

INSIDE
HOKIES ESPORTS

The Official Magazine of Virginia Tech Athletics

A.D. Vassallo



Brittany Cook



**2008-09
BASKETBALL
PREVIEW**

INSIDE: Both the men's and women's hoops teams have high expectations as the 2008-09 season gets ready to tip off

Collegiate Inn OF BLACKSBURG

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Collegiate Inn Owner:
John Malone
VT Alum, BSEE - 1983

"Our hotel-condo is something our entire family can enjoy for decades to come."

Collegiate Inn Owner:
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Collegiate Inn Owner:
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*Ownership may include rental program opportunities



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Printed by Virginia Tech Printing Services

- 5** Hokie Club News
- 10** VT News & Notes
- 11** From the Editor's Desk
N.C. State provides valuable lesson for Tech
- 12** Kroger Roth Report
Delaney's toughness makes him natural leader
- 14** Compliance Corner
- 16** Men's Hoops Preview
Hokies' hopes high heading into season
- 18** Men's Profiles
- 20** Women's Hoops Preview
Tech anxious to put last season behind
- 22** Women's Profiles
- 24** Administration Feature
'First ladies' of football keep program running
- 26** Football Game Recaps
Hokies rolling heading into second half of season
- 28** Ryan Shuman Feature
Tech center keeps things loose with humor
- 32** Hokies in the Pros
Now in his 10th NFL season, Prioleau helping Jacksonville as a DB and special teamer
- 38** Emily Jukich Feature
Winds of change
- 42** Swimming and Diving Preview
H₂Ogies lost some big names, but have some firepower returning
- 45** Olympic Sports Recaps
Tech volleyball team continues sizzling start



Men's Basketball
Head Coach
Seth Greenberg

VT ATHLETICS UPCOMING EVENTS

OCTOBER



NOVEMBER

BASKETBALL

HOME OPENERS

NOVEMBER

17	Volleyball vs. Wake Forest <i>Think Pink! Breast Cancer Awareness Night!</i>	6 p.m.
18	Volleyball vs. Duke <i>Free VT T-Shirts!</i>	7 p.m.
19	Women's Soccer vs. Maryland <i>Think Pink! Breast Cancer Awareness Night!</i>	7 p.m.
21	Men's Soccer vs. Appalachian State <i>Free VT Car Flags!</i>	7 p.m.
24	Volleyball vs. Florida State	7 p.m.
25	Volleyball vs. Miami	6 p.m.
	Swimming & Diving vs. NC State & WVU	1 p.m.
30	Women's Soccer vs. Wake Forest <i>Halloween with the Hokies!</i>	7 p.m.

2	Women's Soccer vs. Duke	2 p.m.
7	Volleyball vs. NC State <i>Kids Night! Free Autograph Books!</i>	7 p.m.
	Men's Soccer vs. Boston College <i>Free VT Gloves!</i>	7 p.m.
8	Swimming & Diving vs. Clemson	11 a.m.
	Volleyball vs. North Carolina <i>Free HokieBird Bobblehead Dolls!</i>	7 p.m.
9	Wrestling vs. George Mason	7 p.m.
14	Volleyball vs. Boston College	3 p.m.
15	Volleyball vs. Maryland	6 p.m.

10	Women's Basketball vs. Peach State 7 p.m. (Exhibition)
14	Women's Basketball vs. UNC Greensboro 6 p.m.
	Men's Basketball vs. Gardner-Webb 8 p.m.
<i>Free Basketball Schedule Magnets!</i>	



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THE HOKIE CLUB ... THE OFFICIAL FUNDRAISING ARM FOR VIRGINIA TECH ATHLETICS.

The Hokie Club ... the Hokie Nation in true form. **The Hokie Club ...** responsible for raising all scholarship support for Virginia Tech's 21 varsity sports, capital projects and athletics department programmatic needs. **The Hokie Club ...** the crowd jumping around as the team runs out of the tunnel into Lane Stadium and onto the court in Cassell Coliseum. **The Hokie Club ...** Supporting Tech athletics since 1949!



WAYS TO GIVE: "HOKIE MATIC"

When making a gift of cash to the Virginia Tech Athletic Fund, there are several payment schedules that Hokie Club members can choose from, including making monthly, quarterly or lump sum payments. An increasingly popular payment option that many Hokie Club members are selecting involves setting up a monthly electronic transfer, called "Hokie Matic."

The "Hokie Matic" electronic transfer option allows the member to have his or her annual donation drafted with even payments on a monthly basis from a specified banking account. Either checking or savings accounts are acceptable. Drafts will occur automatically on either the 15th or 30th of each month as specified by the member. The Hokie Club will automatically renew the member's "Hokie Matic" membership each year until directed otherwise by the member, and therefore, the member will never become inactive.

Once Hokie Matic has been set up and the first payment has been received, the Hokie Club will award full privileges for the member's corresponding annual membership level (i.e. Platinum Hokie, Golden Hokie, etc.). To make any changes or to stop an existing "Hokie Matic," please complete a new form and send to the Hokie Club office. **It is important to note when setting up memberships that "Hokie Matic" forms must be set up prior to Dec. 1st, 2008 for privileges to be awarded for 2009.**

As it applies to the December 31st, 2008 Benefits Deadline for all 2009 benefits, members who set up "Hokie Matic" will receive priority points for the amount that has been drafted as of December 31st, 2008. If a new Hokie Club member sets up "Hokie Matic" and their account has only been drafted a few times before the December 31st, 2008 Benefits Deadline, this will affect their current giving points in the point priority system. In this instance, the member will receive all base club points afforded to him/her, but will have less current giving points. This will affect the member's point priority ranking against other Hokie Club members in the same giving level for benefits (e.g. tickets, parking, etc.).

For a "Hokie Matic" form, visit our website at www.hokieclub.com.



For more information on how to give to Virginia Tech athletics, contact the Hokie Club at (540) 231-6618 or visit hokieclub.com.



I'm a Hokie Club member because I felt it was the best way to help Tech... ! It has an incredible influence in positive change at our school.

Andy McCullough

Hokie Club Level:

Hokie Century Champion

Family members:

Erika (wife), Katie (5-year-old daughter), Matthew (almost 3-year-old son), and Buddy (8-year-old pup). Katie believes she lives in Norfolk, Virginia Tech, even when corrected!

Q: What year did you graduate?

A: 1993

Q: A Hokie is...

A: a great spirit. I have a lot of non-Hokie friends, but once they experience it, they get it. I do still like the "Fighting Gobblers," too (from just the mascot point)!

Q: The Hokie Nation is real because...

A: of that spirit. Anywhere and everywhere you go, that common feeling is evident. Tech is a special place.

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

A: I have several. For some reason, the away football game at Miami to win our first ACC championship sticks out. A few of us made the trip and just remember being so proud and happy at the end of that game. There were similar feelings during our national championship run, but that one moment sticks out.

More recently, the play of our basketball team and the job Coach Greenberg has done has been incredible. I grew up a Maryland and ACC fan, and to see us compete for the title in three of the past four years, and whip up on UVa consistently, always makes me smile. We are very fortunate to have the coaches we do at Tech; Coach Beamer, Greenberg, Hardwick, Thomas, and all of the assistants we have met combine for a great team.

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

A: I wanted to do something for Tech in thanks for all I have gotten out of being involved. A friend introduced me to the Hokie Club some years ago and the rest is history- bowl games, Hackin' Hokies, road trips – it all makes me very proud to be a Hokie.

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

A: Like a lot of friends I know, when I came home from my visit, I told my parents I wanted to go to Tech. What always impressed me when I was a student was that the records of the teams were not as important as Tech overall. We didn't win much when I was at Tech, but still managed to fill the stadiums and fields most of the time. And beat the Wahoos quite often!

Q: Describe your perfect day at Virginia Tech.

A: House full of friends, visiting the bookstore, knowing we'll stay for the whole weekend. Of course, a Hokies win every time.



FINANCIAL CORNER

Supporting Tech Athletics Since 1949

On March 11th, 1949, business and alumni leaders met with the intention of establishing a formalized way to financially contribute to intercollegiate athletics for Virginia Tech. The result of this meeting was the creation of the **Virginia Tech Student Aid Association, Inc.** With the hiring of a part-time director in 1951 and the classification as a non-profit, tax-exempt and deductible organization in 1955, the **Hokie Club**, as it was most commonly referred to as, was well on its way toward blazing a trail as one of the first fundraising organizations in intercollegiate athletics.

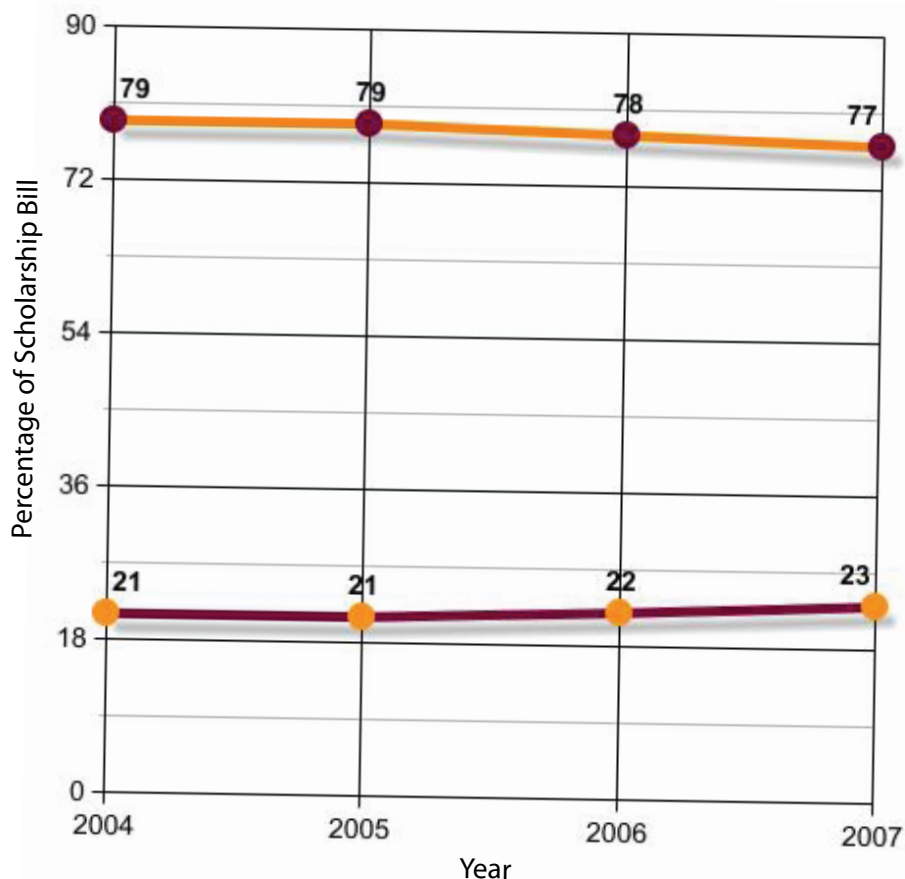
In 1989, the Virginia Tech Student Aid Association, Inc., expanded its mission to include raising funds for all athletic purposes: scholarships, capital improvements and programmatic needs. At this time, the official name of the organization was changed to the **Virginia Tech Athletic Fund, Inc.**, in an effort to more appropriately reflect the mission of the organization.

Athletic Scholarship Quick Facts: 2007-08 Academic Year (Estimated)

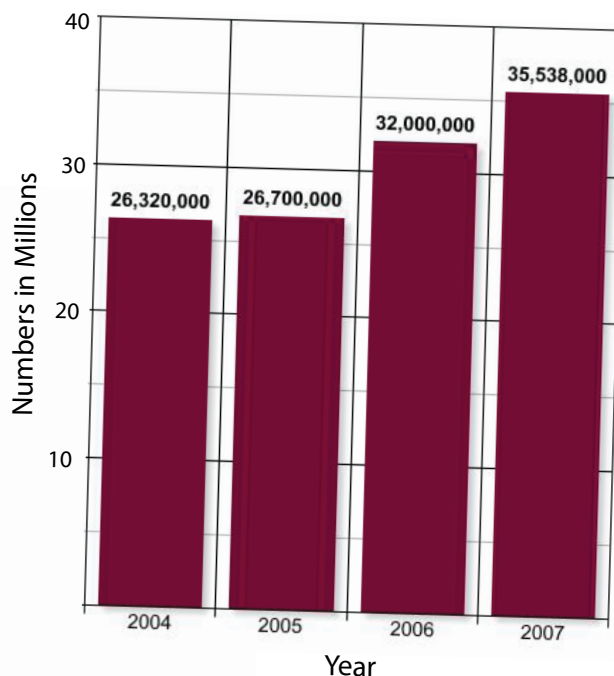
In state:..... \$13,700

Out of state:..... \$26,100

Number of Individual Scholarships Set Up
and Funded by Hokie Club Members: **476**



Cumulative value of
Virginia Tech's Athletic Endowment



- Percentage of Scholarship Bill Funded by Annual Fund Income
- Percentage of Scholarship Bill Funded by Endowment Income

For more information on supporting Virginia Tech athletics, contact us at:

Virginia Tech Athletic Fund
P.O. Box 10307
Blacksburg, VA 24062-0307
(540) 231-6618 (Office) • (540) 231-3260 (Fax) • Hokieclub.com



Hokie Club Succeeds Through its Reps

What is a Hokie Representative?

A Hokie Representative (Hokie Rep) is an active Hokie Club member who volunteers his or her time to assist in the mission of the Hokie Club. The purpose of the Hokie Rep System is to provide each Hokie Club member with a personal contact on a consistent basis. A Hokie Rep is responsible for providing Hokie Club members with pertinent information about Virginia Tech athletics and the Hokie Club, helping to recruit new members and assisting current members interested in upgrading their membership. Hokie Reps also play a vital role in each community, as they help the Hokie Club set up, organize and run local Hokie Club events. Most importantly, a Hokie Rep is someone who shares the positive outlook of Virginia Tech Athletics with the Hokie Nation.

Hokie Representative Awards Banquet

Throughout the year, over 475 Hokie Reps are involved in the annual Hokie Rep Incentive Campaign. This campaign, which culminates each year on August 31st, allows the Hokie Club an opportunity to measure and reward Hokie Reps who achieve high levels of success.

Each year, the Hokie Club puts on the Hokie Rep Awards Banquet to honor the achievements of these fine representatives. This year, the Hokie Representative Awards Banquet was held on October 3rd in the Bowman Room in the Jamerson Athletic Center. Hokie Reps who maintain 22 active members and either sign up a new member or upgrade a member are recognized with an upgrade in their individual membership as well as with other awards. Additionally, Hokie Club Presidents are recognized and given an award if their area shows a 14 percent annual increase in the number of active members or have five award-winning reps in their area.

Special awards are given in three categories. The Top 10 Hokie Reps with the Most Active members are recognized and the Rep with the Most Actives receives the H.M. "Mac" McEver Award. This year's recipient is Monna Booth, representing the Christiansburg, Montgomery, Floyd Hokie Club.

The top Hokie Reps with the Most Growth in members are also recognized. The Rep with the Most Growth receives the John S. Moody Award. Monna Booth, representing the Christiansburg, Montgomery, Floyd Hokie Club was also this year's recipient.

A special award created a few years ago recognizes the Hokie Rep of the Year as voted on by the Hokie Club staff. This award isn't given annually, but is given when merited. This year, the Michael W. Carroll Award for Hokie Representative of the Year was awarded to Pat Akers, representing the Tidewater Hokie Club.

For information on becoming a Hokie Rep, contact the Hokie Club at (540) 231-6618.

2008 Top Ten Hokie Representatives - Most Actives

Monna Booth – Christiansburg, Montgomery, Floyd (H.M. "Mac" McEver Award)	93
Ed Williams – Tidewater	92
Rayburn Vandergrift – Blacksburg	68
Gene & Charmaine Cress – Roanoke Valley	65
Clay Whitley – Richmond	62
Roy Burrows – Peninsula	60
Alan Glick – Blacksburg	59
Greg Godsey – Staunton/Waynesboro	56
Ed Moore – Raleigh-Durham	54
Dean Farmer – Lynchburg	53

2008 Top Hokie Representatives - Most Growth

Monna Booth – Christiansburg, Montgomery, Floyd (John S. Moody Award)	+13
Frankie Smith – Twin Cities	+11
Danny Leigh – Peninsula	+8
Sam Bickford – Roanoke Valley	+4
David Zier – Blacksburg	+4
Pat Akers – Tidewater (Michael W. Carroll Award)	

2008 Hokie Club President's Achievement Award Winners

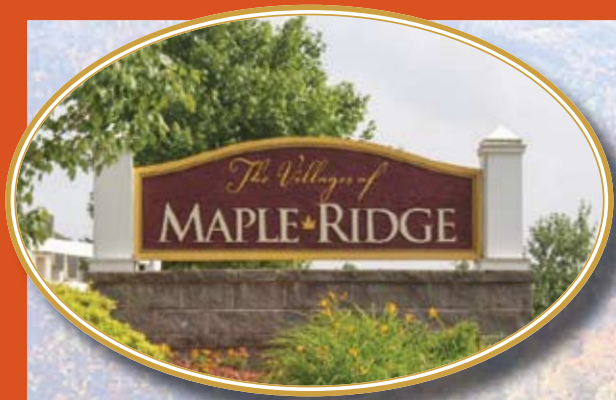
Randy Jones	Charlottesville
Dodd Harvey	Lynchburg
Rich Cooper	Franklin County
David Keys	Richmond
Frank Seamster	Peninsula
Rodger Pike	Tidewater
Norman Fitzwater	Blacksburg
Rich Alvis	Christiansburg/Montgomery/Floyd
John Rupe	Pulaski
Brian Wilson	Roanoke Valley
Eric Wuchina	Northern Virginia

2008 Hokie Representative Award Winners

Charlottesville		Jeff Kessler	22
Billy Wingfield	34	Franklin County	
Rob Herbert	33	Arnie Trope	32
Jeff Bromm	30	Corbin Wellford	29
Kinny Kinnier	27	John Bernard	27
Leon Tilley	25	Willie McCall	24
Lynchburg		Wayne Dudley	22
Dean Farmer	53	Commonwealth	
Kim Tibbs	33	Gene Watson	30
J. B. Carter	30	Richmond	
Tom Aud	27	Clay Whitley	62
Dodd Harvey	24	Sharon White	50
Gene Montgomery	24	Steve Adams	47
Jim Mays	23	Wade Kennedy	47

