then went on to make plays. So that part was really encouraging."

As for Di Nardo, Brown liked the way he approached the offseason, starting with his work in the strength and conditioning program.

He got stronger and faster, and it showed on the field this spring.

"Derek got stronger with Coach [Mike] Gentry," Brown said. "He excelled athletically and showed some improvement in his athletic movements. It paid off this spring, as he was able to go out and simply play the game without any worries of trying to do too much. He was able to go out and play and perform."

The unknown with the position centers around the return of Ronny Vandyke, who missed last season after injuring his shoulder in August. He underwent surgery, and Tech's sports medicine staff limited him during spring practice. Vandyke participated in some drills, but nothing in the way of contact.

Vandyke should be at full speed when August practices start. He certainly gives Tech a big (6-3, 204) and athletic whip linebacker.

"I saw him making some improvement back to the player he was movement-wise," Brown said. "I see him gaining more confidence in his body, and that was encouraging. He did a lot of things that showed he was going to be back at full strength and not let that injury affect him.

"I'm really encouraged about where he is right now. I look for him to work hard during the offseason and get himself ready to come back and contribute and be a factor on this defense." **VT**

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Desmond Frye

Defensive backfield loaded with talent and depth

by Jimmy Robertson

DEFENSIVE BACKS

SPRING DEPTH CHART

LEFT CORNERBACKS

- 2 Donovan Riley (5-11, 207, Jr.)
- 23 Der'Woun Greene (5-10, 189, r-So.)
- 27 Curtis Williams (5-10, 170, So.)
- 31 Erikk Banks (5-9, 171, r-Fr.)

FREE SAFETIES

- 8 Detrick Bonner (6-0, 194, r-Sr.)
- 15 Greg Jones (6-2, 203, r-So.)
- 21 Johnathan Galante (5-11, 202, So.)

ROVERS

- 26 Desmond Frye (6-2, 202, Jr.)
- 24 Anthony Shegog (6-1, 211, r-Fr.)
- 12 Zach Snell (5-10, 205, r-So.)
- 14 Zakeel Muhammad (5-10, 170, Fr.)

RIGHT CORNERBACKS

- 11 Kendall Fuller (5-11, 195, So.)
- 19 Chuck Clark (6-0, 208, So.)
- 29 Terrance Travis (5-10, 179, r-Fr.)

Perhaps no group on the Hokies' roster possesses more depth than the defensive backfield – and not just in terms of bodies, but talent. It's almost an embarrassment of riches.

But defensive backs coach Torrian Gray isn't about to apologize. Not after last season, when his top two cornerbacks played together for just two snaps the entire season because of injuries. And not after this spring, when Kyshoen Jarrett missed the entire spring with a shoulder injury and Brandon Facyson missed all but one practice because of a stress reaction in his left leg.

"Hopefully, we can get everyone healthy at one time, but you never know," Gray said. "That may not happen. We'll see how that goes. We were never healthy last year, but obviously the young guys played a huge role for us.

"You have different caliber of players, but I think our depth would be able to sustain a couple of injuries if that were to happen like it did last year. So I'm pleased with the depth and direction we're headed."

Any discussion of Tech's secondary needs to start with Kendall Fuller, last year's ACC Defensive Rookie of the Year. He started 12 of the 13 games as a true freshman and finished with six interceptions.

Though only a rising sophomore, Fuller anchors Tech's secondary. His coverage skills and his ability to tackle in open space allow Gray and defensive coordinator Bud Foster to use him in many ways.

"You don't want to take him for granted because he comes out and he's so consistent every day," Gray said. "He's so smart. He's as smart a cornerback as I've been around. His football IQ and his understanding of the defense has gotten better. He's fundamentally sound, and he's tough. He has all the intangibles, and he's put it all together to have a great spring."

Fuller and Detrick Bonner served as the leaders of Tech's secondary this spring. The Hokies' defense played so well toward the end of spring ball primarily because Fuller and Bonner took care of things on the back end.

Bonner, who has started 30 games the past three seasons, really took on a leadership role this spring. The defense needed it, too, considering only five seniors are projected on the first and second units.

“I’ve been impressed with Detrick,” Gray said. “He’s put an emphasis on being a leader, and I like the way he carried the group and led them and the defense. He was doing what you would hope seniors would do. He’s grasped that part of things, and his play has exemplified that. I’m really pleased with what he’s done this spring.

“The biggest thing he and Kendall do is communicate. They talk, and it’s loud, and there’s no confusion when they’re out there because they’re out there controlling things. I’ve never really had that to the extent that Kendall gives it as a corner, but Bonner, that’s what you expect from your safeties, and he loves that role anyway. It’s been fun to sit back and watch those guys lead and talk and communicate with the group.”

Bonner’s leadership and play this spring also made things easier for Desmond Frye, who worked with the first-team unit because of Jarrett’s injury. Frye made the most of his reps, as Gray felt that Frye was the biggest surprise among his group this spring.

Frye is a long and lanky player who lacks bulk, but he held up pretty well in run support this

spring. In one scrimmage, he made a nice one-on-one tackle of 232-pound tailback Marshawn Williams.

“Desmond has probably been our most improved guy in the secondary,” Gray said. “He’s really stepped up, and because of Bonner and Kendall talking and setting things up, Desmond was able to just go out there and play. I love the way he played. I thought he improved a lot, and I feel much better about him.”

Others who stood out in the secondary this spring included Donovan Riley, Der’Woun Greene and Chuck Clark. Riley worked in Facyson’s spot this spring, getting most of the reps with the first-team unit.

Riley, like Frye, played in all 13 games a year ago, but saw most of his action on special teams. This spring, he showed that he could be a playmaking cornerback.

“He’s been a pleasant surprise in terms of being more consistent,” Gray said. “He has athletic ability, and he has toughness, but the mental aspect slowed him down. He’d do things that weren’t necessarily part of his assignment, and those were the things that kept me from fully trusting him and feeling comfortable with him in a game situation. But he’s taken steps this spring to be much more consistent.”

Gray also liked what he saw from Greene and

Clark. In fact, he said there was not much of a gap between those two and Riley. Greene backed up Riley in scrimmages, while Clark was behind Fuller. Clark also got a lot of reps in Tech’s nickel package (e.g. five defensive backs), as Foster and Gray worked on that package more this spring than in previous springs.

One of these two will end up back at free safety or rover. Greene played at free safety last fall, but Gray may leave him at corner and move Clark back.

“That’s a discussion we’ll have as we go into fall,” Gray said. “I’m pleased with the progress those guys made at corner. Chuck played it some last year, and with Greene, it was new to him. Riley was naturally ahead of those guys, but those guys have done a great job, and I like the way they played.”

Tech’s depth chart on the opening day of practice in August probably features a first-team unit of Fuller and Facyson at the corner spots, with Bonner and Jarrett at the safety and rover positions, respectively. The backup corners will be Riley and Greene (or Clark), with Frye and either Greene or Clark working as backups at the free safety and rover positions.

Gray has a lot of depth, a lot of talent and a lot of flexibility in the defensive backfield. As he found out last year, he may need it. **VT**

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TC67321 (03/12)

Beamer still searching for Tech's 2014 field-goal kicker

by **Jimmy Robertson**

Following the spring game, Tech coach Frank Beamer was asked if he felt comfortable playing a true freshman at kicker.

"Did Shayne Graham play as a true freshman?" he jokingly asked.

When informed that Graham played as a true freshman, Beamer said that he, indeed, would feel comfortable playing a true freshman at kicker.

"I would. I think if a guy has got it, then he's got it," he said. "It takes a special guy to be a great field-goal kicker. I really believe that. Confidence is one thing, but looking forward to the big moment ... you want a guy who can't wait to celebrate instead of a guy who goes, 'Whew, I hope I make this.' You want that guy who can't wait to celebrate. If we've got that guy, then we'll be OK."

Beamer wasn't sure that he had that guy coming out of spring practice. Ten days prior to the spring game, Michael Branthover stood atop the depth chart at kicker. Then a couple of days before the game, Beamer cited the kicking of Remington Hinshaw, a transfer from the University of Richmond, and listed him as the top kicker. Eric Kristensen made a 28-yard field goal in the spring game, so Beamer has three potential candidates, but no sure thing.


"None of them have separated themselves, and

that's what I was hoping would happen," Beamer said. "All of them have had their moments, and all of them are good kickers, but none of them have separated themselves.

"We've got two coming in here [this summer], and I'll give them a chance to separate themselves. If a kicker has it, he can come in there and play quickly. Experience helps, there is no doubt about that, but if you have the ability to be a kicker – and to me, it's the hardest thing in football because you're going out there and making a very exact motion and then you run off the field – but the guy that has that feature about him can be our kicker this upcoming fall."

Beamer has less concerns at punter, where A.J. Hughes returns after an All-ACC season, and at snapper, where both Eddie D'Antuano and Joe St. Germain possess experience snapping the ball. Mitchell Ludwig or Branthover figures to be the kickoff guy.

But finding a kicker is paramount. The Hokies missed 11 field goals last season, including seven from 40 yards or less.

Like with the quarterback position, the search will continue in August – and will take on just as much importance. 

SPECIAL TEAMS

SPRING DEPTH CHART

KICKERS

- 2** Remington Hinshaw (5-8, 178, r-Jr.)
- 22** Eric Kristensen (5-11, 162, So.)
- 14** R.J. Warfel (5-10, 164, r-Fr.)
- 38** Michael Branthover (5-9, 202, Sr.)
- 30** Mitchell Ludwig (5-11, 195, So.)