Dave Keys	47	Hunter DeJarnette	23	Clay Blevins	25	Bill Groseclose	27
Robert Smith	43	Bert King	22	David Blevins	24	Staunton/Waynesboro	
Morris Skeen	42	Charlie Reid	22	Brandon Semones	24	Greg Godsey	56
Pam Janney	38	Tazewell		Bonnie Sumner	23	George Reed	52
Philip McKenney	35	Darrell Harman	34	Pulaski		Al Torrence	26
Jimmie Anderson	34	Russell County		Larry Gilmore	39	Atlanta	
Donna Yenny	34	Robert Hutton	23	Keith Boyd	33	Greg Jones	22
Todd Callis	32	Martinsville		C. E. Hughes	28	Raleigh-Durham	
Clem Carter	32	Phillip Davis	22	Fred Tilley	25	Ed Moore	54
Patrick Berryman	31	Danville/Pittsylvania County		Gary Hall	22	Marshall Bates	46
David Kusterer	31	Cleve Belote	25	Nashville		Rob Patterson	27
Vic Calaman	29	John Richardson	23	Chuck Terry	30	Mike Austin	24
Robin Daniels	29	Western Tidewater		Roanoke Valley		Triad	
Doug Rechenbach	29	Peyton Barlow	27	Charmaine & Gene Cress	65	Bruce Coleman	26
Jimmy Roberts	29	Sandy Mann	26	Sam Camden	46	Larry Anderson	23
Denise Heckathorne	28	Southside		Renny Lynch	42	Bill McGinnis	22
Tim Mullins	28	Jerry Callis	31	Dennie Denison	41	Charlotte	
Don Sage	28	John Clary	28	Ellsworth Snyder	41	Perry Clark	30
Kevin Kelly	27	Marvin Crutchfield	24	Chuck Watson	38	Henry Brassel	25
Newman Ogden	27	Twin Cities		David Bailey	36	Glenn Williams	22
Kirk Pace	27	Frankie Smith	33	Sam Bickford	36	Central South Carolina	
Brian Cory	26	Abingdon/Washington County		Willard Flora	36	Bruce Sproles	30
Greg Moser	26	L. C. Angle, Jr.	50	Will Miller	36	Coastal Carolina	
Terry Tuskey	26	Smyth County		Jim Pearman	36	Ray Horton	29
Michael Baum	25	John Burrows	28	Wally Newton	34	Northern Virginia	
Tom Williams	25	Carroll/Grayson Counties		Dave Amos	32	Bob Armentrout	44
Matt Marchal	24	Dale & Brenda Moore	28	Steven Boyd	32	John Gonsa	40
Tom Crump	23	Knoxville		Ron & Tonda Fugate	32	Dennis McDonald	40
Bob Hundley	23	Jim Wright	25	Micky Hatcher	32	Michael Wherley	38
Lawrence Phipps	23	Wise County		Jonny Webster	32	Matt Johnson	36
Shane Caudill	22	Billy Sutherland	27	Jackson Beamer	28	Al Kelly	36
Spud Mistr	22	Amherst/Nelson		George Tate	28	Eric Wuchina	35
Eric Robison	22	Bernie McGinnis	31	Ki Luczak	27	Steve Upton	33
Fredericksburg		Sam Davis	22	Mark Carr	26	Natalie Kelly	32
Paul Vadeboncoeur	25	Blacksburg		Chuck Gearhart	26	John Britt	31
Colonial Rivers		Rayburn Vandergrift	68	Effie Moore	26	Don Clary	29
Charles Davis	25	Alan Glick	59	Buddy Taylor	26	Trey Reemsnyder	27
Eastern Shore		Mike Cooke	43	Al Hardy	24	Bill Stover	27
Pete Young	30	Norman Fitzwater	33	Larry Perry	24	Greg Haught	26
Franklin/Southampton		Mike Eggleston	29	Pete Rice	24	Charles McDade	22
Vernon Taylor	23	Jay Price	27	Brian Wilson	24	Loudoun County	
Peninsula		Bud Sutphin	26	Ken Arritt	23	Keith Seekford	22
Roy Burrows	60	Tom Wilson	25	Chad Gilmore	23	Battlefield	
Frank Seamster	47	Chris &		Jay Rule	23	Pam Hoag	37
Danny Leigh	41	Mary Ann Bonadeo	24	Andy Viperman	23	Prince William	
George Leftwich	29	Dan Carper	24	Bette Brand	22	Chuck Rector	49
Jason Hartmann	25	Hilda Reynolds	24	David Kallio	22	Bill Burton	26
Vern Lockwood	25	David Zier	24	Mark Lawrence	22	Ed Powell	23
John Wells	25	Jim McAlister	23	Jim Petrine	22	Harrison Jones	22
Dale Johnson	22	Herb Alcorn	22	Adam Shores	22	Fauquier	
Scott Nicholas	22	Terry &		Suzy Summerlin	22	George Scheulen	31
John Routten	22	Carol Herdman	22	Maryland		Emporia	
Tidewater		Christiansburg/		John Skipper	24	Barry Grizzard	26
Ed Williams	92	Montgomery/Floyd		David Nizamoff	23		
Rodger Pike	35	Monna Booth	93	Jeff Bowling	22		
Steve Henderson	33	Wayne Bishop	46	Bill Eades	22		
Greg Shumaker	27	Pete Ramey	41	Covington/Clifton Forge			
John Karr	26	Rich Alvis	39	Jack Manner	30		
Tex Badkins	24	Rusty McCoy	32	Harrisonburg			
Ed Collins	24	John Bartlett	27	Barry Minnick	28		





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THE HUDSON TEAM



Tincher honored, getting ready to head to Japan



At some point, the awards and accolades may stop rolling in for Angela Tincher.

Maybe.

The latest one came courtesy of the Tech athletics department. On the same day in which the softball pitcher and her family stood at midfield before the Georgia Tech game and collected the trophies for the three major awards she won this past season (the USA National Player of the Year, the Honda Award for Softball, and ACC Female Athlete of the Year), officials from the Tech athletics department surprised her by retiring her number – No. 1. The Eagle Rock, Va., native, who went 123-35 over four years with a 0.78 ERA and 2,149 strikeouts (the third most in NCAA softball history at any level), became the third female athlete to have the honor bestowed upon her, joining former standouts Lisa Pikalek (volleyball) and Renee Dennis (basketball).

“I was shocked,” Tincher said. “I didn’t think something like that would happen, and if it did, I didn’t think it would happen this soon. When I looked up on the videoboard [to see her jersey hanging at the softball field], it took me a few seconds to realize what was going on. It’s an incredible honor.”

Though her days of playing for the Hokies ended at the College World Series, her playing career will be continuing. She pitched this summer for Akron in the National Pro Fastpitch League, and she earned all-league honors there after leading the league in strikeouts. But she recently signed a contract

to play for a professional team in Japan, which will provide better competition and better money. She plans on helping Scot Thomas and the Hokies for the remainder of this fall, and then will head to Japan in late January.

“My feelings change from day to day,” she said. “It’s a little overwhelming, just knowing that I’ll be in a different country and so far away from the people I know. But lately, I’ve been excited about it. It’ll be a new experience.”

Her team in Japan is one of 20 in that particular league, and each team is allowed to sign two foreign players. The season runs from March through May and then picks up again, going from September through October, with the playoffs in November. League rules allow her to pitch only 14 games – games are played on the weekends – but she can pitch in exhibitions during the week.

Next summer, Tincher plans on coming back to the States at the end of May and pitching for Akron. Then she’ll head back to Japan in late August to finish that season.

She landed a pretty sweet set-up in Japan. In addition to paying her a good salary, the team provides her with an apartment and a translator to help her with the language barrier. Companies sponsor the teams over there, and she’ll be living near that company, so she gets free use of that company’s cafeteria for meals. She can’t reveal the name of the team or the company yet because the season is still going over there. Her only expenses would be for personal items.

“I’ve committed to do this for one year and then we’ll see,” she said. “I didn’t want to commit to anything longer than that. But if I like it over there, I’ll consider another year.”

In addition to helping Thomas and the Hokies this fall, she also plans to work part-time for Club K, a softball instructional facility in Nashville. She’ll serve as a private instructor for 10 days a month.

“This fall, things started to sink in for me,” she said. “I felt like it was the end of everything. But it helps to have the opportunity to keep playing. It’s not like softball is over for me and I want to stay involved with it while I can.”

Vassallo gains more international experience

Tech forward A.D. Vassallo played for his home country of Puerto Rico in the Centrobasket Tournament held in late August in Cancun, Mexico, and played a small role in leading Puerto Rico to the gold

medal. Puerto Rico, which went 5-0 in the tournament, knocked off the Virgin Islands 87-70 in the gold medal game.

Vassallo, a senior from Toa Baja, Puerto Rico, played on a stacked team that included Jose Juan Barea, a guard for the Dallas Mavericks who won MVP honors in the tournament. Vassallo played in four of the five games in the tournament. His best game came in a 107-102 win over Panama when he played 18 minutes and scored 13 points, hitting 4-of-5 from the floor, 1-of-3 from beyond the 3-point arc, and 2-of-2 from the free-throw line.

He played 11 minutes against Cuba, scoring six points, grabbing two rebounds and dishing out two assists. In 13 minutes against Costa Rica, he scored five points and grabbed two rebounds.

Former Tech player signs with NBA’s Suns


Former Virginia Tech basketball player Coleman Collins signed with the Phoenix Suns of the NBA and currently participates in their training camp, which began Sept. 30th in Tucson, Ariz.

Collins, a 2006 graduate of Virginia Tech who completed his eligibility in 2007, played on a first-division German team in Ludwigsburg last year. He averaged 10.6 points and 4.1 rebounds while shooting 58.3 percent to help the team to the league finals. He played on the Toronto Raptors’ summer league squad this summer, averaging 7.3 points and 3.7 rebounds in 17 minutes per game for the Raptors.

He completed his Virginia Tech career with 1,144 points, good for 32nd in career scoring at Tech, and is currently ninth on the school’s career blocked shots list with 106.

Hokies lose two more

Rover Davon Morgan, a sophomore from Richmond, and tailback Kenny Lewis, Jr., will miss the remainder of this season after suffering devastating injuries in the Nebraska and Western Kentucky University games, respectively. Morgan tore the anterior cruciate ligament in his knee while returning a kickoff in the Nebraska win, while Lewis tore his Achilles on a run in the third quarter of the WKU victory.

The two became the seventh and eighth players to suffer a season-ending injuries, joining freshmen Marcus Davis (shoulder) and Joe Jones (shoulder), redshirt sophomores Aaron Brown (shoulder) and Ron Cooper (knee), junior Kenny Younger (knee) and redshirt junior Brandon Dillard (Achilles). 



FROM THE
**EDITOR'S
DESK**

Jimmy Robertson

A.D. Vassallo is majoring in sociology. Cheick Diakite chose agricultural economics. Lewis Witcher picked accounting.

That's just a smattering of majors for Tech men's basketball players. There are others, though not a single one in the subject of history.

Rest assured, however, that Seth Greenberg will be delivering a few of his own lectures on that particular subject. In fact, his class could be called 'Recent History 101.'

The Virginia Tech men's basketball team opens its season on Nov. 14th, and the Hokies enter the 2008-09 season with some rather large expectations. For good reason, too, because four starters return and more than 80 percent of the scoring and rebounding return from a team that nearly slid into the NCAA Tournament at season's end last March and ultimately advanced to the NIT quarterfinals.

But the first lesson for Greenberg's class should be entitled, 'The Demise of N.C. State.' You may ask simply, 'Why?' Well, the Wolfpack found themselves in this exact same situation a year ago – and flunked miserably.

Heading into last season, N.C. State returned four starters and welcomed a five-star recruit in J.J. Hickson. Following a gritty season in which the Wolfpack landed in the 2007 ACC title game, they – and their fans – expected even more success heading into the 2007-08 campaign.

Despite being picked to finish third in the ACC, they belly-flopped all the way to last place. Plagued by injuries and besieged by poor chemistry, they lost their final nine games. Brandon Costner, a supremely talented player, was a poster child for disappointment and Hickson departed for the NBA. He was the ACC's only first-round draft pick, which shows just how much the 'Pack underachieved. Head coach Sidney Lowe finds his coaching career now at a crossroads.

Paying attention, Hokies?

"I told our players in the first meeting that last year for us wasn't about what other people thought and this year isn't either," Greenberg said. "It's about the investment you make on a daily basis to yourself and to your team.

"We're not going to talk about what we're going to do. N.C. State did that last year and they're not playing in the ACC-Big Ten Challenge [this year]."

Of course, there are some startling dif-

League foe provides lesson for Hokies as they get ready to begin upcoming season

ferences between this Tech team and that of N.C. State's last year. The Wolfpack lost only point guard Engin Atsur, who graduated following the 2007 campaign and left a hole. In contrast, the Hokies return Malcolm Delaney, who played very well as a point guard – as a freshman, no less – last year and he continues to keep rapidly ascending the leadership ladder on this team.

Also, Tech's chemistry was good last year and should be just as good, if not better this season. Lowe tried to run his offense through Hickson and guys like Costner and Ben McCauley suffered. The Hokies feature no NBA prospects at the moment, though a couple could easily develop into such, and Greenberg runs his offense based on match-ups. He gives freedom to all his players to make plays.


Plus, Greenberg's teams have this nice trait of getting better as the season goes along. Remember two years ago when they got handled at Marshall and came back to make the NCAA Tournament? Last year, they lost to Richmond, and then played great down the stretch, which led to an NIT berth.

This all brings us to this season. Like the Wolfpack last year, Tech will be the trendy pick to finish in the top half of the ACC next to heavyweights Duke and North Carolina and to receive one of those coveted NCAA Tournament berths.

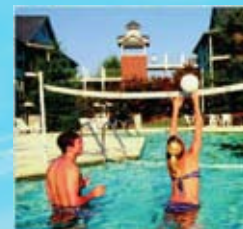
"It's all how you approach expectations," Greenberg said. "My expectation is to get better every day, learn how to compete and learn how to trust each other. That doesn't change from year to year. Expectation is pressure from people on the outside. We understand that when you're in this league, you better be good – because if you're not, the league will hit you upside the head.

"We're not going to buy into what people say. We didn't last year. If we had, we'd have won about eight games. When the ball goes up, whatever has been written or said means nothing."

A long-deceased poet once astutely wrote, "Those who cannot learn from history are doomed to repeat it." That's why Greenberg is focusing on the small picture and pointing out what transpires when you look at the big picture – as in what happened to the Wolfpack last season.

For the Hokies, that would simply be a history lesson well learned. 

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Bill Roth

Delaney's tough Baltimore background has him prepared to lead this season



Malcolm Delaney

Malcolm Delaney wasn't going to just sit there and accept it. No sir.

This wasn't right. This wasn't Virginia Tech basketball – at least not Tech basketball as he saw it.

This wasn't the way he learned the game in Baltimore. And not the way it was coached at Virginia Tech.

The Hokies had just lost 92-53 at North Carolina and the skinny freshman knew he had to do something. He had to say something, right?

And so after the humbling, embarrassing loss in Chapel Hill last February, Delaney stood in front of his teammates in the locker room, his jersey bottom hanging down to his shorts, and began to talk about Virginia Tech basketball as he saw it.

The Carolina band was still blaring in the Smith Center, echoing down the hallway as Delaney stood in front of the grease board and gave an emotional talk to his teammates.

"I said we had guys out there who didn't compete as hard as they could," Delaney recalled. "I'm gonna speak my mind and I did that day."

Of course he's going to speak his mind. Malcolm Delaney is one tough kid who comes from a tough neighborhood and that's the way he is.

See that new tattoo on his forearm? "Eierman Avenue," it says.

"That's where I grew up – my street in Baltimore. That's where I get my toughness," Delaney said. "That's where I got good in hoops. That's where my friends are who support me, on that street.

"Some people get tattoos just to have 'em. Not



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me. Each one of my tattoos means something to me, says something about me or where I came from.”

He’s from Baltimore, and he wants you to know it. He’s proud of his hometown, his street and his friends there who love him.

Similarly, he’s not shy to say what’s on his mind and that’s exactly what he did last February.

That day in Chapel Hill, Delaney didn’t accuse his teammates of quitting. “I think the media got that part wrong,” he said. “We didn’t quit. We just didn’t play as hard on every possession as we can. Listen, I didn’t call out my teammates. They know I put more pressure on myself than anyone, but after that, we came together.”

And thus the lowest point of the basketball season for Virginia Tech’s 2007-08 team also became its turning point.

Following Delaney’s passionate talk, the Hokies won four straight ACC games, including a huge win at Maryland just four days later. Tech would win seven of its next nine games and Delaney, who had looked awkward at point guard for much of the season, blossomed in the season’s final weeks.

In some games, he’d be a key scorer, like his 16-point effort against Georgia Tech. Other games, he would get critical rebounds, like the eight he had against Boston College.

In the final month of last season, Delaney would make the tough shot. He played smart, keeping an eye on the shot clock and making good decisions. He was first guy to pick up a teammate after a turnover. He was the first guy to call for a huddle on the court. His play at point guard got better by the week.

“I’ll be honest, I was hesitant much of the

season because I wasn’t comfortable at the point,” Delaney said. “Not just hoops, but school, too. Being away at college, there’s a lot to get used to, but after the North Carolina loss, I just started playing my game.”

And his game is simple: “I want to make other people better, create more and take good shots,” he said. “For a while, what I thought was a good shot wasn’t the same thing Coach [Seth] Greenberg thought was a good shot. But after the first North Carolina game, I felt more comfortable doing everything.”

In the ACC Tournament quarterfinals, Delaney played one of his best games, leading Tech to a 63-49 win over Miami. In 32 minutes he scored 15 points, pulled down four rebounds, and dished out three assists.

In the semifinals against UNC, he had 15

play and everyone got better. I thought when guys went home, they’d slack off and not come back in shape, but the opposite happened. Guys worked out on their own and came back in great shape. I called Jeff [Allen] and he said he was working out twice a day and sure enough, he’s in the best shape of his life.”

And in the locker room, the Hokies hope they have a leader in No. 23.

“Coach Greenberg and I have been talking about that,” Delaney said. “He’d like me to be more vocal as a leader and I can see it now. I’m already pushing the freshmen.”

Like the rest of his teammates, Delaney has worked hard this past summer to prepare for his sophomore year, watching tape, working out and improving his ball skills. His improvement during the final month of the 2007-08

season was dramatic and Hokie fans hope that progress will continue this year.

The early results look positive.

“I can see it in the way we’re working out now and getting ready for this season,” Delaney

said. “We have depth and a lot of dedication.

“We can have something special.”

Delaney is darn proud to be from Baltimore – and he wants you to know it.

And he’s darn proud to wear a Virginia Tech basketball jersey, too.

He wants to bring the loyalty and the passion he learned on Eierman Avenue to this year’s team. That street is where guys stick up for each other and love and trust each other and always have each other’s back.

He’s the fervent, passionate guy whom every coach wants on his team.

And Hokie fans should be proud to have him on their side. 

“We’re so much better now than we were a year ago. We’re real deep. Seriously, we have 10 people who can really play and everyone got better. I thought when guys went home, they’d slack off and not come back in shape, but the opposite happened. Guys worked out on their own and came back in great shape.”

– Tech guard Malcolm Delaney

points, six assists, three steals and only two turnovers. The kid who delivered that passionate plea in Chapel Hill a month earlier looked like the best guard on the court that day.

Delaney scored in double figures in all three NIT games for the Hokies and averaged an impressive 14.8 points and 3.8 assists in Virginia Tech’s five postseason games. Virginia Tech finished 21-14 last season, but like his teammates and Hokie fans everywhere, Delaney has higher hopes for 2009.

“We’re so much better now than we were a year ago,” Delaney said. “We’re real deep. Seriously, we have 10 people who can really



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VIRGINIA TECH'S COMPLIANCE CORNER

NLI dominates as the early-signing period approaches

The month of November marks the time for Thanksgiving, but for head coaches in most collegiate sports, the month marks the time for bringing in some top-notch talent.

The second week of November marks the early-signing period for all sports except field hockey, soccer, track and field, cross country and men's water polo. These sports have signing periods strictly in the spring.

During this week, which starts Nov. 12th and runs through Nov. 19th, prospective student-athletes sign national letters-of-intent [NLI] with respective schools. Most knowledgeable fans know the definition of a letter-of-intent – a binding agreement between the prospect and the school in which the prospect agrees to attend the school for one academic year (not one playing season!) and the school provides financial aid for a year – but few know about the other intricacies involved with the letter.

So here's an opportunity to get your fill on the NLI. These are some commonly asked questions fielded by the Virginia Tech compliance office.

• How is the NLI handled?

The CCA (Collegiate Commissioners

Association) – not the NCAA – administers the NLI program. Once a prospect receives a letter from a school, it must be signed within 14 days from the date of issuance. The prospect signs two copies, keeping one and returning the other to the school. If he or she is under 21, then he or she needs to get a parent or legal guardian to sign it as well.

The institution then sends the letter to the conference office within 21 days. The conference determines the validity of the letter and then enters the student-athlete into the NLI database.

• Can the NLI be declared null and void?

Yes, if the signee is denied admission to school or does not meet NCAA eligibility requirements. Other ways for an NLI to be declared null and void include if the signee doesn't enroll for a year and a scholarship is no longer available; if the signee serves in the military or goes on a church mission for a year; if the signee's sport is discontinued; and if there are recruiting violations.

• What happens if the student-

athlete changes his/her mind and wants to attend another school?

The basic penalty is he or she sits out a year in residence at the new school and loses a season of eligibility.

• What if there is a coaching change?

The prospect signs the NLI with the school, not with a coach. If the coach leaves, the prospect is still bound by the provisions of the NLI.

• Can a signee be released from an NLI?

Yes, an institution may release a student-athlete from all penalties. If the school denies the release, then the signee may appeal to the NLI Policy and Review Committee. A decision by that committee may be appealed to the NLI Appeals Committee, whose decision is final and binding.

COMPLIANCE TEAM CONTACTS

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Heather Robertson: herobert@vt.edu, 540-231-0644

Charles Holloway, Jr.: chasholl@vt.edu, 540-231-2493

FAN QUESTION OF THE MONTH


Q: How many contests can a student-athlete participate in and still receive a 'medical hardship waiver'?

A: The medical hardship waiver (often referred to as a 'medical redshirt') is a complex and often misunderstood part of Division I college athletics. To receive a medical hardship waiver, a student-athlete may not have participated in more than 30 percent of the team's contests. Additionally, the injury or illness must occur prior to the completion of the first half of the season.

If the percentage calculation for the 30-percent rule results in a decimal – any decimal – the number is always rounded up. For example, the lacrosse team competed on 17 dates. Thirty percent of 17 is 5.1. A student-athlete who competed on six of the first eight dates does qualify for a medical hardship waiver.