PUNTERS

- 27** A.J. Hughes (6-1, 212, Jr.)
- 30** Mitchell Ludwig (5-11, 195, So.)

SNAPPERS

- 59** Eddie D'Antuano (6-6, 265, r-So.)
- 65** Joe St. Germain (6-0, 220, r-Sr.)
- 48** Colton Taylor (6-0, 207, r-Fr.)

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Breakfast of Champions spotlights work of FCA and Hokies' team chaplain

by Jimmy Robertson

Virginia Tech football coach Frank Beamer and his wife, Cheryl, have made many charitable contributions over the years, which comes as no surprise to those who know the kind-hearted couple. They even established their own charity, Herma's Readers, a foundation that promotes reading to youngsters during their formative years and is named after Beamer's mother, a former schoolteacher.

But on the morning of the annual Maroon-White game, Beamer spoke to his and his wife's investment in another cause – the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) and the work being done by the Hokies' team chaplain, Dave Gittings.

"It's one of the best investments we've ever made," Beamer told an audience of around 125 people at the sixth annual "Breakfast of Champions" held at Rector Field House.

Beamer, Gittings, Tech AD Whit Babcock, assistant football coach Shane Beamer and players Sam Rogers, Demitri Knowles and Ronny Vandyke all delivered remarks in some form or fashion at the breakfast, which has become an annual spring game tradition. It started when Johnny Shelton served as the team chaplain, and it continues under Gittings, who took over for Shelton last fall after Shelton left to become the chaplain of the NFL's Baltimore Ravens.

The breakfast serves a couple of purposes. From a practical standpoint, it's a fundraiser, though there is no charge to attend. Those who come get to participate in a silent auction, if they wish, and this year's auction featured an array of popular items, including signed memorabilia (helmets, jerseys, photos, etc.) from past Tech players, autographed items by baseball and football stars such as Cal Ripken, Jr., Hines Ward, Tony Dorsett, Ed "Too Tall" Jones, Roger Staubach and others; a framed portrait of golfers Jack Nicklaus, Tiger Woods and Arnold Palmer; and certificates from local golf courses, restaurants and businesses.

The money from the auction serves as a supplement to Gittings' salary (he is not an employee of the athletics department), and the money also helps pay for any other resources that go along with the FCA program. The auction, though, isn't the only way to contribute to the cause. One can simply donate if he or she likes by filling out a form and leaving a credit card number or check, or by visiting the website (vtchaplain.org) and making a contribution that way.



"That's the case with all chaplains and all FCA staffs across the country – we are missionaries, and we're responsible for raising our own support for wherever we are, whether it's on a college campus or even with a professional team," Gittings said. "We have a little more leeway with a professional team. Most times, we'll receive funds from anyone who gives individually, but nothing financially comes from the institution itself."

The more important purpose of the breakfast, though, is that it provides a forum for the FCA, and Gittings, in particular, to educate the people about the work they do and the impact they're having on the student-athletes at Tech, especially the football players. The three players and Shane Beamer participated in a panel discussion with WDBJ-7's Travis Wells, who served as the master of ceremonies at the breakfast and the host of the discussion. They spoke passionately about their faith and the ways in which God continues to move them.

Gittings has established a junior chaplains program, and seven players on the football team serve as junior chaplains. They work in coordination with Gittings and minister to their teammates, usually in a small group setting. The junior chaplains encourage their teammates to participate, but everything is voluntary. Players participate only if they feel led to do so.

Gittings also meets with a group of players in one-on-one settings. The group consists of 16 players, and he sees that group becoming

larger in the future. He continues to coordinate outreach opportunities in which players visit local schools, and he established a "Behind the Bench" program in which his wife, Kim, ministers to other coaches' wives.

"We've been very fortunate that God has given us a great plan in our minds and our hearts, as to how to move the ministry forward," Gittings said. "Johnny [Shelton] did a great job of laying the foundation, and we had to come in and have a plan to move it forward."

"The junior chaplains program is totally exceeding everything I thought it would be. Those guys are really getting after it. There is a hunger and a thirst there, and we know, being a Christian organization, that that comes with a relationship with Christ, but in addition to that, those guys understand that just having a good Biblical view and a moral compass helps everyone on the team."

Gittings sees his and FCA's role expanding on campus. Former Tech player E.L. Smiling is in the process of becoming a full-time staff member with FCA on campus, and plans are in the works to hire a female staff member to minister with women's sports at Tech.

Those plans continue even though the spotlight has been on Christianity recently following an outside group's complaints about Clemson and head football coach Dabo Swinney, a devout Christian who proudly and publicly proclaims his faith. This outside group claims that Swinney

violates the constitutionally protected separation between church and state, arguing that Swinney shows favor to one religion and tries to coerce players of a different faith, using playing time as a way to leverage those players to see his viewpoints.

Clemson and Swinney strongly deny that. But the issue has received national attention and caught the eyes and ears of those within the FCA – an organization that has been involved in athletics since 1954 and whose goal is to use athletics to impact the world for Jesus Christ.

“All we’re wanting to do is just to be a service to any athlete or any coach who wants us around,” Gittings said. “The good news is there are more coaches and athletes who want us around than there are of those in the verbal minority who seem to not want us around. Our goal is to provide a service to the coaches and athletes who want that Biblical view and moral compass encouraged during their college careers.

“One of the roles of a chaplain is to be a comfort in critical situations and be an encouragement, and I think we do that well at the college level. When you have a player that breaks a leg or gets injured seriously, that’s a critical situation, and that athlete needs to be comforted and encouraged in ways that sometimes coaches just can’t do. So we play a pivotal role, and not having

a chaplain around could be detrimental in some cases for an athlete or a coach.

“I don’t think we’re worried [about outside groups] – and I’m not worried – but we are careful. We are concerned about every aspect of the institutions that we serve. We respect our coaches, we respect our athletics directors and we respect our presidents of the institutions we work along with, and we’re certainly not here to make waves or cause problems. We do want to be a help.”

How impactful has Gittings been in less than a year on campus? Five players have given their lives to Christ. Three other players have rededicated their lives, with one of those – former defensive end J.R. Collins – being baptized by Gittings after the spring game.


“Dave is a great guy and a great pastor,” said former defensive tackle Derrick Hopkins, who was a junior chaplain last season. “He loves the



Tech team chaplain Dave Gittings has implemented a junior chaplains program, created an initiative to minister to coaches’ wives and set up various community service outings during his brief time as the chaplain at Tech.

guys, and he loves the Lord. He’s an influential guy. He’s a great guy to have around the team, and his impact has been great.

“You know, when Johnny left, people didn’t know who the new chaplain was going to be, and they were asking was he going to be good and all that. But Dave came in running, and he’s doing great things.”

Those interested in learning about those great things should keep in mind next year’s “Breakfast of Champions.” The event is certainly worth it, but the cause makes it that much more worthwhile. 



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Beyer, Yensen take home 2014 Skelton Award for Academic Excellence in Athletics

by Jimmy Robertson

Tech men's basketball player Christian Beyer remembers well the conversations he and his parents, especially his mother, had about academics during his years as a kid, and later, as a teenager.

They were usually one-sided discussions.

"I always bring up the fact that a lot of kids were getting rewarded for B's and A's in classes, and if I got an A-minus, my mom was upset," he said. "She expected me to do well. It's always been stressed in my family, and I like learning and I take pride in it."

Tech women's soccer standout Katie Yensen tells a similar story, though her father was the one who served as the top figurehead when it came to dialogues on academics.

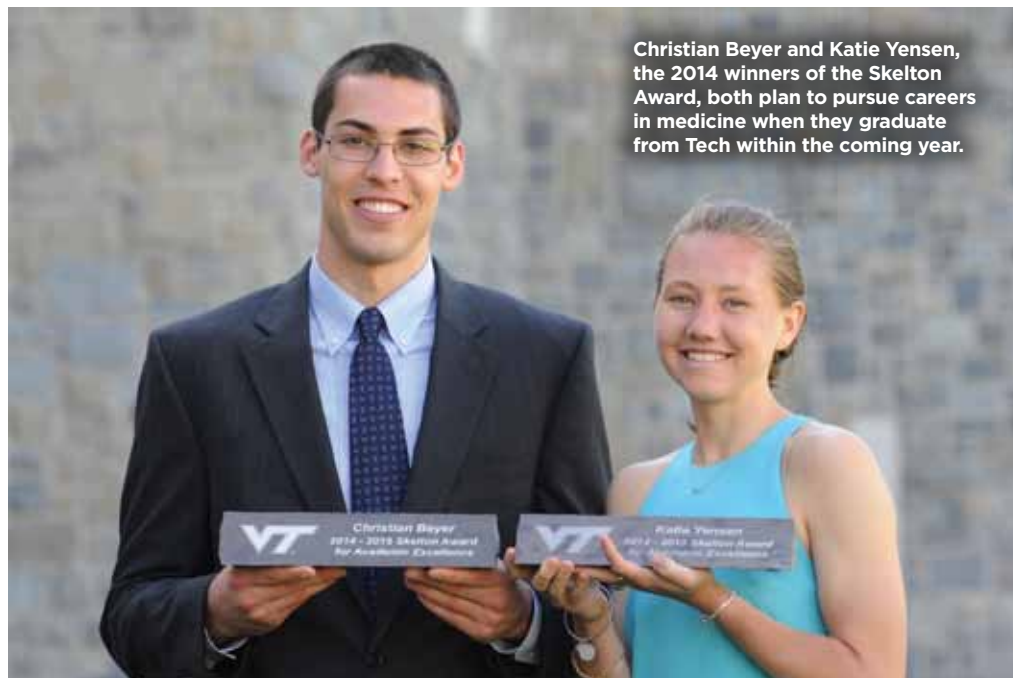
"My dad, in particular, instilled in me from the get-go that academics is primary, always," she said. "My family believes in hard work and dedication, and that applies to a lot of different aspects of our lives – and academics is definitely one of those.