To meet the first-half-of-the-season requirement, all competition must have ended prior to the start of the contest or date that begins the second half of the season. For example, any competition in the 10th game of a 19-game season would prevent a soccer player from receiving a medical hardship waiver.

The key to receiving a medical hardship waiver is that the injury or illness must leave the student-athlete unable to compete for the remainder of the season. Substantial documentation must be provided to confirm the debilitating nature of the injury or illness.



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EXPERIENCE, TALENT AND MOTIVATION

HAVE HOKIES' HOPES HIGH

By Jimmy Robertson

A.D. Vassallo

The stock market's recent plunging has investors searching far and wide for a safe haven to put their future retirement dollars.

From a college basketball perspective, the safe money seems to be on the Virginia Tech men's basketball team. Most, in fact, appear to be quite bullish on the Hokies as the 2008-09 basketball season gets ready to tip off.

Whether Tech's stock soars this season depends upon the play of a senior with the potential to be an elite player and the continued development of a contingent of young players. Perhaps even more so, it depends upon finding the replacement for Deron Washington, who left after becoming the face of the type of program that head coach Seth Greenberg wants in Blacksburg.

Tech finished with a 21-14 overall record a year ago. The Hokies won a game in the ACC tournament and advanced to the quarterfinals of the NIT before seeing their season come to an end with an 81-72 loss to Ole Miss. Tech enjoyed such a fine season because Washington scored, he rebounded, he defended, and he led. No other Tech player possessed such a combination, and Greenberg's immediate charge is to find someone or a group to replace those attributes.

"I think Deron reflected what we were trying to do with player development – playing hard, being tough and competing for 40 minutes," Greenberg said. "The thing I'm most proud of is that he came in as a center, left as a small forward and got drafted in the NBA. Those are all positives in terms of the big picture of the program. We're going to miss him."

Rest assured, though, that Greenberg loves what he has coming back for this season. In all, eight guys return who started at least two games last season. Six guys return who started at least 12 games, and 81 percent of both the scoring and rebounding return from last year.

"I like our basketball team," Greenberg said. "We're still a very young basketball team. You're talking about eight freshmen or sophomores, but our sophomores are experienced. We do have senior leadership in A.D. Vassallo and we have some juniors who have been in our program."

"After our first three weeks of individual workouts, our guys have been great. They're focused and buying in. It's exciting. But I'm not excited because of what other people think because if we believed in what other people think, then we would have finished in last place last year. I'm more excited about the individual commitments that our guys are making and their commitment to what we need to get done as a team."

That gets Tech fans excited. It's also why the Hokies appear to be a trendy bet to finish in the upper echelon of the ACC and to receive one of those coveted at-large NCAA Tournament berths.

The investment has been made – by the coaching staff, the players and the fans. Only time will tell what the return will be.

Now, here's a closer look at this year's version of the Hokies.

Backcourt

Greenberg feels pretty good about his situation even with the departure of Mr. Everything – Washington. That's because Vassallo, Malcolm Delaney and Hank Thorns all return to the Hokies' backcourt.

Vassallo enjoyed a sensational season a year ago, leading the Hokies in scoring at 16.9 points per game. The senior from Toa Baja, Puerto Rico, hit 44.3 percent of his shots from the floor – respectable for a guard/forward – and 39.5 percent from beyond the 3-point arc. He hit a team-high 85 3-pointers on his way to earning All-ACC honors last season. He figures to be one of the league's best players this season and the clear leader of this team.

"He reflects our philosophy. Each year, he's pushed out the walls of his game," Greenberg said. "Everyone thought he was just a shooter, but he's a basketball player. He rebounds his position. He's sneaky quick getting to the rim. He's tough. He's an underrated defender. He's improved defensively."

Delaney and Thorns suffered some growing pains as freshmen, but the two sophomores learned from that and figure to be much better because of that experience. Delaney started 24 games a year ago, and despite being a tremendous shooter, he served as the Hokies' point guard for the most part. He'll probably stay in that role, too.

"I'll probably keep him at the point," Greenberg said. "Because we've got those other wings."

Thorns started 12 games, but during the second half of the season, he came off the bench to spell the starters at both guard spots. The 5-foot-9 dynamo averaged a team-leading 3.2 assists per game.

Greenberg could go with these three guys as his starting backcourt. But he also thinks quite highly of two other sophomores – Dorenzo Hudson and Terrell Bell – and those two continue to create competition in the backcourt. Hudson came in for the second semester last season and struggled from the floor, but Greenberg expects bigger things from him after he dropped 20 pounds over the summer and looks much quicker.

At 6-6 and blessed with long arms, Bell is the closest thing the Hokies have to someone with Washington's skill set. The staff just hopes Bell buys into becoming the Hokies' defensive stopper, as Washington was.

"We lost a stopper," Greenberg said. "There's no question about it. Terrell could be that guy. He's much more confident than he was last year."

Two walk-ons, Paul Debnam and Tom Amalfe, round out those looking for time in the backcourt. Greenberg thinks highly of these two because they make his prominent players work hard every day in practice.

Frontcourt

A year ago, the Hokies actually out-rebounded their foes by an average of 37.3-33.2. But the Hokies' season-ending loss to Ole Miss illustrated a problem when they faced teams with huge, physical post players. Tech got out-rebounded 46-23 by the brawny Rebels in that defeat.

The Hokies, though, should be much more effective in the post this season both on the boards and on the defensive end. Four post players return in the form of Jeff Allen, Cheick Diakite, Lewis Witcher and Terrance Vinson. Allen, Diakite and Witcher all started at various points last season.

Allen may be the most gifted player on this team. A year ago, he earned a spot on the ACC's all-rookie team, but he disappeared at critical times. In the Hokies' last two games of the season, he scored just six and seven points, respectively.

Those days may be over. Allen stayed in Blacksburg over the summer and got himself into tremendous shape. He's also displaying an improved attitude and work ethic and Greenberg raved about him.

"I'm so proud of where he is now," Greenberg said. "He's in the best shape he's been in during his adult life. But more importantly, he's embracing his talent and his attitude and work ethic have been great. I'm really, really encouraged."

Greenberg expects that same light to go on for Witcher, an extremely talented 6-9 junior who possesses the length and skills to be a double-digit scorer and rebounder and a big-time shot blocker in the ACC. And Greenberg wants to get more from Diakite, the other senior along with Vassallo. Diakite could provide some of the rebounding and defense in the post that Tech desperately needs. The 6-8 Vinson provides depth and leadership.

Greenberg and the staff also added two post players in last year's recruiting class - 6-8, 245-pound Victor Davila and 6-11,

260-pound Gene Swindle. They rank as the two biggest players on the squad.

"Victor is a guy whose footwork is really, really good," Greenberg said. "He has good patience around the basket and an understanding of how to score. If we can get his motor running full speed, he's got a chance to be special."

"Gene is a work in progress. He's a big, ol' rascal. He's got good feet and good hands and he's strong as an ox. He wants to be good and he's getting there."

Tech just missed out on heading to the NCAA Tournament for the second year in a row, with a few close losses early in the season hurting the team's potential at-large berth, as they attempted break in a handful of freshmen (Penn State, ODU, Richmond). The Hokies ended up losing eight games by six points or less. But experience figures to go a long way toward rectifying that this season.

In addition to being more experienced, this team also has more depth. That gives Greenberg some flexibility to take advantage of potential mismatches.

"I think we've got nine or 10 guys who can contribute," Greenberg said. "Hopefully we'll be able to defend and attack more. I'm hoping we can extend our defense a little bit because of our numbers. I think our strength is in our numbers and that we have three guys who can legitimately score [Vassallo, Delaney and Allen]. And who knows who else will emerge."

If the depth and experience merge together quickly, the Hokies could be in for a special season. Most prognosticators seem to think that will be the case.

Greenberg, though, cautioned about getting the cart in front of the horse.


"What gets it done is working. What gets it done is being tough. What gets it done is what you're doing in the weight room," he

2008-09 SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	Time
Nov. 14 Fri.	GARDNER-WEBB	8 p.m.
17 Mon.	MOUNT ST. MARY'S	8 p.m.
<i>O'Reilly Auto Parts Puerto Rico Tip-off</i>		
20 Thurs.	vs. Fairfield	11 a.m.
21 Fri.	vs. Missouri/Xavier	TBA
23 Sun.	vs. Finals/Consolations	TBA
26 Wed.	ELON	7 p.m.
<i>Big Ten/ACC Challenge</i>		
Dec. 1 Mon.	Wisconsin	7 p.m.
<i>BB&T Classic</i>		
7 Sun.	vs. Navy	5 p.m.
9 Tues.	at Georgia	7 p.m.
14 Sun.	LONGWOOD	2 p.m.
<i>Aeropostale Holiday Festival</i>		
20 Sat.	vs. Columbia	2 p.m.
21 Sun.	vs. St. John's/Marist	TBA
29 Mon.	at Charleston Southern	7 p.m.
Jan. 4 Sun.	at Duke *	7:45 p.m.
10 Sat.	VIRGINIA *	4 p.m.
14 Wed.	RICHMOND	7 p.m.
17 Sat.	BOSTON COLLEGE *	4 p.m.
21 Wed.	at Wake Forest *	7 p.m.
25 Sun.	at Miami *	5:30 p.m.
29 Thurs.	CLEMSON *	7 p.m.
31 Sat.	at Boston College *	8 p.m.
Feb. 8 Sun.	NC STATE *	1:30 p.m.
11 Wed.	GEORGIA TECH *	7 p.m.
14 Sat.	at Maryland *	4 p.m.
18 Wed.	at Virginia *	8 p.m.
21 Sat.	FLORIDA STATE *	8 p.m.
25 Wed.	at Clemson *	7:30 p.m.
28 Sat.	DUKE *	3:30 p.m.
Mar. 4 Wed.	NORTH CAROLINA *	7 p.m.
8 Sun.	at Florida State *	2 p.m.
ACC Tournament		
12-15 Thu-Sun	Atlanta (Georgia Dome)	TBA

*ACC game - Home games in CAPS

said. "Not talking or listening to what other people say.

"Our two words are 'team' and 'commitment' and if you're committed to the team and coming in every day and busting your tail to get better and help the team ... if you have a guy who isn't doing that, then you need to hold that guy accountable. That will determine how successful we are." 



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CLEAN SLATE REFRESHES HOOPS SQUAD AS NEW SEASON APPROACHES

By Matt Kovatch

Brittany
Cook

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL PREVIEW

The United States is just a few short weeks away from one of the most important presidential elections in its history. As the debate rages on about whether John McCain or Barack Obama is better equipped to handle the blundering economy, the war in Iraq and a mess of other issues, one thing is for sure – the winner will have his work cut out for him.

What this country needs is a fresh start, and no matter what happens come Nov. 4th, that's exactly what it will get. The same could be said for the Virginia Tech women's basketball team, which will begin its 2008-09 season just 10 days later on Nov. 14th.

The Hokies began last season 12-2 and with high approval ratings, but once conference play began and the rest of the league entered the race, Tech stumbled in the polls with just two ACC wins and a final overall record of 15-15. The accumulating losses seemed to weigh on the young team, and no matter how one tried to spin it, the consensus was that, just like the next president of the United States, the 2008-09 hoops campaign couldn't arrive soon enough.

"There's a hunger and an enthusiasm that I see from a team that's not happy with how it finished last year," head coach Beth Dunkenberger said of a team that enters the schedule with a much-needed clean slate. "That has driven them all spring, all summer and all fall. That's what has me excited about starting practice and getting back out on the court with them. They are intense and very goal-driven, and they know where they want to go. It's good to see that passion."

"We've all looked at last season as a learning experience," added Brittany Cook, the redshirt senior guard who led the ACC in scoring a year ago. "It's [last season] motivating to improve upon last year. We need to come into this season and try to reach our potential."

As bleak as things looked at times last year, there truly is potential on this team. Cook obviously arrived in a big way and just missed out on first-team all-conference honors after pouring in 17.9 points per contest, but she is just part of what could be a formidable backcourt.

Sophomore Andrea Barbour certainly deserves mentioning in any discussion about scoring, as she stepped in as a freshman and finished right behind Cook at 15 points per game. She is one of the most talented playmakers in the league, but offseason shoulder surgery will likely delay her debut until sometime in December. That's where one of this year's rookies comes in – 6-foot rookie guard Shanel Harrison.

"I think Shanel is one of the most highly decorated recruits to come out of the Washington, D.C., area," Dunkenberger said. "She was ranked in the top 40 in the nation by some publications. She played on an AAU team with a couple of kids who went to North Carolina and a kid who went to Stanford, and to me, she was the go-to player on that team. She's got experience in wanting the ball in crunch situations, and I really think that she can step in and play right away."

If that is true, then the Hokies could have a very potent trio of scorers once Barbour returns. But who will feed them the ball?

Reliable senior point guard Laura Haskins is back after ranking third in the ACC in assists and assist-to-turnover ratio, and she will be contrasted by the addition of another newcomer, Nikki Davis. The redshirt sophomore is a push-the-tempo spark plug who also won't be available until mid-December, but that is due to NCAA transfer rules, as she arrived at Tech last December following a season at Alabama in 2006-07. Outside shooters Lindsay Biggs and Lakeisha Logan, as well defensive stopper Shani Grey and senior A.J. Lemaitre, add to a deep contingent of guards.

Deep, however, is the last word that one might use to describe the Hokies' group of post players. There is some talent there – junior forward Utahya Drye had a breakout season last year and is athletic enough to do a number of things, while senior center Amber Hall is a solid rebounder, shot blocker and jump shooter. Those two will start again, but the team no longer has the services of 6-4 Eleanor Brentnall, one of the first players off the bench last season. She opted not to return to school after going home to Australia over the summer, so that leaves three youngsters on the roster who must step up and contribute in the paint.

"I think we'll see more from our post players," Dunkenberger said. "Elizabeth Basham and Brittany Gordon had a lot to learn as freshmen, but I think that they're ready to step up and contribute a whole lot more this year."

Here's hoping they do because the minutes are there to be had. The 6-2 Basham was off to a surprising start as a freshman before coming down with mono, while the 6-4 Gordon may be the most improved player on the team from a year ago. Though still only sophomores, the pair has been around the block once now and that should prove valuable to the Hokies' other freshman, 6-2 Brittany Lewis. The lanky forward is more of an athletic-type than a physical-type, but with the way Drye plays and the way Tech's guards like to run, that may end up helping her fit in even better.

All things considered, it looks like the Hokies have the talent to take a couple of steps up in the standings. Some who look at the past year might not agree – "We know we're going to have doubters," Cook said. "But if we believe in ourselves, we'll be the only ones who can stop us from within."

The key to any new season is optimism, and this team has it.

Optimism is what is fueling the upcoming election, so why can't it fuel the Hokies? Just take all of the buzzwords being tossed around by the presidential candidates – change, hope, reform, believe – and simply apply them to this year's Tech basketball team. It needs some votes.

Q&A with Brittany Cook

Catching up with the ACC's leading scorer

IHS: You were a little banged up at the end of last season. How is your health?

BC: "It's good. Toward the end of last season, I was kind of exhausted from the wear and tear of the season. I had a couple of bumps and bruises here and there, but I've had time to take care of my body and rest it in areas where it needed to be rested."

IHS: How does a workout fiend like yourself take a break?

BC: "It's hard because I always feel pressured to be in good shape, and if I take time off, I feel like I'm doing an injustice to the team. It was difficult to sit out a little bit, but it was what was needed this summer. I don't need to be in playing shape in June or July – I need to be healthy and prepared and ready to go in November."


IHS: You had a fantastic statistical season last year. How are you going to top it?

BC: "I don't really ever go into a season focused on individual goals, but I know it's going to be hard to top. I was blessed last year to be healthy and to be able to compete in all of the games at a high level. It will always be a season that I'll look back on when I'm older, and I feel pretty blessed to have had it. I know this is my last year, so I'm just going to try to do my best and enjoy every minute of it. I'm going to come in with the same approach as last year, and hopefully more wins will come along the way."

IHS: What have you been working on improving since last year?

BC: "I'm not complacent with anything. I think there is always room for improvement in every area, so I don't want to say I focused on one thing or another. I try to be well-rounded and work on everything because I know that, just like last year, defenses are going to be aiming to shut me down. But if they do that, I'm confident in the players I have around me to step up and make them pay for it."

IHS: You guys have hung tough with some of the best teams in the nation. Who are you the closest to pulling off the upset against?

BC: "I think Maryland, definitely, and then I'd put Duke after them. I think we match up better with those two teams than we do with Carolina. Carolina is hard to match up with because of their athleticism. It presents more of a problem for us than Duke and Maryland." 

2008-09 Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time
Nov. 10 Mon.	PEACH STATE (Exh.)	7 p.m.
14 Fri.	UNC GREENSBORO	6 p.m.
18 Tues.	RADFORD	7 p.m.
20 Thurs.	NORTH CAROLINA CENTRAL	7 p.m.
23 Sun.	at George Mason	2 p.m.
<i>Vanderbilt Thanksgiving Tournament</i>		
28 Fri.	vs. St. Joseph's	5 p.m.
29 Sat.	vs. Davidson/Vanderbilt	TBA
Dec. 4 Thurs.	at Wisconsin (ACC/Big Ten Challenge)	8 p.m.
14 Sun.	JAMES MADISON	4 p.m.
<i>South Padre Island Shootout</i>		
19 Fri.	vs. IUPUI	6 p.m.
20 Sat.	vs. Jacksonville/SMU	TBA
<i>Hokie Hardwood Classic</i>		
29 Mon.	LAFAYETTE	7 p.m.
30 Tues.	LIBERTY OR N.C. A&T	7 p.m.
Jan. 5 Mon.	Presbyterian	7 p.m.
8 Thurs.	FLORIDA STATE*	7 p.m.
11 Sun.	at Boston College*	2 p.m.
16 Fri.	DUKE*	6:30 p. m.
18 Sun.	at Maryland*	4 p.m.
21 Wed.	VIRGINIA*	7 p.m.
25 Sun.	LONGWOOD	2 p.m.
28 Wed.	at Clemson*	7 p.m.
Feb. 1 Sun.	NC STATE*	4 p.m.
2 Mon.	USC UPSTATE	7 p.m.
5 Thurs.	at North Carolina*	7 p.m.
8 Sun.	at Virginia*	2 p.m.
12 Thurs.	MIAMI*	7 p.m.
15 Sun.	at Wake Forest*	3 p.m.
19 Thurs.	at Duke*	7 p.m.
22 Sun.	WAKE FOREST*	2 p.m.
26 Thurs.	GEORGIA TECH*	7 p.m.
<i>ACC Tournament</i>		
5-8 Mar.	Greensboro, N.C. (Greensboro Coliseum)	

*ACC game - Home games in CAPS

Writer's note: We would be remiss if we published this preview without mentioning the tragic passing of Rick Cook, Brittany Cook's father, who recently suffered a fatal heart attack. Rick played a huge role not only as Brittany's dad, but also in her development as a basketball player, having served as her coach throughout high school. Our thoughts remain with Brittany and the Cook family.

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**A.D.
VASSALLO**
#40

Class: Senior
Position: Guard/small forward
Height: 6-6
Weight: 215
Hometown: Toa Baja, Puerto Rico

Inside the numbers: Started all 35 games last season ... Averaged a team-leading 16.9 points per game and 34.3 minutes per game ... Also averaged 4.6 rebounds and 2.2 assists ... Shot 44.3 percent from the floor and 39.5 percent from beyond the 3-point arc ... Led the team with 85 3-pointers ... Hit 76 percent of his free-throw attempts.

Analyzing Vassallo's game: A second-team All-ACC performer, Vassallo enjoyed a terrific season a year ago in large part because of his ability to score in a variety of ways. He's always been an outstanding shooter, but last season, he exhibited an ability to take the ball to the basket and showed nice touch when shooting that floater in the lane. He also got to the free-throw line more (125 times, second on the team).

Vassallo also did a nice job on the boards last season. He still needs to improve his ball-handling – he had more turnovers than assists (87-77) – and he still needs to work on his defense, though he's improved in that area as well. Overall, he could be in for a huge season.

Quick comments: "I expect him to continue on the path he's been on the past three years," Tech coach Seth Greenberg said. "I think he can be one of the elite players in the ACC. I didn't say 'shooters,' I said 'players.' He impacts the game a lot of different ways. We expect him to be an elite player in one of the best basketball conferences in America."