"He made sure it was a priority, but in an encouraging way. He wasn't one of those parents that said, 'Oh, if you don't get an A, you're not having dinner tonight.' He wanted me to learn and do well, and if I got a B, it wasn't the end of the world, but he made me want to push myself and do well in the classroom."

Their parents' firm belief in the importance of education certainly resonated with these two student-athletes, as both 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 27 at the Inn at Virginia Tech.

The Skelton Award, named after the late Dr. Bill and Peggy Skelton, goes 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 and who holds an overall grade-point average of 3.40 or better. Each recipient receives a scholarship of \$5,000.

"I was really excited," Beyer said. "Obviously,



Christian Beyer and Katie Yensen, the 2014 winners of the Skelton Award, both plan to pursue careers in medicine when they graduate from Tech within the coming year.

it's a huge honor. All the time that I've put into schoolwork ... it's just nice to see people rewarding the student-athletes who put the time in in the classroom as well as on the court or whatever sport they play. So I was extremely honored."

"I was very honored and a little surprised," Yensen said, echoing Beyer's comments. "It was something that I wanted, and it's great to be recognized. I've worked hard on the field and off the field, and it's good to be recognized for my academic achievements. I'm very humbled and thrilled."

That the two of them were honored comes as no surprise, as both excel in the classroom – certainly a by-product of their upbringing. Yensen, in fact, has gotten just one "B" as a college student, which came in a physics class. She also has just one "A-minus," which came in one of her biology labs. She ranks in the top one percent of her class at Tech, and both she and Beyer have made the Dean's List every semester since they enrolled at Tech.

Both of them plan on eventually pursuing

medical school when they graduate from Tech – Yensen wants to play soccer for as long as possible – and both are leaning toward becoming orthopaedic surgeons, though Beyer sounded a little more set on that than Yensen, who wants to keep her options a little more open.

"When I was in high school, I tore a couple of ligaments in my ankles and had to visit an orthopaedic surgeon, and I got to see what they did," Beyer said. "I got to shadow one and see him do surgery. So I want to be an orthopaedic surgeon and apply it to the sports medicine world and work with injured athletes."

Beyer, a junior from New Bern, N.C., who is a health, nutrition, foods and exercise major, took a rather unconventional path to this point in his career. He enrolled at Tech as a student in the fall of 2011. He was a good basketball player in high school, but not one who received a ton of Division I interest. He had participated in one of Tech's basketball camps the summer after his junior year of high school, and the Hokies' staff liked him, but they didn't feel he was quite good enough for a scholarship offer.

Beyer came to Tech anyway, and he took care of his basketball itch by playing pickup games at McComas Hall. When then-coach James Johnson needed bodies after attrition left Tech's roster a little thin following his hiring in 2012, he invited Beyer to become a member of the team, seeing him as someone who could help in practices.

Since then, Beyer has played in 51 games, including 28 this past season. He averaged 1.1 points and 2.3 rebounds per game and shot 52 percent from the floor.

Yensen is a little more accomplished athletically. The Falls Church, Va., native – who is a biology major, with a minor in Spanish – enjoyed a terrific fall on the pitch for the Hokies, who made it to the NCAA's College Cup last December for the first time. She recorded seven goals (fourth on the team) and five assists (third on the squad), and she made the ACC All-Tournament Team, scoring a goal in the Hokies' 4-2 upset of then-No. 1 Virginia in the ACC Tournament semifinals.

Yensen has a knack for coming up with clutch goals. She recorded five game-winning goals this past season for Tech and has eight for her career – the third-most in Tech history. Even more impressively, the Hokies are 19-0 in her career when she tallies at least a point in a match.

Yensen's desire to get into medicine stemmed from her background in sports while growing up and also her love for science classes while in high school. A medical service trip to Costa Rica over spring break in March only reaffirmed her desire to pursue medicine, and she plans on taking the MCAT (Medical College Admission Test) in June.

"I'm glad I did that," Yensen said of her Costa Rica trip. "I had shadowed a lot of doctors

beforehand, too. That was good, and it made me realize that I was in the right field. But at the same time, I was wondering if being a doctor in a practice was the way I wanted to go. I still had some questions. But this [the trip to Costa Rica] made me realize that I want to go into medicine, and I want to do more mission trips like this. It opened a lot of possibilities."