**CHEICK
DIAKITE**
#34

Class: Senior
Position: Center
Height: 6-9
Weight: 217
Hometown: Bamako, Mali

Inside the numbers: Started 16 of 34 games last season, averaging 11.9 minutes per game ... Averaged 1.9 points and 2.7 rebounds per

game ... Hit 42 percent of his shots from the floor and 37.5 percent from the free-throw line ... Tied for the team lead with 41 blocked shots ... Had three assists and two steals.

Analyzing Diakite's game: Diakite is a rugged, physical player in the post who excels at rebounding and defending. In fact, he may be the Hokies' most physical player. His offensive game continues to evolve. He possesses a nice turnaround jumper, particularly along the baseline, but the Hokies probably need for him to be more of an offensive rebounder who scores on stick-backs. He needs to work on his free-throw shooting and on taking better care of the basketball when he gets it in the post.

Quick comments: "We need him to be consistent in every aspect – on the floor, off the floor, in the locker room and in his approach," Greenberg said. "If he does that, he can help us win. He's a physical low post defender and he's helped us win games in the past."



**TERRANCE
VINSON**
#15

Class: Redshirt junior
Position: Power forward
Height: 6-8
Weight: 215
Hometown: Valdosta, Ga.

Inside the numbers: Played in 11 games last season, averaging 3.2 minutes per game ... Scored four points and grabbed seven rebounds ... Hit 1-of-7 from the floor and made both of his free-throw attempts ... Had an assist and blocked two shots.

Analyzing Vinson's game: Vinson's game resembles that of Diakite's, though Diakite is bigger and stronger. But Vinson's game centers on defense and rebounding. A knee injury suffered the summer after his redshirt freshman year robbed him of some quickness last season, but a summer in the strength and conditioning program has him in better shape now. He's limited offensively, but could help this team on the offensive glass.

Quick comments: "He's a great teammate," Greenberg said. "He coaches our locker room. He understands what this thing is all about. He's an extremely valuable member of our team."



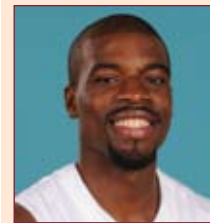
**LEWIS
WITCHER**
#21

Class: Junior
Position: Power forward
Height: 6-9
Weight: 218
Hometown: Rocky Mount, Va.

Inside the numbers: Started 13 of the 35 games in which he played, averaging 12.7 minutes per game ... Averaged 2.7 points and 2.2 rebounds per game ... Shot 52 percent from the floor – second on the team – and 65.2 percent from the free throw line ... Blocked 17 shots and had eight steals.

Analyzing Witcher's game: This may very well be the year that Witcher breaks out. He played much better the second half of last season and possesses all the tools to be a very good ACC post player. He's long – tall with long arms – he's quick and he got stronger over the offseason. He continues to refine his offensive game and expand his range, and on the defensive end, he certainly could alter a lot of shots. If he plays with the aggressiveness he displayed toward the end of last season, he could take a big step forward this upcoming season.

Quick comments: "I expect him to take a huge step forward this year," Greenberg said. "I've got to empower him and make sure he knows he's good, and then he's got to pay us back by playing hard every day and every play. He's got every attribute you could want on and off the court to be a successful player."



**PAUL
DEBNAM**
#32

Class: Junior
Position: Guard
Height: 6-3
Weight: 195
Hometown: Farmville, Va.

Inside the numbers: Played in seven games a year ago for a total of 11 minutes ... Averaged 1.1 points and 0.4 rebounds per game ... Hit 3-of-5 from the floor and nailed both of his free-throw attempts ... Had one blocked shot and one steal.

Analyzing Debnam's game: A year ago, Debnam was an unknown, as he joined the basketball team after playing on the football team his freshman season. He established himself as a solid walk-on who really helped the Hokies in practice, where he makes Tech's guards work hard. He defends pretty well and he has a good shot. If he improves his ball-handling and passing, he could see some time in a reserve role this season.

Quick comments: "Paul is the ultimate

teammate,” Greenberg said. “He never has a down day. He always says the right thing and he always has a smile on his face. Plus, he keeps things loose.”



**JEFF
ALLEN**
#0

Class: Sophomore
Position: Power forward
Height: 6-7
Weight: 240
Hometown: Washington, D.C.

Inside the numbers: Started 32 of 33 games, averaging 28.2 minutes per game ... Led the team in rebounding at 7.6 per game and finished third on the team in scoring at 11.8 points per game ... Led or tied for the team lead in scoring on seven occasions and led or tied for the team lead in rebounding in 16 games ... Shot 49.1 percent from the floor and 60.7 percent from the free-throw line ... Led the team in blocked shots (41) and steals (69) ... Also dished out 30 assists and hit four 3-pointers.

Analyzing Allen's game: Allen, a selection to the ACC's All-Freshman Team, is an immensely talented young man with the ability to dominate a game. He possesses the size and strength to be a force in the post, and displays a wide array of post moves, which enable him to be a scoring machine. His long arms, combined with his size and strength, enable him to be an excellent rebounder and defender as well. He also has great hands and anticipation – he led the team in steals.

He needs to be more careful with the ball, though. He turned the ball over a team-leading 89 times last season.

The only person who can stop him is himself. If he plays with intensity and passion every time out, he could be a first-team All-ACC selection.

Quick comments: “He’s a unique talent,” Greenberg said. “He can do so many things. He’s unselfish. He rebounds in traffic. He’s as good as he wants to be and it seems like he wants to be better. That’s extremely encouraging.”



**TERRELL
BELL**
#1

Class: Sophomore
Position: Guard/forward
Height: 6-6

Weight: 205
Hometown: Stone Mountain, Ga.

Inside the numbers: Played in 33 games last season, averaging 7.1 minutes per game ... Averaged 1.8 points and 1.0 rebounds per game ... Shot 43.5 percent from the floor and 21.7 percent from beyond the 3-point arc ... Made 66.7 percent from the free-throw line ... Dished out 18 assists, blocked four shots and had 10 steals.

Analyzing Bell's game: Bell got buried a little on the bench behind Deron Washington and A.D. Vassallo at the small forward spot last year, but figures to pick up more minutes following Washington's departure. Bell reminds the staff of Washington. He has long arms and tremendous athleticism, and could develop into a top-notch defender, like Washington. He flourishes in the open court. He needs to work on his perimeter shooting and on his post-up skills because the staff would like to take advantage of his length against smaller defenders.

Quick comments: “He’s got the potential to be our next stopper,” Greenberg said. “He’s long, he’s quick and he can shoot it. He puts a lot of pressure on himself and I’d like for him to enjoy the process a little more. He’s much more confident now, though. He’s really improved his ball-handling, which he needed to do.”



**DORENZO
HUDSON**
#5

Class: Sophomore
Position: Guard
Height: 6-5
Weight: 220
Hometown: Charlotte, N.C.

Inside the numbers: Played in 26 games last year, starting in two of them and averaging 12.3 minutes per game overall ... Averaged 3.5 points and 1.4 rebounds per game ... Shot 35.6 percent from the floor and 21.3 percent from beyond the 3-point arc ... Shot 54.5 percent from the free-throw line ... Had 12 assists, nine steals and two blocked shots.

Analyzing Hudson's game: Hudson arrived at Tech at the end of the first semester and spent the remainder of the season getting acclimated to Division-I basketball. He is a tough, physical guard and a good rebounder for a guard. He spent the offseason getting into better shape, which figures to help him tremendously. He struggled shooting a year ago, but his form leads one to believe that he'll be a much better shooter once he gains confidence. He still needs to work on defending and ball-handling.

If he enhances those parts of his game, he'll see more and more time, perhaps even starting.

Quick comments: “He’s dropped over 20 pounds,” Greenberg said. “He’s got a bounce to him now and he’s better defensively. He was in a tough situation. He knew where to go, but he didn’t know why he was going there. I think he’ll have a better understanding of what we want to do now.”



**HANK
THORNS**
#10

Class: Sophomore
Position: Guard
Height: 5-9
Weight: 160
Hometown: Las Vegas, Nev.

Inside the numbers: Started 12 of the 35 games in which he played, averaging 21.1 minutes per game ... Averaged 4.6 points and 2.0 rebounds per game ... Led the team with 113 assists, an average of 3.2 per game, and only had 67 turnovers ... Finished second on the team with 40 steals ... Shot 34.4 percent from the floor and 28.9 percent from beyond the 3-point arc ... Hit 66.7 percent from the free throw line.

Analyzing Thorns' game: Thorns goes into this season hoping to secure a starting job at the point guard spot, if Greenberg decides to play Malcolm Delaney at shooting guard and Vassallo at small forward. Thorns excels at getting his teammates involved. He’s a very good passer with a feel for getting into the lane and distributing the ball to the right person. He needs to get stronger and quicker to be able to defend bigger guards, and he also needs to work on his perimeter shooting. Tech’s staff feels he’ll shoot the ball much better this season with a year of experience under his belt.

Quick comments: “He’s got a great work ethic,” Greenberg said. “He’s the new Energizer bunny. He gets guys to follow him. He has a knack for getting his teammates involved.”



**MALCOLM
DELANEY**
#23

Class: Sophomore
Position: Guard
Height: 6-3
Weight: 170
Hometown: Baltimore, Md.

Inside the numbers: Started 24 of 35 games, assuming the starting job at point guard roughly one-third of the way into the season ... Finished second on the team in assists with 107, averaging 3.1 per game ... Finished fourth on the team in scoring at 9.6 points per game and also averaged 2.9 rebounds per game ... Shot 42 percent from the floor and 40.2 percent from beyond the 3-point arc ... Led the team by shooting 78.7 percent from the free-throw line ... Had 28 steals and four blocked shots.

Analyzing Delaney's game: Delaney really came on toward the end of last season, gaining confidence with every game. He is a world-class shooter, with tremendous range. He knows how to use screens when playing off the ball, yet has the ability to create his own shot from the point guard spot. He handled the ball well for a freshman and is only going to get better in that area. He could be one of the best guards in the ACC this season.

Quick comments: "Malcolm, when he shoots it, you think it's going in every time," Greenberg said. "He's improved his body. He's improved his ball skills. I want him to continue to make himself and others better. He's got tremendous leadership ability. He's got a chance to be really special!"



**J.T.
THOMPSON**
#33

Class: Sophomore
Position: Forward
Height: 6-6
Weight: 210
Hometown: Monroe, N.C.

Inside the numbers: Played in 34 of 35 games and started five of those ... Averaged 18.4 minutes per game ... Averaged 5.6 points and 4.1 rebounds per game ... Shot a team-leading 54.8 percent from the floor ... Hit 64.2 percent from the free-throw line ... Also had 21 steals, 15 assists and 17 blocked shots.

Analyzing Thompson's game: Thompson quickly became a fan favorite at Cassell Coliseum because of his work ethic and toughness, and also because he plays the game smartly. He rarely takes a bad shot and he rarely turns the ball over.

Thompson is a little undersized to be a post player and doesn't quite have the range to be a small forward. But he is a strong, powerful player who attacks the glass at both ends of the court, scoring mostly on stick-backs. He never shies from guarding players taller

and bigger than him, and he's fearless when it comes to drawing charges as well. He certainly figures to see plenty of time this season, regardless of whether he earns a starting job.

Quick comments: "People ask, 'where are you going to play him?'" Greenberg said. "You can call him whatever you want. He's going to play because he helps you win games."



**TOM
AMALFE**
#3

Class: Sophomore
Position: Guard
Height: 6-0
Weight: 170
Hometown: Mountainside, N.J.

Inside the numbers: Played in seven games last season ... Scored two points and grabbed one rebound ... Made one of his four shot attempts.

Analyzing Amalfe's game: Amalfe is a walk-on who has embraced his role of helping this team get better each and every practice. He understands the game, so Greenberg uses him in a variety of ways in practice to help prepare the team for upcoming games. He lacks size and strength, but he's a good shooter with a good basketball IQ and nice instincts for the game. He's the perfect walk-on for this team, as his teammates respect him.

Quick comments: "He's just a great teammate," Greenberg said. "He has the respect of his teammates. He helps us get better every day."



**VICTOR
DAVILA**
#14

Class: Freshman
Position: Power forward
Height: 6-8
Weight: 245
Hometown: Canovanas, Puerto Rico

Inside the numbers: Averaged 20 points, 11.5 rebounds and six blocked shots his senior season at Starmount High in North Carolina ... Averaged 23.2 points, 11.7 rebounds and 3.4 blocked shots per game as a junior ... Finished as the school's all-time leading scorer and rebounder with more than 1,900 career points and 1,400 rebounds.

Analyzing Davila's game: Davila gives the Hokies size and toughness in the post, which are traits this team needs. But he's more than just a big body with a passion for rebounding. He possesses a nice array of offensive skills. His footwork for a big guy allows him to score in a variety of ways, and he has decent range on his shot. Unlike a lot of big guys these days, he knocks down his free throws. On the other end of the court, he affects shots with his size and shot-blocking ability.

Like most freshmen, he'll have to learn how to play hard and compete at this level. But he certainly adds capable depth to the Hokies' thin post.

Quick comments: "If he gets up to speed, he has a chance to make a huge impact," Greenberg said. "He's a legitimate low-post player who can command a double team. And he makes his free throws. He's physically strong."




**GENE
SWINDLE**
#42

Class: Freshman
Position: Center
Height: 6-11
Weight: 260
Hometown: Miami, Fla.

Inside the numbers: Averaged 18 points, 14 rebounds and five blocks his senior season ... Averaged 11.2 points, 7.1 rebounds and one block per game as a junior ... Averaged 15.3 points, 10.4 rebounds and 1.7 blocked shots for his career.

Analyzing Swindle's game: Swindle will not turn 18 until December, so he's still developing and maturing. He can run for a big guy and he possesses terrific hands. Greenberg likes his work ethic as well, so if one combines that with good hands and good feet, one can see the potential for Swindle being a good player. Greenberg compares him to former Pittsburgh center Aaron Gray, who blossomed into an all-conference type of player his final two seasons with the Panthers.

Quick comments: "He is making huge progress," Greenberg said. "He's learning how to work. He's buying into the fitness program. I said when we signed him that I thought he could be a little like Aaron Gray [former Pittsburgh center] and I still believe that." 



**Brittany
Cook**
#21

Class: Redshirt senior
Position: Guard
Height: 6-0
Hometown: Narrows, Va.

Inside the numbers: Started all 30 games and led the ACC with 17.9 points per contest ... Had great percentages, ranking sixth in the league (and first among guards) with a field-goal percentage of 50.2 and seventh in the league with a free-throw percentage of 76.6 ... Also hit 35.7 percent of her 3-pointers ... Led the team and ranked 17th in the league with 6.4 rebounds per game ... Finished second on the squad with 76 assists and 49 steals ... Set Tech's single-game scoring record with 36 points at Miami on Feb. 11th.

Analyzing Cook's game: Not much needs to be said about the Hokies' most reliable and well-rounded player. Opponents obviously know what she is capable of now, so it will be up to her teammates to step up and take some attention away from her. If that happens and Cook gets the chance to pick her spots, she could be even more effective.

Quick comments: "She does what she does, but she's also good at including everyone around her," head coach Beth Dunkenberger said. "When she can make those decisions and keep shooting in the 50s, that's phenomenal. As a guard, it's unbelievable to not only lead the league in scoring, but also to be near the top in field-goal percentage."



**Amber
Hall**
#31

Class: Senior
Position: Center
Height: 6-2
Hometown: Tallahassee, Fla.

Inside the numbers: Started all 30 games and averaged 6.1 points per game ... Shot 41.1 percent from the field and made 25 of 29 free-throw attempts ... Was just 14 rebounds shy of the team lead, averaging 5.9 per game ... Led the Hokies with 53 blocked shots (sixth most in the ACC) and chipped

in with 26 steals.

Analyzing Hall's game: Hall has always been hampered by a bad back, but team doctors have said she is the healthiest she's been since arriving at Tech. If she can maintain that, she'll continue to be the most solid post player on a team that has few. She is unique in that she can defend the other team's best player in the post, but can lure that same player away from the basket on the other end with her top-of-the-key jumper.

Quick comments: "She's got nice range, and really, she's got great 3-point range - we just never see her shoot it in games," Dunkenberger said. "But she's done a nice job of working on her low-block moves as well, so that she can be an inside-outside punch. She looks good."



**Laura
Haskins**
#22

Class: Senior
Position: Guard
Height: 5-10
Hometown: Alexandria, Va.

Inside the numbers: Started all 28 games in which she played, averaging 5.9 points per contest ... Finished third in the ACC with 4.75 assists per game and a 1.64 assist-to-turnover ratio ... Ranked 10th in the league with two steals per contest ... Grabbed 4.6 rebounds per game and accomplished the rare feat of shooting better from the 3-point arc (14-of-36 for 38.9 percent) than from the field (34.4 percent) ... Made 40 of 51 free throws.

Analyzing Haskins' game: Haskins does a little bit of everything in her role as the floor general and has improved in many areas over her career. She is a great rebounder for a point guard and has become a more-trusted ball-handler and decision maker. She plays good perimeter defense and her ability to sink a few jump shots or add a couple of breakaway layups makes her a jack-of-all-trades.

Quick comments: "Laura is an over-achiever - she takes time to figure out what she thinks her weaknesses are and she works on those in the offseason," Dunkenberger said. "That's why you've seen her get better from the 3-point line and that's why you now see her No. 2 in the league in assists and assist-to-turnover ratio (now that UVa's Sharnee Zoll has graduated). She studies the game and tries to figure out where she can be better."



**A.J.
Lemaitre**
#14

Class: Senior
Position: Guard
Height: 5-10
Hometown: Fairfax, Va.

Inside the numbers: Played just 38 minutes over seven games, hitting five of 16 field-goal attempts and two of three free throws for a total of 12 points ... Grabbed 10 rebounds and dished out four assists ... Recorded one block and one steal.

Analyzing Lemaitre's game: Lemaitre's junior season was ended by a torn ACL in late January, and the word is it's not healing very quickly. She's never gotten much time on the court to begin with, and the knee troubles surely won't help her cause. However, Lemaitre has a good basketball IQ and an upbeat personality, which makes her invaluable on the bench and in the locker room.

Quick comments: "Her rehab has been slow and it's not responding extremely well," Dunkenberger said. "It's going to be a situation where her knee will determine how much she can do this year."



**Lindsay
Biggs**
#20

Class: Junior
Position: Guard
Height: 5-11
Hometown: Midlothian, Va.

Inside the numbers: Played in 29 games and was called on to start six times ... Led the team with 32 3-pointers made on her way to an average of 5.1 points per game ... Increased her assist total from 19 as freshman to 37 as a sophomore, but also raised her turnover total, committing 55 ... Shot 32.5 percent from the field and pulled down 53 rebounds.

Analyzing Biggs' game: Biggs never got going last year and struggled with her confidence, which led her to pass up some shots and make passes that weren't there, resulting in too many turnovers. However, she is said to be looking much more confident now, and

with one of the smoothest strokes around, this may be the year that she becomes a quick-strike scoring threat off the bench.

Quick comments: "She struggled last year, but once the season ended, she really made a commitment to get in the best shape she's been in, and if you look at her, you can see a physical difference," Dunkenberg said. "She is one of the best 3-point shooters in the league, and she's just got to have the confidence to fire it any time she's open."



**Utahya
Drye**
#15

Class: Junior
Position: Forward
Height: 6-1
Hometown: Durham, N.C.

Inside the numbers: Played 32.8 minutes per game while starting all 30 contests ... Was third in the team with 9.6 points per game and second with 6.1 rebounds per game ... Was also third on both assists (64) and steals (41) ... Was a 45.9 percent field-goal shooter and a 70.1 percent free-throw shooter.

Analyzing Drye's game: Drye is the 'athlete' whom you see in surplus on many of the great teams around the nation – someone who makes a difference simply by her ability to run, jump and get out into transition. She's developed into more than that, though, and is versatile enough to play in the post or on the outside. She's a legitimate threat on both sides of the ball.

Quick comments: "We just look for Utahya to expand on what she can do," Dunkenberg said. "She's worked hard on her range and is trying to move herself farther away from the basket to help her ability to score because she's already a great slasher. She's worked hard in the weight room and is definitely one of the fittest and fastest players on our team."



**Lakeisha
Logan**
#24

Class: Junior
Position: Guard
Height: 5-8
Hometown: Scarboro, W. Va.

Inside the numbers: Made two starts in 26 games played, averaging 1.5 points in 9.4 minutes ... Shot 33.3 percent from the field ... Pulled down 15 rebounds, handed out 21 assists and made 13 steals.

Analyzing Logan's game: Logan barely played as a freshman, but finally saw some time as a sophomore in a backup role. She is more of a shooter/scorer-type than a point guard, so the addition of Nikki Davis will allow her to play more as a shooting guard. Logan could be a nice role player if she stays in shape and is ready when her number is called.