Both have busy summers planned. Yensen plans on playing for two soccer teams, taking the MCAT and shadowing an anesthesiologist at a local clinic near her hometown. Beyer is going to the Dominican Republic as part of a summer school course, and then he plans on shadowing an oncologist at a hospital in Charlotte, N.C., for the remainder of the summer.

Yensen and Beyer weren't the only student-athletes recognized at the AD's Honors Breakfast. All members of the 2014 AD's Honor Roll were recognized. The AD Honor Roll is designed to pay tribute to student-athletes who have achieved a grade-point average of 3.0 or better during one or both semesters in the preceding calendar year. Since its inception in 1988, the Honor Roll has recognized an average of more than 200 student-athletes each semester. This year, more than 300 student-athletes made the AD Honor Roll.


The athletics department recognized Dani Anderson from the softball team and Ryan Hawkins from the swimming and diving team for being named the school's ACC Female and Male Scholar Athletes of the Year, respectively. Anderson, a senior from Rio Linda, Calif., will graduate in May with a degree in human, nutrition, foods and exercise and then pursue a doctor of physical therapy degree at Sacramento State, in Sacramento, Calif., next fall.

Hawkins, a senior from Charlotte, N.C.,

is a three-time All-American in the platform diving event and will be at Tech next fall while finishing up coursework toward his degree in architecture. The architecture program at Tech is a five-year program.

The athletics department also honored Scholar Athletes of the Year, an honor that goes to those with the highest GPA in the 2013 calendar year. This list of honorees included women's cross country runners Alex Watt and Frances Dowd, women's soccer player Shannon Mayrose, women's swimmer Caroline Higgins and men's track standout Stephan Munz.

The 2013 All-Academic Team was recognized as well, a group that includes the top performer academically in each sport. The list of honorees included Brad Markey (baseball), Beyer (men's basketball), Uju Ugoka (women's basketball), Kelsey Smith (cheerleading), Jared Berman (men's cross country), Trey Gresh (football), Maclain Huge (golf), Danielle Neuburg (HighTechs), Laney Clarke (lacrosse), Jolie Kipper (managers), Nick Smirniotopoulos (men's soccer), Anderson (softball), Kyle Butts (men's swimming and diving), Hunter Koontz (men's tennis), Tea Ivanovic (women's tennis), Nick Scioscia (trainers), Sabine Kopplin (women's track and field), Tyler Terry (video), Allison Munter (volleyball) and Devin Carter (wrestling).

The athletics department took a moment during the breakfast to recognize Dr. Larry Killough, a professor in the Pamplin College of Business who has been the faculty athletics representative for the past 23 years. Killough is retiring from Tech, and the athletics department gave him an honorary letterman's jacket as a token of appreciation for all his years of service. 

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UP, UP AND AWAY

Martina Schultze didn't try pole vaulting until she was 15 or 16 years old, but five ACC titles and five All-America nods later, the native of Germany has vaulted her way to the top of the list among Tech's all-time greatest female athletes

by Marc Mullen

Culture shock – the feeling of confusion or nervousness caused by being in a place that is very different from what a person is used to – is very common among international students, regardless of where they attend college.

Martina Schultze, who is in her final year of competition on the women's track and field team here at Virginia Tech, is from Uhingen, Germany, and certainly felt that disorientation when she first came to the States.

Shocking, though, is probably the best word to describe what she's done since arriving in Blacksburg in 2011. That includes doing things for the Hokies that very few females have ever done before in the track and field realm.

She recently finished her sixth ACC Championship, combining both the indoor and outdoor seasons, by claiming her fifth straight championship in the pole vault, and with it, she joined some very elite company at the school. She credits an encouraging family, supportive teammates, motivating coaches and the Virginia Tech community, or Hokie Nation, as a whole for helping to achieve this level of success.

Born in Kirchheim unter Teck and raised in Uhingen – a two-plus hour car drive slightly northwest of Munich – Schultze was the youngest child of Cornelius and Renate Schultze's four children, a group separated by 10 years. Anna, who is five years older than Martina, is most responsible for introducing the world of pole vaulting to her younger sister.

"Our parents were always trying to keep us fit, but none of them did track specifically," Schultze said. "My mom did field hockey, and my dad did handball and gymnastics as well.

"My sister and I are both the same height, approximately, and she brought me into it [pole vaulting] because she introduced me to

the regional coach there. I got onto the regional team, and so I practiced there with her, which was really exciting. To have your older sister there, you just feel more comfortable, in the beginning especially.

"I did horseback riding when I was younger. I did gymnastics when I was really young, but I was never good at gymnastics. I was about 15 or 16 years old when I started pole vaulting, which is kind of late, but I saw my sister and I was so inspired by her, and that was what I wanted to do."