Quick comments: "Keisha's not quite as tall as a lot of shooting guards in the league, so she has to make up for it with speed," Dunkenberg said. "She has worked hard to be in better shape and to keep up at that pace. It's a fast game, and because she's not as tall, she's got to have some speed and quickness. That's what she's working to maintain and develop."



**Andrea
Barbour**
#5

Class: Sophomore
Position: Guard
Height: 5-10
Hometown: Charlottesville, Va.

Inside the numbers: Saw action in 26 games and made 24 starts ... Led ACC freshmen in scoring, and ranked 11th overall, with 15 points per game ... Grabbed 94 rebounds, half of which were offensive, for a 3.6 per-game average ... Made 38 steals and blocked 17 shots ... Shot 41.9 percent from the field ... In just her third game, tied the sixth-highest single-game point total in Tech history with 29 against Liberty.

Analyzing Barbour's game: Barbour's talent is undeniable, as anyone who watched her last season could attest. She can get to the basket at will and can finish in traffic with the best of them, but at times, she did not appear to be totally invested in the game. Whether that was because her skills make things look easier for her or because she kept injuring a shoulder that she wound up having surgically repaired in July, she's back and ready to build on a tremendous rookie campaign. She is still rehabbing the shoulder, and the staff hopes for her to return to action sometime in December.

Quick comments: "I think Kat is re-focused, rededicated and willing to give 100 percent to this team," Dunkenberg said.

"She underwent surgery this summer to repair the shoulder that she kept injuring last year, and she's progressing nicely through that."



**Elizabeth
Basham**
#42

Class: Sophomore
Position: Forward
Height: 6-2
Hometown: Abingdon, Va.

Inside the numbers: Appeared in 16 games, playing 8.4 minutes and averaging 2.4 points per contest ... Went 17-of-28 from the field for a percentage of 60.7 ... Tallied 15 rebounds, three assists, two blocks and two steals.

Analyzing Basham's game: Basham got off to a nice start before missing a chunk of the season with mono, and she was never same after that. She's the type of player who won't wow you when she's in there, but who also rarely makes a mistake. She knows the game, plays solid defense and keeps opposing defenses honest with her baseline jumper.

Quick comments: "Had she not gotten mono, I think she would've had a great rookie campaign," Dunkenberg said. "But she missed about three weeks where she could do absolutely nothing, and she obviously came back out of shape and a little behind. But she is a fundamentally sound player who understands her role, and that's where she could come in and make a difference."



**Nikki
Davis**
#12

Class: Redshirt sophomore
Position: Guard
Height: 5-7
Hometown: Lexington, Ky.

Inside the numbers: Played in all 30 games, with 19 starts, as a freshman at Alabama during the 2006-07 season ... Averaged 5.1 points, 3.7 rebounds, 3.1 assists and 1.6 steals per game ... Tied her career-high with 16 points and set the Alabama freshman record with 11 assists against Birmingham Southern.

Analyzing Davis' game: Davis is a transfer from Alabama who won't be able to play in a game until December 19th due to NCAA transfer rules, but she has been practicing with the team since last winter when she came to Tech for the spring semester. Dunkenberger compares her to former Hokie Lisa Witherspoon, and she doesn't lack experience, as she started nearly two-thirds of her games as a freshman against some of the best talent in the SEC.

Quick comments: "I think Nikki really complements Laura Haskins at the point," Dunkenberger said. "They're very different. Nikki is a quick, little sparkplug who really pushes the tempo. She can score in a number of ways, but her energy will lift our team every time she's on the court."



**Brittany
Gordon**
#23

Class: Sophomore
Position: Center
Height: 6-4
Hometown: Howard County, Md.

Inside the numbers: Appeared in just 10 games last year, playing 51 minutes ... Struggled percentage-wise, going 6-of-19 from the floor and 5-of-15 from the line to tally 17 total points ... Grabbed 14 rebounds and blocked four shots.

Analyzing Gordon's game: According to Dunkenberger, center is arguably the hardest position to adjust to as a freshman because big players can dominate in high school based on their size alone, but the playing field is evened in college at the highest level. Gordon spent the past year making that adjustment, and one could almost see her mind racing when she got into games as a rookie. She possesses natural athleticism for her size, however, and she is at the top of the list to eat the minutes vacated by the departed Eleanor Brentnall.

Quick comments: "She spent a year learning concepts like how to post up, how to pin and seal, and how to play post defense," Dunkenberger said. "She really grew over the course of the year as far as how much more she understands the game. We're trying to simplify things for her and show her where she can be a difference maker on the court, and she's been very responsive. I'm excited for her. She did a great job last year of coming in here and getting in great shape, and now I think she's starting to see it all come together."



**Shani
Grey**
#30

Class: Redshirt sophomore
Position: Guard
Height: 5-8
Hometown: Windsor, Conn.

Inside the numbers: Appeared in 26 games last season, playing 9.1 minutes per contest ... Averaged 1.7 points and 1.1 rebounds per game, while dishing out nine assists ... Shot just 32.5 percent from the field, but hit 18 of her 22 free-throw attempts for a success rate of 81.8 percent ... Made 14 steals on the defensive end.

Analyzing Grey's game: Grey doesn't do a whole lot with the ball, but she sure brings it on defense, and that's what the Hokies want her to continue. An absolute terror on the opposing ball-handler and in the full-court press, Grey is put into the game to ignite the defense, and when healthy, that's exactly what she does. She's had bad luck with her knees, though, as she sat out her first year with a torn patellar tendon in her right knee, and then she partially tore the patellar tendon in her left knee during a workout in May. Her rehab is going well, but the team is still unsure as to exactly when she'll be ready to go.

Quick comments: "[Her knee] is progressing at a far more rapid pace than we had anticipated," Dunkenberger said. "Her speed and her defensive quickness are a big part of her game, so it's good to see that coming back."



**Shanel
Harrison**
#33

Class: Freshman
Position: Guard
Height: 6-0
Hometown: Olney, Md.

Inside the numbers: Averaged 16.8 points and 8.4 rebounds per game during her senior season at Good Counsel High School ... Ranked No. 63 in the *ESPN HoopGurlz Hundred* for the 2008 class and No. 18 at the guard position ... Named the 2007-08 Washington Catholic Association Conference (WCAC) Player of the Year

and was a first-team All-Met selection by The Washington Post ... Earned WCAC all-league honors all four years ... Scored 1,400 career points, with 789 rebounds, 246 assists and 244 blocks.

Analyzing Harrison's game: Harrison is a big guard who will probably play mostly at the 2 and 3 positions, and maybe even the 4 at times. She is a capable scorer who could provide a Barbour-like presence while Barbour is out allowing her shoulder to heal. Those two together, combined with Cook, could present a pick-your-poison scoring trio for opponents to guard.

Quick comments: "Shanel is a big guard who can score in a number of ways," Dunkenberger said. "She's very strong and very aggressive to the basket. To me, she is a difference maker on the court with her ability to make plays. It's that simple. She's very similar to Kat [Barbour] in that respect."



**Brittany
Lewis**
#3

Class: Freshman
Position: Forward
Height: 6-2
Hometown: Orange Park, Fla.

Inside the numbers: Averaged 13.6 points, 6.5 rebounds, 1.6 steals and one block during her senior season Fleming Island High School ... Holds the school career record for points (705) and blocks (29) ... Set the school standard with 29 blocks during her junior season ... Was a three-time member of the All-St. John's River Athletic Conference team ... Was named to the *Jacksonville Times-Union* all-area team (northeast Florida).

Analyzing Lewis' game: Lewis is a long and lanky forward who will probably see more time inside because of the Hokies' lack of post depth, but she definitely has the ability to step out and stretch the defense. If you're looking for a not-too-former Hokie to compare her game to, Dunkenberger said she's a Kerri Gardin-type of player - a more athletic forward as opposed to a true low-block forward.

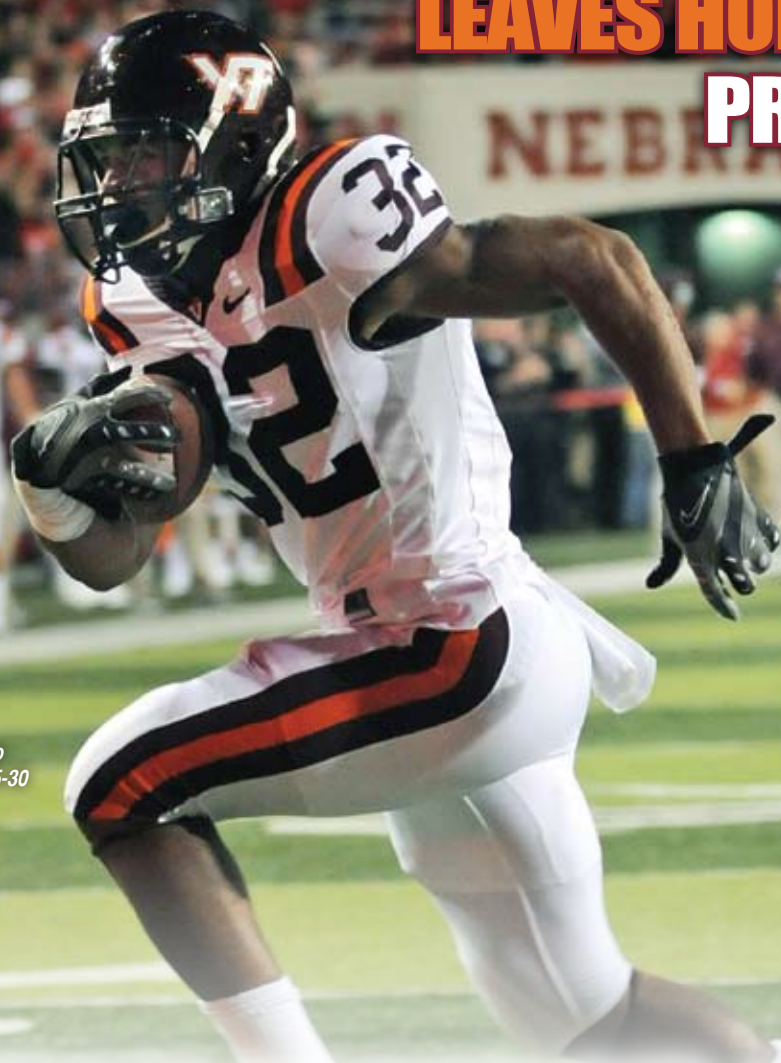
Quick comments: "Brittany is a very athletic forward who can play not only with her back to the basket, but also facing the basket," Dunkenberger said. "She has very good 3-point range for a 6-foot-2 player and she has some very natural instincts around the basket. She's got a lot to learn, but she's very talented."

FIVE STRAIGHT WINS LEAVES HOKIES IN PRIME POSITION

heading into
second half of '08

By Jimmy Robertson

Darren Evans scored two touchdowns in Tech's 35-30 win at Nebraska



Like most Tech football fans, Tyrod Taylor glanced at the Hokies' 2008 football schedule before the season even kicked off.

Unlike most, he fully expected his team to be unbeaten at this point in the season.

"I thought we'd be 6-0," he said matter-of-factly. "I never think negatively. I'm always a positive guy."

The Hokies aren't quite 6-0, but at the halfway point of the season, they're not far from it either. Following an excruciating loss to East Carolina in the season opener, Tech has ripped off five straight wins, the latest coming on Homecoming when the Hokies lethargically won 27-13 over Western Kentucky University to move to 5-1 on the season.

This probably wasn't expected, particularly after watching that ECU game. Tech's staff went into this season expecting to battle inexperience, but then they realized they needed to change plans at quarterback, scrapping Taylor's redshirt plans in favor of his play-making ability.

They've also dealt with a rash of season-ending injuries. Tech lost Davon Morgan (knee) for the year in a win at Nebraska and

then Kenny Lewis, Jr., blew out his Achilles tendon against WKU, putting an end to his season. Back-up fullback and key special teams cog Kenny Younger (knee) and expected starting receiver Brandon Dillard (Achilles) went down as well.

Then there's the schedule. Tech finds itself in the midst of playing four road contests in five games. The Hokies have won the first two of those four.

"If you gave me a choice of 5-1 after our first six games, I would have taken that in a heartbeat, just with how young we are," Beamer said. "It's a hard schedule, too. Being 5-1 sounds pretty good, but we still have our work cut out for us."

"I think we've done a good job of turning the season around," tailback Darren Evans said. "A bunch of people probably thought this was going to be one of those down-the-drain seasons, but we proved some people wrong. We've been playing well."

The Hokies still have much improving to do. After tallying 35 points and 377 yards against Nebraska, they only mustered 27 and 293 against WKU, playing in its second

season as a Division I-A team. They got in the red zone six times, but only scored two touchdowns. Defensively, they've been solid, but prone to some big plays – 20 of 20 yards or more in the past four games.

"We've got a lot of work to do in all phases of the game," end Orion Martin admitted.

Tech gets two weeks to work on some things before heading to Chestnut Hill, Mass., to take on BC in a pivotal game. The extra week also gives the Hokies some time to rest and to heal.

But to be 5-1 at the halfway point – could Tech fans have asked for much more?

"I don't think so," Martin said. "We've got a young team. We had to replace a great senior class. We wish we could be undefeated, but to be 5-1 going into the off week, we'll take that. We'll try to improve and get ready for the rest of the ACC."

TECH 27, WKU 13
Oct. 4, 2008 • Blacksburg, Va.

Evans and place-kicker Dustin Keys each extended their respective scoring streaks in leading Tech to the victory.

Evans, who tallied 79 yards on 21 carries, rushed for a pair of touchdowns to increase his season total to eight. Keys nailed both of his field-goal tries and has made 11 in a row dating back to a miss in the first game of the year.

Other notes:

- Taylor threw a TD pass to Boone, his first TD pass of the season. It marked Boone's first touchdown reception of this season and just the second of his career.

- Tech cornerback Macho Harris recorded his 12th career interception and picked off a pass for the third straight game.

TECH 35, NEBRASKA 30
Sept. 27, 2008 • Lincoln, Neb.

The Hokies used a balanced attack, racking up season highs in points (35) and yardage (377) en route to a 35-30 upset of Nebraska in front of 85,831 fans at Memorial Stadium – the largest crowd in stadium history.

Taylor completed 9-of-15 for 171 yards. On the ground, Tech got 87 yards rushing from Taylor and 72 from Evans, who scored twice.

Other notes:

- Nebraska lost for just the fourth time at home in a night game, falling to 26-4. The other opponents to beat the Cornhuskers – No. 4 Washington in 1991, No. 7 Texas in

2002 and No. 1 Southern Cal in 2007.

- The crowd was the third most ever to watch a Tech game, trailing LSU last year (92,739) and USC at FedEx Field in 2004 (91,665).

- Stephan Virgil blocked the Hokies' first punt of the season and the second of his career. Tech now has 121 blocks in Beamer's 259 games as the head coach (60 punts).

TECH 20, UNC 17
Sept. 20, 2008 • Chapel Hill, N.C.

Tech rallied from a 14-point, third-quarter deficit by scoring 17 unanswered points to record a 20-17 victory over the Tar Heels. Keys' field goal with 10:42 left in the game turned out to be the winner.

Other notes:

- Tech failed to score in the first quarter for the fourth straight game to open the season. The last time that happened was in 1981.

- Jarrett Boykin, a freshman, made his first career start as the Hokies opened in a three-receiver set. Evans also made his first career start, as both he and Lewis got the nod. Evans led the Hokies with 61 yards on 14 carries.

TECH 20, GEORGIA TECH 17
Sept. 13, 2008 • Blacksburg, Va.

Keys' 21-yard field goal with 4:37 left turned out to be the difference as the Hokies sur-

vived a close one against the Yellow Jackets. Linebacker Purnell Sturdivant dropped Josh Nesbitt for a 2-yard loss and the Hokies' only sack of the game on a fourth down late, preserving Tech's victory.

Other notes:

- For the third consecutive game, Tech defensive tackle John Graves got his hands up and blocked a kick. He became the first Tech player in Beamer's tenure to block a kick in three straight games.


- Taylor got the starting nod at quarterback for the first time this season.

TECH 24, FURMAN 7
Sept. 6, 2008 • Blacksburg, Va.

The week before this game, Tech's staff made the decision to scrap the redshirt plans for Taylor, and he made the most of his first action of the season. He rushed for 112 yards on 14 carries, including a 50-yard run that set up Tech's first touchdown of the day in a 17-point Tech win.

Other notes:

- The 100-yard rushing game marked the second of Taylor's career. He rushed for 118 yards at Clemson last year.

- Justin Myer served as the kickoff man this game, making him the ninth true freshman to play for the Hokies this season. 

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HOKIE HUMOR

**RYAN SHUMAN WORKS
HARD ON THE FIELD, BUT
KEEPS IT LIGHT OFF IT**

By Jimmy Robertson

The smile came slowly across Cody Grimm's face.

He was sitting at Tech's weekly press conference, answering the same old tired, mundane questions about the upcoming week's opponent when he finally received something worth actually answering. It was like fielding an easy interception – and seeing nothing but a sea of green expanse in front of him.

Question: "I'm doing a feature on Ryan Shuman. What can you tell me about him?" Then came the smile.

"He's hilarious," Grimm said.

That summed up the consensus among a majority of players when asked about John Ryan Shuman, Tech's starting center and veritable anchor on the offensive line. And those responses came as a bit of a surprise.

Maybe that's because he's an offensive lineman, and he doesn't do a ton of interviews, so the public never gets a glimpse of his true persona. All people pretty much know about this guy is that he practices hard, works hard in the weight room, and in a blue-collar fashion, gets the job done on Saturday.

But judging from his teammates' responses, this guy ought to be working on Saturday nights – as in on the set of *Saturday Night Live*.

"I hear you been talking to Cody," Shuman said. "All lies. You can't print any of that stuff either."

Maybe he'll end up forgiving those who take a few literary liberties with his exploits. His humor centers not really on slapstick, nor on stand-up routines, but more along the lines of simple shenanigans, or rather, Shuman's shenanigans. These are more appreciated by the young men ages 18-23 who congregate daily in the Hokies' locker room.

For starters, the proud alum of Fork Union often sports his old high school jersey in public. Shuman arrived at Tech weighing about roughly 250 pounds and now weighs more than 290, so the jersey fits a little snugly. Yet sources say he takes so much pride in it that he even wears it out to local establishments and parties.

"The funny thing is I found it in my bag one day," Shuman said. "I don't know how it got there. Maybe I packed it. I don't know. So I just started wearing it."

"Then I lost it somehow. I went to my old high school buddy's house one day and his roommate had it on his wall. I had no idea. I was like, 'How did that get there?' Somehow, my buddy got it and his roommate found out whose it was and put it on his wall like it was his. It was pretty funny, but I got it back and it's at my house."

"I don't really wear it to parties, though. Yeah, I wear it from time to time. But I don't wear it out [on the town]."

"He's a liar. I can tell you about numerous occasions," best buddy and offensive line teammate Richard Graham said. "He wears it to the pool. He wears it when he comes over to watch football with us and when he goes out at night. He's a big fan of that. It barely covers half his gut."

Graham – who actually played against Shuman in high school and whose high school team knocked off Fork Union for the private school state championship during Shuman's senior year (Graham's junior year) – possesses firsthand knowledge of Shuman's shenanigans. He let his hair grow long and grew a beard during preseason camp this past August, and Shuman coined the nickname "Thunder" for Graham. Not long thereafter, a Facebook page popped up, concerning Graham's hairstyle and general overall appearance. At last check, it had 87 members.

"He thought I looked like a lead singer for an '80s rock band," Graham said. "So he started calling me 'Thunder,' and everyone started calling me that."



"I had the bandana on [during practices] to hold my hair back and he kept saying that I should come in on a zip line before every game, right after the team came out to *Enter Sandman*. That was his great idea."

Shuman's teammates say he's obsessed with hair, mostly of the facial variety. Of particular interest is the rather thick beard grown by redshirt freshman lineman Blake DeChristopher. That subject crops up quite frequently.

"He enjoys Blake DeChristopher's beard a lot," Grimm said. "He claims it's beautiful."

"I can grow a somewhat trashy beard, but Blake can grow a real man's beard," Graham said. "Shuman, however, can't grow anything. He swears he can grow a beard. He tries and then he gets in these pictures with me and Blake, but you can't even see his facial hair. He's really jealous of Blake's facial hair ability and his mustache."

Shuman's obsessions also extend to his own trapezius muscles, or 'traps' as they get called among those in the weightlifting profession. Most weightlifters take pride in their biceps or their abdominal muscles, but Shuman goes to great pains to point out his traps – the muscles behind the neck that extend part way down the back – to his teammates.