Schultze's ascension into the pole vault world took a huge leap upward during the summer of 2009 at the age of 18, roughly three years after picking up the sport. She had qualified for the European Junior Championships in Novi Sad, Serbia, but had no expectations upon entering the event.

"My coach told me, 'In one and a half years there are the European Championships, and you're going to have a chance to qualify and we are going to practice for it.' And that was our focus," she said. "I'd never done that before. I would never have thought of making the international events. I qualify, and we go there, and going in, I was like 10th or ninth. I wasn't ranked high. No one expected me to do well.

"Then there is a qualifying round that's like a day or two before the finals, and the top 12, I think, qualified for the finals. And during the finals, everything went well, and I won."

Winning the event catapulted Schultze onto Virginia Tech's radar. Stephan Munz, who is also in his final year of competing for the Hokies' men's track and field team in pole vault, was kind of the middleman for the coaching staff, as he knew Schultze from his days of living in Germany as well.

The idea of going to another country to study was not foreign for the Schultze siblings, as Schultze's oldest sister and brother had done that, while Anna was the only one who had not.

"My parents are really open with almost everything I'm doing, and they were encouraging me to go," she said. "My oldest sister went to California for a year, and my brother went to China for a year, so they were really open with the kids going somewhere else.

"So when I told them, they were like, 'Yeah, do it! Even if it's only for a year.' And then after it, I came back and told them I wanted to stay longer. I like it so much, and they were like 'OK, sure, do whatever you want. Whatever you think is right.' I'm really lucky for their support. They have been really supportive.

"My sister, Anna, wanted me to go – but she was like, 'No, I don't want to miss you for another two years.' It's just, whenever I look back, I think I made all the right decisions, and that's really important to know, that I don't have any regrets or anything."

The size of everything when Schultze came to Blacksburg was what overwhelmed her at first. The informal way Americans talk to each other was the other thing that she just couldn't grasp.

"Opening up to people and starting to talk to them was my biggest challenge," she said. "In Germany, you just don't randomly talk about things. If they say to you, 'How are you?' they are really asking, 'How are you!' and not just, 'Hey, how are you?'"

"I just had to get used to having random chats with people that don't necessarily mean anything. And I guess I did get many friends here. Sometimes, it was just cultural differences. You can feel like you don't have too

many people you can trust.

“In the beginning, I had to get used to that and felt completely alone in my class because you don’t really have anyone to attach to except for within the track area. Now, I feel super comfortable.”

And certainly comfortable enough to where she was able to leave her mark in the Tech

She also became just the second female to win the ACC outdoor title three straight seasons and helped the Hokies continue their dominance in the pole vault event. Starting in 2007, Tech has captured seven of the past eight ACC indoor titles and five of the past eight outdoor crowns. So 12 of the past 16 pole vault champions have trained in Blacksburg – something not lost on Schultze.

“I think that’s why I enjoy it so much here, coming to Bob [Phillips, the pole vault coach], who is very motivating and very positive. It helped me so much to gain my self-esteem back,” she said. “And then talking to Coach [Dave] Cianelli – I’ve had so many sessions with him in his office where we were just talking. And hearing that someone like Coach Cianelli is

believing in me, and he says something like, ‘I totally see you at the Olympic Games one day. I think you can totally do that.’ That was so important for me to hear.

“When I came to Virginia Tech, I didn’t have a very good season the year before. I wasn’t as successful, and I kind of thought I was done. I was still so young, but I thought maybe I wouldn’t make the jump to the professional level. And then coming here and hearing from people that you’re still so young, you can do so much in your life ... that was really motivating.

“The other day, Coach Cianelli grabbed a

magazine with all the top rankings of the world, and he put it on the desk and said, ‘OK, look. This girl – Yelena Isinbayeva – holds the world record in the pole vault – year 82,’ meaning she was born in 1982. ‘This girl, 83. This girl, 85. How old are you?’ I said, ‘90.’ He said, ‘See, you have so much more in you.’”

Schultze is very thankful for everything she’s gotten here at Tech and appreciative of the experience. According to her, her gaining more self-confidence and improving as she did is partly because of the American culture. She recalls her first days of college and how confused she was when she saw her fellow students walking around wearing Virginia Tech hats and shirts.

“In Germany, we don’t have anything like a team, and you don’t celebrate your college like the way they do here,” she said. “When I saw that, I was like ‘Oh, everyone is wearing Virginia Tech. That’s so awesome!’ Also, people handle success differently here. My teacher sent me an email because he read an article in the paper about me winning the ACC and said, ‘I’m so proud of you,’ and that just made my day. That would never happen in Germany.