"He's got big traps, but it's by genetics," Graham said. "It's not by his weightlifting routines."

One wouldn't know that by checking out his Facebook profile. It includes every famous weightlifting quote imaginable, and his activities all pertain to weightlifting. His favorite magazines and books are related to weightlifting as well. If one didn't know better, one would think he was the biggest meathead on the team.

"I work out for a purpose and I don't mind it," Shuman said, laughing. "But it's not an obsession at all."

"That [the Facebook thing] was just a joke. It was a masterpiece, though, you must say. It's pretty good. I have a sense of humor, too."

Shuman's shenanigans could be written about for days. But one other thing also needs to be said about him – this young man is a helluva football player.

And that's nothing to laugh at.

It comes as no surprise since, after all, he grew up as the son of John Shuman, Fork Union Military Academy's longtime post-graduate team football coach, and Patricia Shuman, whose father, Bill Miller, played basketball at UVa and recorded the first triple-double in ACC history. They raised their family near Fork Union, which sits in the tiny town of Fluvanna, Va., and like most small towns, there was little to do.

Oddly, John Shuman and his sons, Ryan

and Mark, spent their free time playing basketball in the backyard. Ever the crafty coach, John Shuman wanted to get his boys away from the television set, but also saw basketball as a way to improve their footwork for the sport he coached and they played.

"Oh yeah, we played a lot of basketball," said John Shuman, himself a former athlete at VMI. "And every time we'd go to a relative's house, we'd try to find an outdoor court."

"We'd block each other's shots and foul each other. It was a great stress reliever. I'd say my record against him is about 20-3."

"He was real good," Ryan admitted of his dad. "Not now. He had knee surgery. He can't move like he used to, but when I was growing up, the guy could still move. He was good. I couldn't keep up. But he's fading now. He's getting old. Fading quick."

The familial hoops games became so legendary that even Tech's current players quiz Ryan about them, especially about the one in which Ryan allegedly took a big lead and his dad started fouling him hard and yelling that he was 'soft.'

"I had to break out some old school," John said. "Had to elbow him a bit, knee him in the thigh. I had to toughen him up."

The Shumans lived right across the street from the Fork Union campus, so Ryan got an everyday glimpse of cadet life. But rather than send Ryan to the private school, John



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and Patricia Shuman elected to take the public route.

"My wife has taught in the public school system for 39 years," John said. "So we decided 'Let's do public.' He went to elementary school, then middle school and then to Fluvanna [High] for two years.

"The interesting thing – and I'll never forget this – was that Ryan had a job with me in the summer. July 4th that year was on a Thursday and me and Ryan and Liz, my daughter, came in to work on that Friday. Me and Liz started ganging up on him. I asked him, 'Do you think you can accomplish your goals there [at Fluvanna]? If you come here, you can concentrate on your grades and getting your SAT scores up and getting your weight and strength up.' I was just running off at the mouth, but he didn't say much.

"A few days later, my wife comes up to me and she's irate because Ryan wanted to transfer. I was like, 'What are you talking about?' I didn't think he was even listening to me. But it began the trek to where he is today."

Ryan Shuman shined on the prep team for two years and ultimately earned a scholarship offer to Tech. Interestingly, he only played for his dad once, moving up to the postgraduate team for a game at the end of the season.

That's not to say he didn't learn something from his old man. On the contrary, his dad

WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT starting center **RYAN SHUMAN**

What do you watch on TV?: *World's Strongest Man*, Food Network, Discovery Channel.

What's in your iPod?: Hootie & the Blowfish, Kid Rock, Bruce Springsteen, Tom Petty, John Cougar Mellencamp.

What do you drive?: Durango.

Favorite flicks: All Kevin Costner flicks (*Waterworld*), all Steven Segal flicks (*Hard to Kill*), all Nick Cage and Sean Connery flicks (*The Rock*).

What are you reading these days?: *Mind Gym: An Athlete's Guide to Inner Excellence*.

Favorite magazines: FLEX (a bodybuilding magazine).

Favorite Internet sites: Redskins.com.

What's on the walls of your apartment?: Prints from the National Art Museum (mostly Wassily Kandinsky prints).

Favorite city to visit: New Orleans.

What was your first job?: Working maintenance at Fork Union Military Academy.

Favorite team as a kid: Redskins.

Favorite trait in others: Kindness (isn't everyone's?).

I'd love to trade places for a day with... : Curt Newsome.

Favorite dinner: Steak dinner.

Talent you'd most like to have is... : Wish I could juggle.

Your motto: Lift heavy – life is too short to be small.



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GO HOKIES!

Randy Nance

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showed him and Mark the tricks of the trade. He emphasized work ethic and built up his sons' toughness during those bruising summertime basketball games. Yet he never pushed football on either of them, letting them pick their paths.

"He's a tough guy, but he was never really tough on us," Ryan said. "He made sure that we did stuff. When it was slow around the high school, he'd make us do some stuff to improve ourselves.

"Coming in here [at Tech], I knew how to run block and pass block and stuff like that. I knew the basic stuff. He never pushed us to lift weights or anything like that, but he made sure we could move and that we understood the game."

Those instincts, that toughness and that work ethic all led to him becoming a three-year starter here at Tech, even when injuries tried to derail him. As a redshirt sophomore, he partially tore the anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee late in the season and underwent arthroscopic surgery, which caused him to miss the remainder of the regular season. He came back to start the bowl game, though in pain.

lot of pain and was always getting his knee drained.

"But this year, he's pain free and you can tell by the way he's playing. I haven't seen any centers playing any better than he is."

Shuman hopes that leads to future games, of the NFL variety, that is – "It's all about the knee," John Shuman said. "The coaches say what he does well is what the scouts look for." – but if not, he plans on going out and getting a 9-to-5 job. He graduated with a degree in apparel, housing and resource management this past spring.

For now, it's all about the remaining games left on the Hokies' schedule, including the opportunity to close out his final game at Lane Stadium with a win over Virginia, completing the senior class' 4-0 sweep of its in-state rivals.

"I'll be wearing sunglasses on that day [to hide the tears]," said John Shuman, who will be with his wife on the field before the game participating in the senior day festivities. "I hope I don't have to get too close to that UVa sideline, though. Brother Groh [Al, UVa's head coach] was the first to pass on him. I

"Last year, he [Shuman] couldn't move like he wanted to. He was frustrated. He couldn't block in space like he wanted. He was in a lot of pain and was always getting his knee drained. But this year, he's pain free and you can tell by the way he's playing. I haven't seen any centers playing any better than he is." – Richard Graham

The knee bothered him all of last season and hindered his play at times at his center spot. Still, he managed to start every game, even though he lived in the training room and constantly needed to get the fluid drained from his knee.

"I was just stiff," Shuman said. "It took me so long to get going. Last year was a struggle. I couldn't really run and I got heavy, and that didn't help."

Shuman underwent microfracture surgery in January in hopes of taking care of the problem once and for all. He missed out on spring practice, but managed to participate in all of the Hokies' summer workouts.

For the first time in two years, he feels good – and it shows. He's been Tech's top offensive lineman in nearly every game so far this season and was named the ACC's offensive lineman of the week following the Nebraska in which he graded out at a team-high 84 percent and had seven knockdowns.

"Two years ago, when he actually was lifting weights and was huge, he moved so much better and was positive on the field," Graham said. "Last year, he couldn't move like he wanted to. He was frustrated. He couldn't block in space like he wanted. He was in a

don't know. I may have to say something.

"But I don't want that day to come too fast. I want him [Ryan] to enjoy this season and I want to enjoy it. But I'll definitely have on big sunglasses that day and I usually don't."

Rest assured, Ryan Shuman will enjoy the rest of this season. He'll enjoy every day. He'll enjoy wearing his high school jersey out on the town and gazing at his traps in the mirror, and he'll fondly admire Blake DeChristopher's facial hair.

He'll also remind his teammates that he is a team captain – another of his true passions.

"He's all the time saying, 'Go get me this. Listen to your captain,'" Grimm said. "He loves it. He was looking at me the other day before the game and then he held the 'C' up on his jersey ['C' for captain]. They don't even have C's on them, but he's holding his hand as if it were a 'C'. It was pretty funny."

"I'm more quick than anything," Shuman said. "I have a sense of humor. I like to laugh and have a good time. But I'm more quick than anything."

Certainly when he leaves, his play will be missed.

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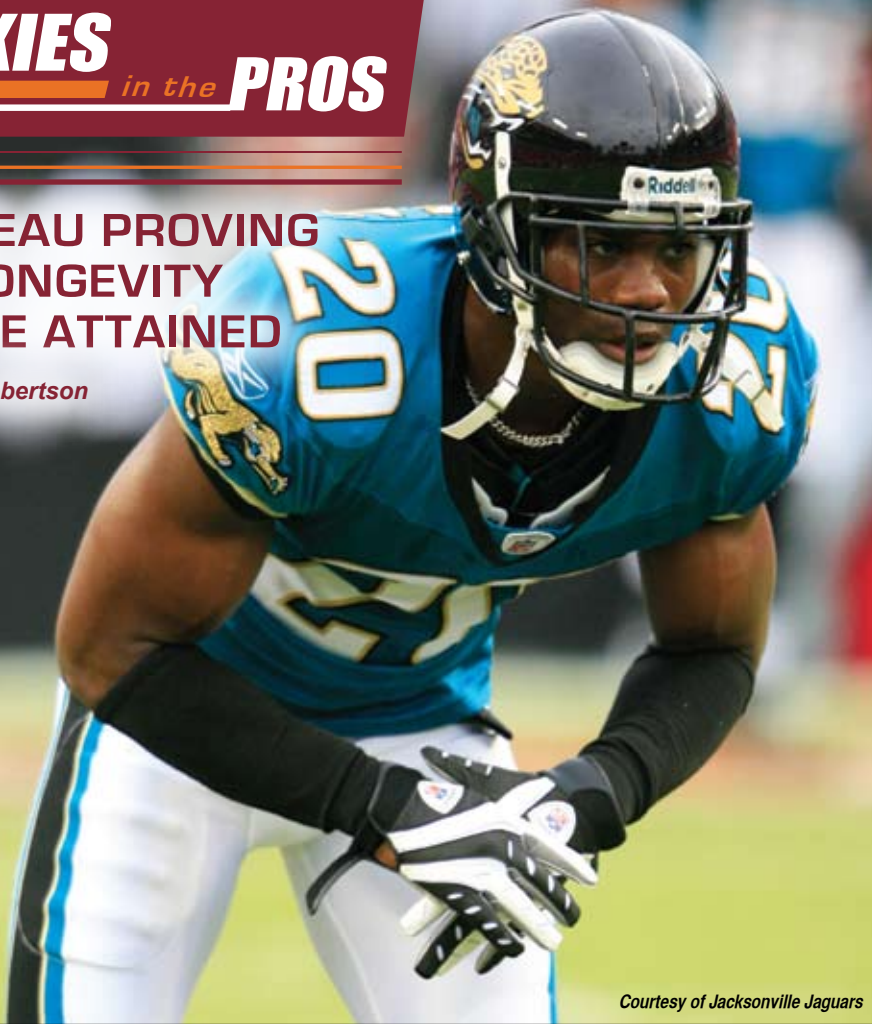
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PRIOLEAU PROVING NFL LONGEVITY CAN BE ATTAINED

By Jimmy Robertson



Courtesy of Jacksonville Jaguars

It seems odd referring to Pierson Prioleau as an old man – after all, he just turned 31 years old.

But he stands as the oldest and longest-tenured of all the former Hokies actively playing in the NFL these days.

Prioleau, a former cornerback, rover and All-American here at Tech, continues to find a way of playing the game he loves in the best league in the world. After his contract with the Washington Redskins expired last season, he thought about hanging up his uniform and dreams for the last time. But the Jacksonville Jaguars hired former Washington defensive coordinator Gregg Williams, and Williams talked Jags officials into bringing Prioleau aboard as a reserve safety and a special teams participant.

“My contract was up with Washington, so I was feeling around my options,” Prioleau said. “I wanted to go somewhere where I could be a leader on and off the field. Coach Williams convinced me to come down and it’s been good so far.”

Prioleau thus is participating in his 10th season in the NFL, and the Jaguars mark his fourth team. He played two seasons in San Francisco after the 49ers drafted him in the fourth round of the 1999 NFL Draft and started 11 games in those two years. He

signed with Buffalo in 2001 – and has played for Williams every year but one since then. Williams served as the head coach in Buffalo, and after getting fired from there, he signed on with the Redskins to work under Joe Gibbs. Prioleau spent four seasons in Buffalo and three seasons in Washington.

So how does a 5-foot-11, 190-pounder survive in the NFL after all those years? It’s simple – by listening.

“First of all, I have to thank God because I’ve only had one serious injury (a torn ACL suffered with Washington on the opening kickoff of the 2006 season),” Prioleau said. “But when I got drafted by San Francisco, I was fortunate because we had a lot of older guys there – guys like Jerry Rice and Steve Young and Merton Hanks. They told me how to take care of my body and I listened to them.

“There was another guy there – Tim McDonald. He was a safety and he was at the tail end of his career. He really taught me a lot. As a younger guy, you tend to take things for granted. But he taught me a lot about the game and how to approach the game and how to take care of myself. He played as an older guy and he played effectively. That always stuck with me.”

Prioleau has enjoyed a nice career in football. He arrived at Tech as a little known recruit

from the low country of South Carolina (near Charleston) and became an All-American his junior season. He then got drafted following his senior season and has spent the past decade in the NFL.

“I’ve been blessed,” he said. “I can’t say I’m surprised. I knew it would be tough, but I’ve never taken anything for granted. It’s hard to have longevity in the NFL. I never take any day in the NFL for granted.”

In the offseason, Prioleau is never far from Blacksburg. He makes his offseason home in Radford, where his wife grew up. The two of them have two boys and they used to live near the Pete Dye River Course. But they recently sold that house and are currently building a residence on a rural piece of property not far from Radford.

“This is the first year I’ve been away from them,” Prioleau said of his family. “But my son was starting kindergarten and I didn’t want to move him, and we’re building a house, so it’s good that my wife is up there and can handle all that.

“Plus, I only signed a one-year contract here. I’m not sure where my career is headed after this year. So I didn’t want to move my family down here and then have to maybe move again. But I’m able to catch up with them on weekends. After this season, we’ll just have to see what happens.”

Prioleau hopes to get into coaching after his playing career ends. He already volunteers at local high schools, and coaching would allow him to remain in the game.

“I think there could be an opportunity on this level [the NFL],” he said. “My boy, [Anthony] Midget, got that job at Georgia State, and I told him I wish I had known. I would have shut it down and gone to grad school there to help him out.

“I’m always teasing Coach Cav [Jim Cavanaugh], too, to give me a heads up on when he’s going to retire. I’ll just move right on in. It would be a dream job to be at Tech. Tech is a big part of the reason why I’m where I’m at today.”

For now, though, he’s focusing on his role with the Jaguars and helping them to snag a playoff berth. Prioleau has participated in the playoffs on two occasions – both with the Redskins – but he never has played beyond the second round. The Jaguars field a good team and stand as a sleeper pick in the difficult AFC, so he may get a shot to go deep into the playoffs.

And if this were to be his last year, it would be a fitting end if he could do so.

“That’s probably the one part of my career I’m missing out on,” he said. “We went twice in Washington and that was a lot of fun. But now maybe I’ll get to experience something a little bigger. That would be great.”

HOKIES IN THE PROS

(As of Oct. 6th)



ARIZONA CARDINALS

25 Eric Green -

The former Tech cornerback, now in his fourth season in Arizona, has started every game for the Cardinals. He has 15 tackles (14 solo), and an interception, the second of his career. A year ago, he started 11 games for the Cardinals and finished with 51 tackles (47 solo). He did not intercept a pass the entire season.



BALTIMORE RAVENS

Justin Harper -

Harper, a seventh-round pick of the Ravens, stuck with Baltimore throughout training camp, but was dropped during the last series of cuts before opening day. Still, he signed with the Ravens' practice squad and probably will spend the season there.



BUFFALO BILLS

93 Chris Ellis - Ellis,

whom the Bills took in the third round of April's NFL Draft, went into this season as a back-up at the end spots. But he has not

been activated for any of the team's games yet.



CAROLINA PANTHERS

50 James Anderson -

Anderson went into his third season with the Panthers as a back-up at the weakside linebacker spot. So far this season, he has not been activated for any of the Panthers' games.

87 Jeff King - King serves as the starter at tight end for the Panthers, but has gotten off to a bit of a slow start. He has just eight catches for 72 yards, an average of 9.0 yards per catch. A year ago, he started all 16 games, catching 46 passes for 406 yards and two touchdowns.



CHICAGO BEARS

34 Kevin Jones - After

spending four injury-plagued years with the Lions, Kevin Jones signed with the Bears in the offseason. Coming off a season in which he tore a ligament in his knee late in the year, Jones rushed for 107 yards on 30 carries in the first five games to rank second on the team.



CINCINNATI BENGALS

17 Shayne Graham -

Graham made nine of his first 10 field-goal attempts to start the season for the Bengals, with a long of 45 yards, and all of his five extra-point attempts. A year ago, he made 31 of 34 field-goal attempts, with a long of 48, and all 37 of his extra-point attempts.



CLEVELAND BROWNS

27 Nick Sorensen -

Sorensen, entering his eighth NFL season, participates mostly on special teams for the Browns, while also serving as a back-up at the safety spots. He had four tackles (two solo) and a half of a sack in the first four games. He played in nine games last season, registering 13 tackles (11 solo) - all on special teams.



DENVER BRONCOS

60 John Engelberger -

Engelberger, a former defensive lineman at Tech, starts for the Broncos at end and had 15 tackles (14 solo) and a sack after the first five games of this season. He started 15 of 16 games last season, recording 41 tackles, including 30 solo stops, and he had one sack.

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75 Carlton Powell - The Broncos took the former Tech defensive tackle in the fifth round of this past April's NFL Draft, but he won't be playing this season. Powell tore his Achilles tendon during an offseason workout and will miss the entire season.

19 Eddie Royal - Royal is the leading contender for rookie of the year honors after getting off to a blazing start. The former Tech wide receiver, a second-round pick of the Broncos, started the first five games and caught 30 passes for 321 yards and two touchdowns. He also returned eight punts for an average of 14.3 yards per return and rushed three times for 15 yards. And he returned one kickoff for 11 yards.



GREEN BAY PACKERS

37 Aaron Rouse -

Rouse moved into the starting role at free safety after two games and has been making the most of it. Through four games, he ranked second on the team in tackles with 23 (18 solo). But an injured knee caused him to miss Green Bay's recent game with Atlanta.



HOUSTON TEXANS

11 André Davis - Davis, now in his seventh NFL

season, serves as the third receiver for the Texans after signing a long-term deal with them in the offseason. In their first four games, he caught four passes for 80 yards and returned 16 kickoffs for 332 yards, an average of 20.8 yards per return.

75 Brandon Frye - Frye went into this season hoping to get some playing time, but the Texans waived him right before the season began. They signed him to their practice squad on Sept. 4th, however. The former Tech offensive tackle spent all of last season on the practice squad.

76 Duane Brown - Brown went in the first round to the Texans in this past April's NFL Draft and started the Texans' first four games. He continues to fair pretty well - he's only committed one penalty thus far.

52 Xavier Adibi - The Texans drafted former Tech linebacker Xavier Adibi back in April and he plays as a reserve at linebacker. The Texans did not activate him in the first two games, but activated him for the third game and he played on special teams.



JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS

20 Pierson Prioleau -

Prioleau signed with the Jaguars in the off-season to be a back-up at both safety spots

and to play on special teams after spending three seasons with the Redskins mainly in a similar role. He has played in every game thus far for the Jaguars and has 12 tackles (11 solo on the season).

75 Jonathan Lewis - The former Tech defensive tackle landed with the Jaguars in mid-August and expected to add depth to their line. But Lewis suffered a knee injury in the preseason finale against Washington and was placed on injured reserve. He will miss the 2008 season.



KANSAS CITY CHIEFS

24 Brandon Flowers -

Flowers has picked up where he left off when he decided to leave Tech following his redshirt junior season. Flowers starts for the Chiefs, who took him in the second round of April's draft, and had 23 tackles through the first five games - including 22 solo stops, which was third on the team.



MIAMI DOLPHINS

19 Ernest Wilford - Wilford signed a big deal with the Dolphins in the offseason, but has gotten off to a slow start. He had caught just one pass for 15 yards in the first four games and was

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not activated for the team's first game. Tech's all-time leading receiver enjoyed a career year for the Jaguars last season, catching a career-high and a team-leading 45 passes for 518 yards and three touchdowns.



NEW ORLEANS SAINTS

61 Matt Lehr - Lehr's contract was terminated in early September, but

the Saints re-signed him shortly thereafter. The nine-year veteran has played in just one game so far this season, his ninth season in the NFL.



NEW YORK JETS

17 David Clowney - Clowney, now in his

second season, has not been activated for any of the Jets' games this season. The former Tech receiver landed with the Jets last fall after being drafted by Green Bay, and he spent the remainder of the season on the Jets' practice squad.



OAKLAND RAIDERS

64 Jake Grove - The former Tech center goes into his fifth season with Oakland and

starts for the Raiders at center, beating out John Wade for the starting job. He played in just seven games last season, missing the majority of the season because of a knee injury.

23 DeAngelo Hall - Hall, who starts at cornerback for Oakland, struggled when matched up with former Tech receiver Eddie Royal during the teams' meeting earlier this season, but he has recorded 22 tackles (20 solo) on the year to go with half of a sack and two interceptions. Hall went to Oakland from Atlanta in an offseason trade and started the first four games this season.



SEATTLE SEAHAWKS

55 Darryl Tapp - After starting all of last season,

the former Tech defensive end has played in a reserve role for the Seahawks so far this season. In Seattle's first four games, he had nine tackles (seven solo). He recorded 49 tackles, including 41 solo stops, and seven sacks a year ago. He also intercepted a pass.



SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

84 Josh Morgan - Morgan, a sixth-round

pick of the 49ers in April's NFL Draft, enjoyed a fantastic training camp for the 49ers and continues to see playing time. He caught five passes for 49 yards in the team's first four games, and he also plays on special teams. He has four tackles on special teams, including three solo ones.



TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS

69 Anthony Davis - The former Tech tackle, playing

his sixth season with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers after landing with them as a free agent coming out of college, has played in a reserve role in every game but one this season. He played in nine games last year as a reserve.



TENNESSEE TITANS

22 Vincent Fuller - The former Tech defensive


back continues to flourish in Tennessee for the undefeated Titans. After the first five games, he ranked fourth on the team with 26 tackles, including 18 solo stops, and he has recovered a fumble. He served as the Titans' nickel back a year ago and he returned two interceptions for touchdowns.

Jason Murphy - Murphy, a former Tech guard, ended up being cut by the Titans in late August. But the Titans signed him to their practice squad a couple of days later and he'll probably spend the season there.



WASHINGTON REDSKINS

23 Justin Hamilton - Hamilton, who did not

play in the NFL last year after spending his rookie season with the Cleveland Browns, signed with Washington in the offseason and played in two of the Redskins' first five-games. He was not activated for the other three games. He sees most of his action on special teams. 



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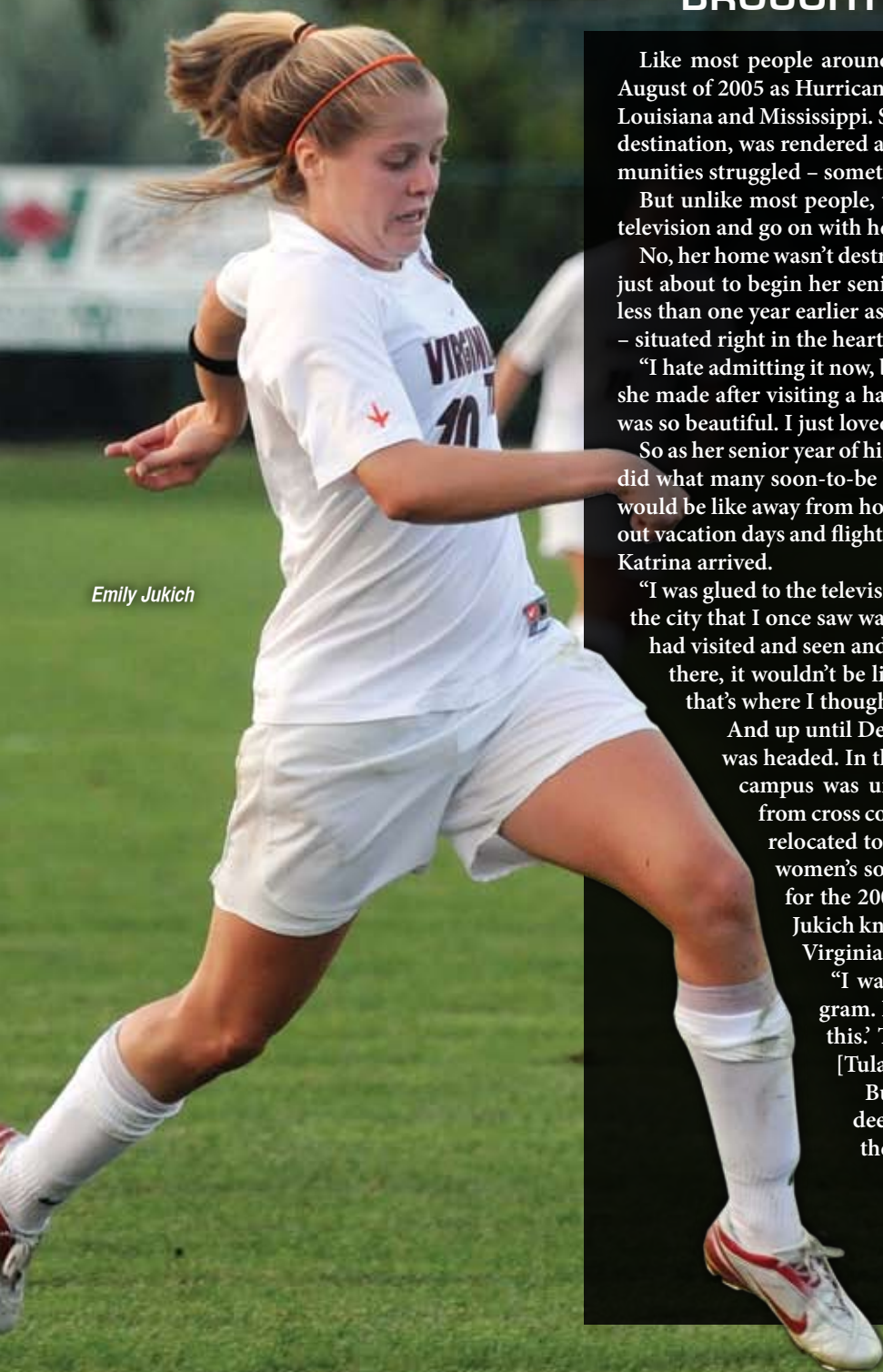


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WINDS OF CHANGE

RECENT HURRICANES REMIND
SOCCER STAR OF THE ONE THAT
BROUGHT HER TO TECH - *By Matt Kovatch*



Emily Jukich

Like most people around the country, Emily Jukich watched in despair during late August of 2005 as Hurricane Katrina ripped through the Gulf coast and ravaged areas of Louisiana and Mississippi. She watched as New Orleans, once a vibrant and culture-laden destination, was rendered a shell of its former self. And she watched as the affected communities struggled – sometimes in vain – to recuperate from the destruction.

But unlike most people, the current Virginia Tech junior couldn't simply turn off the television and go on with her life. She had some thinking to do.

No, her home wasn't destroyed, nor did she lose any friends or family members. She was just about to begin her senior year at Centreville High School in northern Virginia, but less than one year earlier as a junior, she verbally committed to attend Tulane University – situated right in the heart of New Orleans – to play collegiate soccer.

"I hate admitting it now, but I did choose Tulane over Tech," Jukich said of the decision she made after visiting a handful of schools during the fall of 2004. "But [New Orleans] was so beautiful. I just loved the city and the culture there – it was like a different world."

So as her senior year of high school approached and college got that much closer, Jukich did what many soon-to-be undergrads do – she began daydreaming about what her life would be like away from home for the first time. Even her parents were beginning to plot out vacation days and flight arrangements to go see her play for the Green Wave. But then Katrina arrived.

"I was glued to the television," Jukich remembered. "I couldn't stop thinking about how the city that I once saw was clearly not what it was going to be when I got there. What I had visited and seen and pictured what my life would be like – I knew that when I got there, it wouldn't be like that at all. It was very sad and hard to watch that because that's where I thought I was going to be."

And up until December 6th – four days before her birthday – that's where she was headed. In the immediate aftermath of Katrina that fall, much of Tulane's campus was under water, but the athletics programs soldiered on. Aside from cross country and track and field, all of the Green Wave's sports teams relocated to four other universities throughout Louisiana and Texas. The women's soccer team that awaited Jukich's arrival moved to Texas A&M for the 2005 season and played many of its games on the road. In fact, Jukich knew a couple of players on that team from her area in Northern Virginia, and she planned on joining them for the next season.

"I was still going to go," she said. "They still had the soccer program. I never said, 'Oh, I'm not going there anymore just because of this.' That never crossed my mind. I felt like I would be betraying [Tulane]."

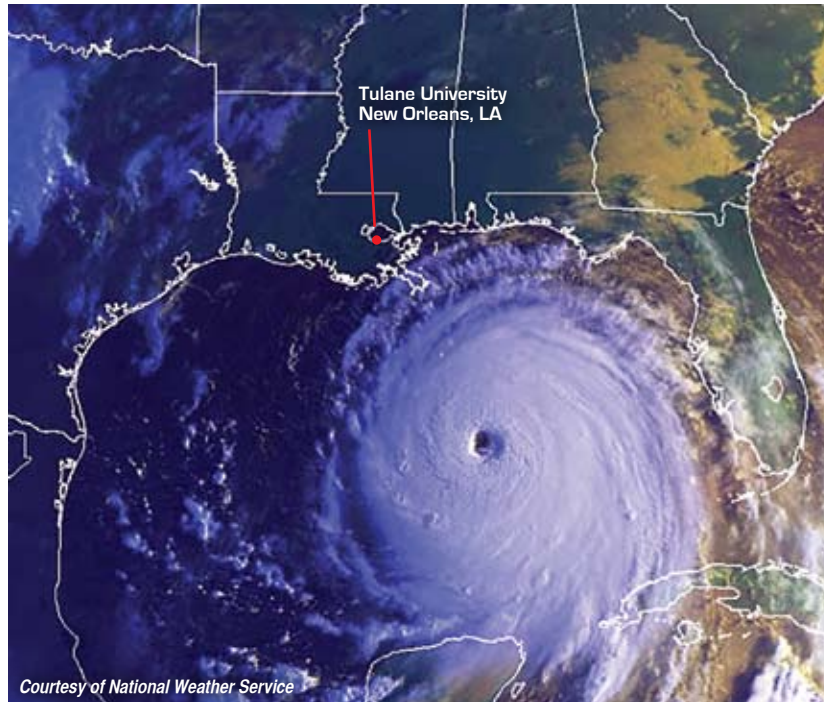
But following that nomadic season, on December 6th, Tulane deemed it necessary to drop half of its athletics programs until the university could get back on its feet, and women's soccer was one of them (and in fact, the program has yet to resurface – it hopes to by 2010). Soon after that decision was made, Tulane's head coach called Jukich with the news – her team was no more, and Jukich was free

to find another opportunity.

"It was really upsetting at first," Jukich said. "I still wanted to go there, even with all of the destruction. I felt that I could maybe make an impact by helping out or something, but after a few days, I just kind of took it as a blessing in disguise and that what happened was what was supposed to happen."

Although she wanted to help, Jukich couldn't imagine life without soccer. And with her type of talent – she's currently one of the top goal scorers in the ultra-competitive ACC – who could blame her? So she set about finding another option, and she had her club coach make some calls to the schools that she had visited during the recruiting process. Virginia Tech just happened to be her No. 2 choice behind Tulane, and Tech head coach Kelly Cagle just happened to be ecstatic that a player of Jukich's caliber would fall into the Hokies' lap.

"It was an easy decision from there," Jukich



Much like a soccer player redirecting a corner kick into the net, Hurricane Katrina (seen here as it bore down on New Orleans in August of 2005) altered Emily Jukich's path from Tulane to Virginia Tech.

recalled. "I made the choice to come to Tech almost instantly. Everything just kind of fell into place."

Though Jukich's path had been changed

her anywhere else, either. After making the ACC All-Freshman Team with seven goals in her first season, and turning in a solid sophomore campaign, the forward tallied ten goals

forever, her thoughts remained with the good people of Tulane. She knew that most of those involved weren't nearly as lucky as her and didn't have a convenient option to fall back on.

"It's so cliché, but I told myself then that everything happens for a reason," Jukich said. "But looking back, so much heartache happened to so many people, and somehow the same circumstances caused me to be at Virginia Tech. It's so weird to think that what was so bad for so many people turned out to be a blessing in disguise for me. Now I couldn't imagine myself anywhere else but here."

And Jukich's teammates couldn't imagine

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over her first twelve games of this season to help the Hokies get off to a hot start.

Coincidentally, though, her success this year has all happened in the wake of a particularly violent hurricane season that saw storms battering the American coastlines all summer. Gustav ran through New Orleans, Hanna swept up the Eastern Seaboard, Ike hammered the Houston area, and even Kyle flirted with land as far north as Maine. It all served as a stirring reminder to Jukich of her experience three years ago and what could have been. So did another tragedy – the shootings on the campus of Virginia Tech in April of 2007.

“Although they’re so different, situations like those [the hurricane and the shootings] can be related by the fact that the people who attend those schools – their lives are dramatically altered by the events,” Jukich said. “Usually in the end, it makes everyone stronger. The people who were already down at Tulane – they were uprooted. Some of them were freshmen who had just moved into their dorms. They were uprooted from their campus, and half of their school probably had to leave after that. Things affect people in different ways, but they still dramatically alter your life.”

Jukich still desires to get back to New Orleans – maybe over winter or spring break for a vacation – and especially now to see how it’s changed since the hurricanes have passed through. But until then, she’ll keep counting her blessings that the Hokies were available to take her in when Tulane wasn’t able to do so.

“My heart goes out to all of those people down there, because I was supposed to be part of that – that was where I was supposed to be,” Jukich said. “I’m not, but [the recent hurricanes] brought back some memories, and it just makes me appreciate Virginia Tech that much more. It’s the best place in the world.” 

WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW ABOUT #10 EMILY JUKICH

Born: 12/10/87 in Media, Pa.

Hometown/High School: Clifton, Va./ Centreville H.S.

Family: Parents Nicholas and Kathleen, siblings Melissa, Matt and Nicole.

Favorite sport other than soccer: I played basketball and street hockey growing up.

CDs in your car right now: Led Zeppelin and Lynyrd Skynyrd.

Last movie you went to see: *The Dark Knight*.

Favorite Blacksburg restaurant and what you order: Poor Billy's for sushi or any kind of seafood. They have good surf and turf.

Pre-game superstitions: I don't have any. I used to, but I would mess it up and it would get me all whacked out, so I don't have them anymore.

Roommates: Teammates Robin Chidester, Kylie Stankovics and Megan Strawther. And we live next door to Ashley Seldon and Kim Hickey.

Favorite TV shows: *The Office*, *30 Rock*, *Chelsea Lately*, *Lost*.

First job: Wegman's (grocery store) in the bakery.

Favorite place to play: The Florida trips (Miami and Tallahassee) are always fun. They're like mini vacations.

Major: Political Science. But I actually really want to go to culinary school – I've always loved to cook. I really wanted to play soccer, and you can't do that at culinary school. So I had to pick a major and I like politics.

Obama or McCain: That's off the record!



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The First Ladies of Football

Behind the scenes with Tech's right-hand (wo)men

By Matt Kovatch



With 10 football coaches, a handful of graduate assistants and over a hundred players, you can imagine that there are a lot of logistical needs to be taken care of around the Virginia Tech football offices. Well, most of those needs are handled seamlessly by a group of three women. Lisa Marie (left) works primarily with Tech's nine assistant coaches, Diana Clark (center) facilitates the majority of Frank Beamer's schedule and commitments, and Kristie Verniel (right) is responsible for much of the goings-on with the Hokies' recruiting effort. Here's a little bit more about what it's like to be one of Tech football's administrative assistants:

CLARK HAS SEEN IT ALL.

As the executive secretary to Beamer, Clark does everything from helping him prepare for his speaking engagements to telling fibs to the dentist when he is late for an appointment. But nothing beats the requests she gets. "The strangest request Coach Beamer has gotten has been to record an automated voice message for someone's personal answering machine," Clark said. "He gets wedding invitations and invites to rehearsal dinners all the time, and tons of autograph requests. People have sent jerseys, footballs, helmets, purses, little race cars, and even the fender of a motorcycle."

VERNIEL HAS THE INSIDE SCOOP ON RECRUITS.

Think those recruiting publications know what they're talking about? It's all old news to Verniel. "I maintain the database of all the targeted

football recruits (right now it's '09 and '10 graduates)," she said. "All correspondence (mailings, offer letters, scholarships, NLI's, admissions applications, etc.) from the time we start recruiting a kid until the time he enrolls in school pretty much comes through me. I'm normally dealing with over 200 prospective student-athletes at a time."

NEED A PLAY CALL? ASK MARIE.

Ever wonder who produces all of the scouting reports, playbooks, or even the quarterback's wristbands? It's Marie. "I do a lot of the assistant coaches' game-week work, which includes typing everything up to hand out to the players," she said. "They have offensive, defensive and special teams playbooks, and I do all the drawings for those." She's the one who deciphers the coaches' chicken scratch and makes it readable on the computer, but don't think she'll share any secrets with you. "Everything is kept locked up, and I won't walk away from my desk if I'm working on a game plan. We account for all the wristbands, and if there's a mistake on one, I'll shred it."

THEY'RE THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE.


The football coaches can get a lot of heat from impatient fans when the team isn't performing up to expectations. But take it easy – these fine ladies have to hear it, too, and their voice mailboxes and e-mail accounts are often flooded on Monday mornings. "We kind of

buffer everything from the coaches," Clark said. "If Tech loses, fans like to vent or voice their opinion, and a lot of that comes to us first. But there are a lot of positive e-mails, too – they usually outweigh the negative."

THEY KNOW WHICH PLAYERS ARE IN THE DOGHOUSE.

Because of its location, Verniel's office serves as a default hang-out spot for the players – unless they're in trouble. "If things are bad for them personally on the practice field or in the classroom, or if they're trying to avoid any of our coaches, I won't see them," Verniel said. "Brandon Flowers was famous for that. When things were going well, he was in my office all the time. But when he felt like he was in the doghouse, he stayed away because he didn't want to see Coach Beamer or Coach Gray so they couldn't get on him about things."

THEY'RE LIKE ANOTHER SPECIAL TEAMS UNIT.

While there might be missed blocking assignments on the field, nothing slips by the ladies in the office. "We're so routine – we know what to have ready and when," Clark said. "The three of us know what our duties are, and we know what the coaches expect of us. We've worked with them for so long that we know – we're like Radar on M*A*S*H – we have it ready for them before they ask for it. They're not standing over our shoulder waiting for us to get things done, and that makes for a good working relationship." 

H2OKIES LOOK TO CAPITALIZE ON SWIMMING'S POPULARITY WITH SUCCESSFUL '08-09 CAMPAIGN

By Matt Kovatch

Not too long ago, the 2008 Olympics were fresh in Americans' minds and the sport of swimming was arguably more popular than ever, mostly thanks to Michael Phelps' history-making performances and many of the other great races that took place in Beijing.

Televised live during primetime across the U.S., the swimming events were watched by millions of Americans, whether it was in the comfort of their own homes or on the big screen at a local establishment. Standing in a Blacksburg eatery for Phelps' seventh gold-medal effort – the 100-meter butterfly that he won by a hundredth of a second – was a surreal experience.

Everyone who had turned on a TV over those two weeks knew that was the night that Phelps could tie Mark Spitz's American record, but it wasn't until that moment – when hundreds of complete strangers erupted in unison as the American flag flashed across the screen next to the No. 1 – that it became clear. Swimming was at the forefront of the sporting world, and whether or not many of those people had ever watched a race in their lives – or whether or not they ever would again – they would certainly remember watching it on that night.

Phelps had made Americans proud, but the Olympics, and the role that the action in the pool played throughout August, had made those in swimming circles even more proud, including Virginia Tech head swimming and diving coach Ned Skinner.

"It shows that our country can rally around something beyond the major sports," Skinner said while reflecting on the magnitude of the United States' performance in Beijing. "I think the Olympic movement still makes us feel good and it's still such an important part of our culture and what people do. Winning



Mikey McDonald

nearly one-third of the medals for America through our sport ... [our swimmers] represented our sport very well."