“And now, I do understand how big of a deal it is. My first year, I didn’t, and that’s why I think I was so surprised by all this positive feedback because everyone was excited for me to be an ACC champion and going to nationals.

“I think you have to be in the States for a while to realize what it means. I guess it’s a different culture, so you kind of have to figure out what it means to people. And I think I realized how big it was when I was talking to people and getting all this positive feedback and then I realized, ‘OK it means a lot.’ For me, it has gotten really

Virginia Tech Women’s Indoor Track and Field Back-to-back ACC champions (single event)		
Athlete	Event	Years
Patrice Potts	60m	2007-08
Brittany Pryor	Shot Put	2007-08
Martina Schultze	Pole Vault	2013-14

Virginia Tech Women’s Outdoor Track and Field Three-time ACC individual champion (same event)		
Athlete	Event	Years
Queen Harrison	400m Hurdles	2008, 2009, 2010
Dorotea Habazin	Hammer Throw	2008, 2009, 2011
Martina Schultze	Pole Vault	2012, 2013, 2014

record books. Technically, no female athlete has ever vaulted higher than her at an ACC championship competition, but in her first ACC indoor meet, she placed second behind teammate Victoria von Eynatten. Both of them tied the meet record with a 14-foot. 1.75-inch height, but Schultze got second due to more misses.

In her next five ACC championships, Schultze claimed gold, resetting the ACC indoor meet record in 2013. She joined two elite lists (see graph), and notice that she is the only one on both.



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important, too. When I went to ACCs [the outdoor meet], I really wanted to finish my last competition well. I was really nervous, and maybe it's because it has a different value to me now."

Before she heads back to Germany, Schultze, who owns both the school's indoor and outdoor pole vault records, has three more things planned – starting with graduation on May 16. At least one more competition remains as well, the NCAA East Regionals in Jacksonville, Fla., at the end of the month, and if she qualifies, the NCAA Championships in Eugene, Ore., in mid-June.

She has not yet missed a chance to advance to either the NCAA indoor or outdoor championship meets, compiling a total of five All-America honors in that span - four first-team nods and one second team.

Schultze won't be able to match Kristi Castlin's seven All-America honors – the most ever for a Hokie female – but with one more, she will tie both Queen Harrison and Brittany Pryor with six and will become the only Tech women's track and field athlete to be an All-American during both the indoor and outdoor seasons for three straight years.

Pretty shocking, to say the least. 

Martina Schultze has won five gold medals in ACC competition and earned five All-America nods, making her one of the top female student-athletes in Tech history.



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Six Hokies crowned champions at ACC outdoor track and field championships

by Jimmy Robertson

The Virginia Tech track and field teams saw six individuals win ACC championships at the ACC Outdoor Track and Field Championships held April 17-19 in Chapel Hill, N.C.

Behind three individual champions, the Tech men's team finished in fifth place with 78 points, and behind three individual champions, the women's team came in sixth with 69 points.

On the men's side, runner Grant Pollock and pole vaulter Stephan Munz each made history for the Hokies. Pollock became the first Tech runner in history to repeat as the champion of the 1,500-meter run, winning the race in a time of 3:50.34. The junior from Richmond, Va., also became just the eighth person in ACC outdoor track and field history to win back-to-back 1,500-meter titles.

Munz, a redshirt senior from Goppingen,

Germany, won the title in the pole vault with a mark of 17 feet, 10.5 inches (5.45 meters). The win marked the fifth time in six years and the seventh time in 10 that a Hokie has won the event. Munz won his first ACC outdoor title in the pole vault on top of his two indoor crowns (2011, 2013).

Tomas Kruzliak added to the Hokies' point total by winning the hammer throw. The sophomore from Nitra, Slovakia, recorded a throw of 214 feet, 4 inches (65.32 meters) that stood, giving Tech its sixth straight win in the event dating back to 2009.


On the women's side, Martina Schultze, Sarah Rapp and Amanda Smith each won individual titles in their respective events.

Schultze, a junior from Uhingen, Germany, continued her domination of ACC competition in the pole vault. She won her fifth ACC title in the event, hitting a mark of 14 feet, 4.25 inches (4.38

meters) to secure the gold medal. She became only the second woman in ACC history to win three straight outdoor titles.

Smith, a junior from Chesapeake, Va., became the first Tech female to win the ACC title in the 800-meter run. She set the school record with a time of 2:04.45, breaking her previous mark of 2:05.59 set last year. Smith won the 800 crown during the indoor season as well.

Rapp, a junior from Raleigh, N.C., became the first Tech female to win an ACC title in the 5,000-meter run. She ran a personal-best time of 16:12.47, 25 seconds faster than her previous personal best en route to a first-place finish.

Tech's next big meet comes May 29-31 at the NCAA East Regionals in Jacksonville, Fla. The NCAA Championships will be held June 11-14 in Eugene, Ore. 



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