Several Hokies actually got to taste the Olympic fever firsthand, as four women who will swim for Tech this season – which begins Oct. 25th at War Memorial Pool – participated in the U.S. Olympic Trials in July in Omaha, Neb. Senior Megan Newell, redshirt sophomore Sarah Losinger and freshman Jace Howanitz each participated in preliminaries, while senior Sara Smith made it all the way to the semifinals of the 50-meter freestyle, where she swam in the same heat as eventual silver medalist Dara Torres.

"As we learned at the Olympics, American swimming is the cat's meow," Skinner said. "I just think it was an incredible experience for those women."

Skinner is hoping that those swimmers can parlay that experience into a successful 2008-09 campaign for the Hokies, the last season that will see Tech compete in War Memorial before moving into the soon-to-be-completed Christiansburg Aquatics Center.

Keep in mind that the Hokies said farewell to some big-name seniors last year: Jessica Botzum was a five-time All-American, while Scott Beard and Kaan Tayla both won multiple ACC championships in their tenure. Despite that, Tech should still field a team that can challenge last year's finishes of fourth in the ACC and 23rd in the NCAA for the women, and fifth in the ACC and 37th in the NCAA for the men. How each side goes about it, though, will be a little bit different.

The women once again have a solid senior class, one that will be led by Smith – a super-

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star in the freestyle – and Newell and Jordan McHorney – a pair of NCAA Championship veterans. The team obviously loses a lot of guaranteed points and individual conference titles now that Botzum is gone, but they should have enough firepower elsewhere to compensate until someone steps up to fill the breaststroke shoes that Botzum wore for so long.

“The women have the potential to have a very strong year,” said Skinner, the Hokies’ 11th-year head man. “We always want to be in the upper third of the conference, but there are some teams like Clemson and Georgia Tech that are on our heels. We’re going to have our hands full, but we have what appears to be a jelling group of women and an improving diving program. We certainly feel like our goal of staying in the top third is realistic. To me, trying to build on what we did last year is possible.”

The men, on the other, hand, have very few seniors to bank on, but the good news is that they have a fantastic crop of freshmen to add to the mix. In fact, the men’s recruiting class of 12 newcomers was ranked by collegeswimming.com as the nation’s 12th-best recruiting class. Only Virginia (No. 7) and North Carolina (No. 8) were ranked higher among Tech’s conference foes. Charlie Higgins leads the way as one of the country’s top backstroke recruits, while the Web site included Caglar Gokbulut and Philip LaRosa among the nation’s top-10 milers, and Dan Flynn and LaRosa among the top-20 400-yard individual medley swimmers.

If the youngsters make progress and junior Mikey McDonald continues his ascension into the ACC’s upper echelon of divers, the Hokies could surprise some folks.

“On the men’s side, I would say we’re going to be young but strong,” Skinner said. “We have so many new faces, but with the way that the men are approaching the season, I feel

that there is a lot of camaraderie and that they are really zeroed in on making this program even better.”

Here is a closer look at some of the Hokies to keep an eye on this season:

MEN TO WATCH

Mikey McDonald – The current junior was the only diver, man or woman, to score points at the NCAA Championships for the Hokies last year, placing 11th in the 1-meter and 15th in the platform. Skinner calls him the most prolific male on the team – swimmers included – and he serves as the captain for the diving squad.

Ian deToll – A sprinter in the freestyle and the butterfly, the current senior scored 47 points at the ACC Championships as a sophomore, but a couple of illnesses sidetracked him as a junior. He’s back at full strength and ready to end his career on a good note.

Charlie Higgins – A freshman in the backstroke/butterfly, Higgins is probably the main newcomer to keep an eye on. He was highly sought after as a recruit, and since he signed with Tech last fall, his swimming is said to have catapulted to the next level. He was ranked second in the nation among 200-yard backstroke recruits by collegeswimming.com.

James Aitken and Ben Miller – This pair of seniors will serve as captains of the men’s swimming team, a pair that is truly committed to making the group better. Skinner said they provide “the best leadership I’ve seen in my 10 years at Virginia Tech.”

2008-09 Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time/Result
Oct. 4 Sat.	Alumni Relays	9:30 AM
25 Sat.	NC State *	1 PM
25 Sat.	West Virginia	1 PM
29 Wed.	at Virginia *	5 PM
Nov. 8 Sat.	Clemson *	11 AM
19 Wed.	at Volunteer Invitational	All Day
20 Thurs.	at Volunteer Invitational	All Day
21 Fri.	at Volunteer Invitational	All Day
22 Sat.	at Volunteer Invitational	All Day
<i>Seniors' & Parents' Day</i>		
Jan. 24 Sat.	Georgia Tech *	Noon
24 Sat.	UNC Wilmington	Noon
31 Sat.	at Pittsburgh	11 AM
Feb. 6 Fri.	at Maryland (Men) *	5:30 PM
18 Wed.	at Women's ACC Championships	All Day
19 Thurs.	at Women's ACC Championships	All Day
20 Fri.	at Women's ACC Championships	All Day
21 Sat.	at Women's ACC Championships	All Day
25 Wed.	at Men's ACC Championships	All Day
26 Thurs.	at Men's ACC Championships	All Day
27 Fri.	at Men's ACC Championships	All Day
28 Sat.	at Men's ACC Championships	All Day
Mar. 13 Fri.	at NCAA Zone B Diving Championships	All Day
14 Sat.	at NCAA Zone B Diving Championships	All Day
15 Sun.	at NCAA Zone B Diving Championships	All Day
19 Thurs.	at Women's NCAA Championships	All Day
20 Fri.	at Women's NCAA Championships	All Day
21 Sat.	at Women's NCAA Championships	All Day
26 Thurs.	at Men's NCAA Championships	All Day
27 Fri.	at Men's NCAA Championships	All Day
28 Sat.	at Men's NCAA Championships	All Day
<i>Grand Opening Gala</i>		
Apr. 18 Sat.	Maroon vs. Orange - Christiansburg Aquatic Center	5 PM

Stephen Hawkins – He is only a sophomore, but he is the lone ACC champion who returns for the men’s team. He swam a leg on the first-place 200 freestyle medley relay team and will be a big factor in whether Tech continues its relay success.

Kaan Tayla – No, the ACC freestyle champion isn’t back for another run at the title – he completed his eligibility last season – but he is back with the team training for the 2009 World University Games while he finishes his degree. His expertise will be an invaluable



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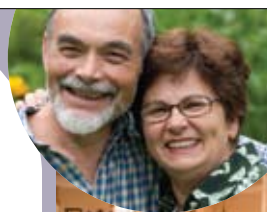
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able resource for a team that features a slew of freshmen, especially considering that he participated in his second Olympics over the summer for his native Turkey.

WOMEN TO WATCH

Sara Smith – This senior freestyle sprinter has spent most of her career in the departed Jessica Botzum's shadow, but she is an All-American in her own right. She had a mag-

nificent junior year that ended with her advancing to the semifinals of the U.S. Olympic Trials, and she did it all after battling through a case of mono. Now healthy, she could have a truly special season.


Megan Newell – As was mentioned earlier, this senior competed at the U.S. Olympic Trials in July. But she also had a great run at the NCAA Championships, scoring points as part of the 200 and 400 medley relay squads,

and breaking school records in both the 100 and 200 butterfly events.

Jordan McHorney – This senior joined Newell, Smith and Botzum on the point-scoring medley relay teams at the NCAA Championships, and she will also serve as one of the captains for the women's swimming team. She sets a positive tone for the program.

Claire Dickey – This senior backstroke/individual medley specialist exemplifies what a student-athlete and role model should be, and she has the resume to back it up. She was presented with the Skelton Award last year, which is the most prestigious scholarship in the Tech athletics department, and she was elected as one of two captains for the women's swimming team.

Jace Howanitz – She is the counterpart to Higgins on the men's side, a freshman who was the team's marquis signing and who will be expected to contribute. She had a great summer that was highlighted by the U.S. Olympic Trials, and she looks great early on as a freestyle/individual medley specialist.

Sarah Milton – Now a sophomore, Milton was the top female diver the Hokies last season and scored points for Tech at the ACC Championships. Expect her to improve in her second year. 



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OLYMPIC SPORTS

VOLLEYBALL THE CREAM OF TECH'S CROP IN EARLY GOING WITH 14-2 START

By Matt Kovatch

One could make the argument that the biggest surprise of Virginia Tech's fall season thus far has been the play of the volleyball team, which, as of Oct. 5th, found itself atop the ACC standings as the only unbeaten team at 5-0. With an overall record of 14-2, the Hokies have already matched their win total from a year ago, and with 15 contests to go, are already more than halfway to their eight conference wins from 2007.

The Hokies cruised through their non-conference portion of the schedule with a 9-2 mark, but that was to be expected with some rather pedestrian opponents on the other side of the net. But then came conference play and two huge tests on back-to-back weekends.

Tech, chosen by the league's coaches in a preseason poll to finish eighth, played host to Clemson and Georgia Tech on Sept. 26th and 27th. The Tigers and Yellow Jackets were picked first and second, respectively, in that same poll, and Clemson came in as the de-

fending ACC champion. The Hokies rolled, however, losing only one set to the Tigers before sweeping the Yellow Jackets, and that all came on the heels of a three-game sweep of rival Virginia earlier in the week.

"We have a young team, but we knew that we were talented," Tech head coach Chris Riley said. "We were pretty happy after the win against Virginia, but we knew we had two tough ones coming up because Clemson and Georgia Tech were both top 25-caliber teams. They are teams we've beaten in the past, but we've also split with them quite a bit, so being able to beat Georgia Tech in three and Clemson in four was a good confidence builder for our team."

Once the Hokies established that they could take care of the top teams at home, the next test – though against weaker opponents in Maryland (Oct. 3rd) and Boston College (Oct. 5th) – would come on the road. Tech went just 2-11 away from Cassell Coliseum a year ago, but the Hokies swept through both the Terrapins and the Eagles in straight sets to extend their winning streak to 11 matches in a row.

Two players in particular have really stepped up in the early going – junior middle blocker Betsy Horowitz, who is neck-and-neck with Felicia Willoughby for the team lead in blocks and hitting percentage, and

freshman setter Erin Leaser, who has gradually assumed most of the setting duties from Michelle Lang.

"Betsy has been doing a really good job," Riley said. "She was hurt a lot last year, so she was kind of in and out of games and practices. But this year, she's been able to practice every day, and that's really helped her to be able to perform on the court. We saw all of those things last year, but she just wasn't physically able to play every day."

"And Erin is putting up a consistent ball for the hitters to swing at. She's a freshman who is making good choices and really doing well with leadership opportunities. I think our team has adapted really well to her."

Women's soccer loses Gray for season

The women's soccer team suffered a big loss in more ways than one on Sept. 21st. Not only did the Hokies fall by a score of 4-3 in double overtime to James Madison, but star forward Marika Gray went down with a torn ACL and is done for the season. Gray, a sophomore from Alexandria, Va., was named to the All-ACC second team as a freshman and had tallied four goals and two assists in eight games before the injury.

Tech has played admirably in her absence, though, and picked up ties on the road

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against Miami on Sept. 25th and Clemson on Oct. 2nd. The Hokies then blanked N.C. State 3-0 on Oct. 5th to push their record to 6-4-2.


Gilson gets men's soccer out of rut

The men's soccer team has struggled out of the gates this season with a 3-6-1 record as of Oct. 4th, and that is also partly due to a slew of injuries, including a hernia surgery that ended junior Charlie Campbell's season after just four games.

But junior James Gilson helped put an end to a four-game losing streak when he converted a penalty kick in the 88th minute to lead Tech to a 2-1 victory over George Washington on Sept. 30th. He also scored

in a loss to No. 1 Wake Forest on Oct. 4th, and he has three goals and three assists on the season.

Fanning pacing the pack for cross country

Senior All-American Tasmin Fanning has picked up right where she left off a year ago on the cross country course, having won each of the two meets she's run in this season. She helped the Hokies finish second to ACC foe Florida State in the Virginia Tech Alumni Invite on Sept. 22nd by winning the individual crown by nearly 30 seconds, an effort that earned her ACC Performer of the Week honors. She also placed first – as did the men's Devin Cornwall – at the Highland Duel on Oct. 3rd. 

OLYMPIC SPORTS SCOREBOARD

VOLLEYBALL

HAWTHORN SUITES HOKIE INVITATIONAL		
Aug. 29	MARYLAND-EASTERN SHORE	W, 3-1
30	WINSTON-SALEM STATE	W, 3-0
30	COASTAL CAROLINA	W, 3-1

Marshall Tournament		
Sep. 5	at Marshall	L, 2-3
6	vs. Western Kentucky	L, 2-3
6	vs. East Tennessee State	W, 3-0

Arkansas Tournament		
12	vs. UT-Martin	W, 3-0
13	vs. Lamar	W, 3-2
13	at Arkansas	W, 3-2

UNC Wilmington Tournament		
19	at UNC Wilmington	W, 3-0
20	vs. UNC Asheville	W, 3-0

Oct. 3		
23	VIRGINIA*	W, 3-0
26	CLEMSON*	W, 3-1
27	GEORGIA TECH*	W, 3-0

Oct. 5		
3	at Maryland*	W, 3-0
5	at Boston College*	W, 3-0
9	at North Carolina*	7 p.m.

Oct. 10		
10	at NC State*	6 p.m.
17	WAKE FOREST*	7 p.m.
18	DUKE*	6 p.m.

Oct. 24		
24	FLORIDA STATE*	7 p.m.
25	MIAMI*	6 p.m.
31	at Georgia Tech*	7 p.m.

Nov. 1		
1	at Clemson*	6 p.m.
7	NC STATE*	7 p.m.
8	NORTH CAROLINA*	6 p.m.

Nov. 14		
14	BOSTON COLLEGE*	3 p.m.
15	MARYLAND*	6 p.m.
20	at Wake Forest*	7 p.m.

Nov. 21		
21	at Duke*	7 p.m.
28	at Virginia*	6 p.m.

CROSS COUNTRY

Sep. 5	VIRGINIA TECH CROSS COUNTRY RELAY	women 1st men 3rd
19	VIRGINIA TECH ALUMNI INVITATIONAL	women 2nd men 2nd

Oct. 3	Highland Duel at Boone, N.C.	Fanning 1st Cornwall 1st
18	Chile Pepper Invitational at Fayetteville, Ark.	10 a.m.

Nov. 1	ACC Championships at Chapel Hill, N.C.	11 a.m.
8	HOKIE OPEN RACE	9 a.m.
15	NCAA Southeast Region Championship at Winston-Salem, N.C.	11 a.m.

24	NCAA Championship at Terre Haute, Ind.	Noon
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WOMEN'S SOCCER

Aug. 23	at Davidson	L, 1-2
29	EVANSVILLE	W, 4-2
31	GEORGE MASON	W, 2-0

HAWTHORN SUITES INVITATIONAL		
Sep. 5	TEXAS A&M	L, 1-3
7	GEORGE WASHINGTON	W, 2-0

Wake Forest Tournament		
12	vs. Cal State-Fullerton	W, 3-0
14	vs. Charlotte	W, 5-1

Oct. 21		
21	JAMES MADISON	L, 3-4 (2 OT)
25	at Miami*	T, 1-1 (2 OT)
28	at Florida State*	L, 1-3

Oct. 2		
2	at Clemson*	T, 2-2
5	NC STATE*	W, 3-0
9	VIRGINIA*	7 p.m.

Oct. 12		
12	at North Carolina*	1 p.m.
15	LONGWOOD	7 p.m.
19	MARYLAND*	5 p.m.

Oct. 26		
26	at Boston College*	1 p.m.
30	WAKE FOREST*	7 p.m.
Nov. 2	DUKE*	2 p.m.

Nov. 5-9		
5-9	ACC Tournament at Cary, N.C.	

MEN'S SOCCER

The UP Nike Invitational		
Aug. 29	at Portland	T, 2-2 (2 OT)
31	vs. Washington	W, 2-1 (2 OT)

HAWTHORN SUITES HOKIE INVITATIONAL		
Sep. 5	HOFSTRA	L, 1-4
7	XAVIER	W, 2-1

Sep. 12		
12	DUKE*	L, 1-3
14	at St. John's	L, 0-3
21	at Clemson*	L, 2-3 (2 OT)

Sep. 26		
26	VIRGINIA*	L, 1-2
30	GEORGE WASHINGTON	W, 2-1
Oct. 4	at Wake Forest*	L, 2-8

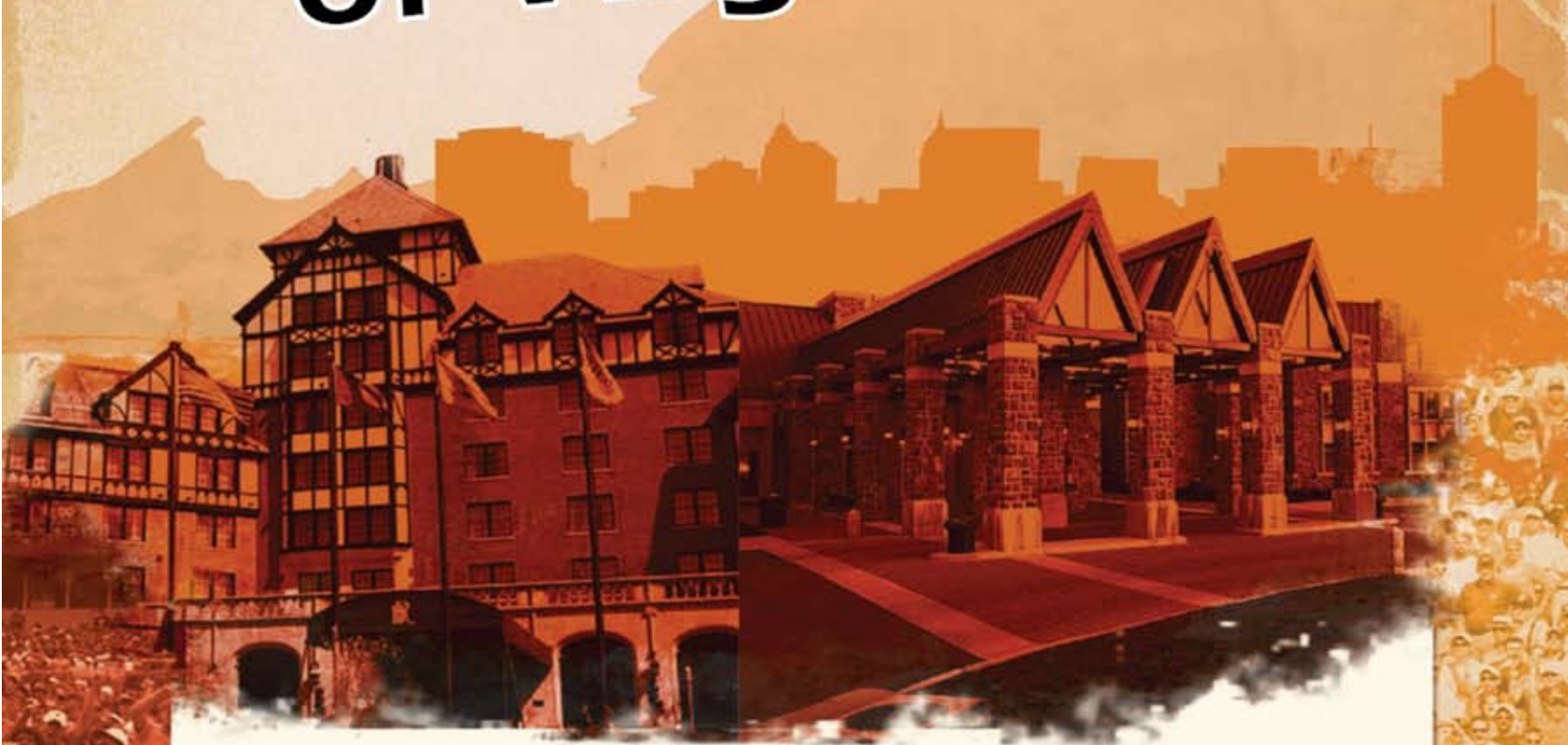
Oct. 7		
7	RADFORD	7 p.m.
10	MARYLAND*	7 p.m.
14	UMBC	7 p.m.

Oct. 18		
18	at North Carolina*	7 p.m.
21	APPALACHIAN STATE	7 p.m.
25	at High Point	7 p.m.

Nov. 1		
1	at NC State*	7 p.m.
7	BOSTON COLLEGE*	7 p.m.
11-16	ACC Tournament at Cary, N.C.	

*Indicates ACC match; Home games in CAPS

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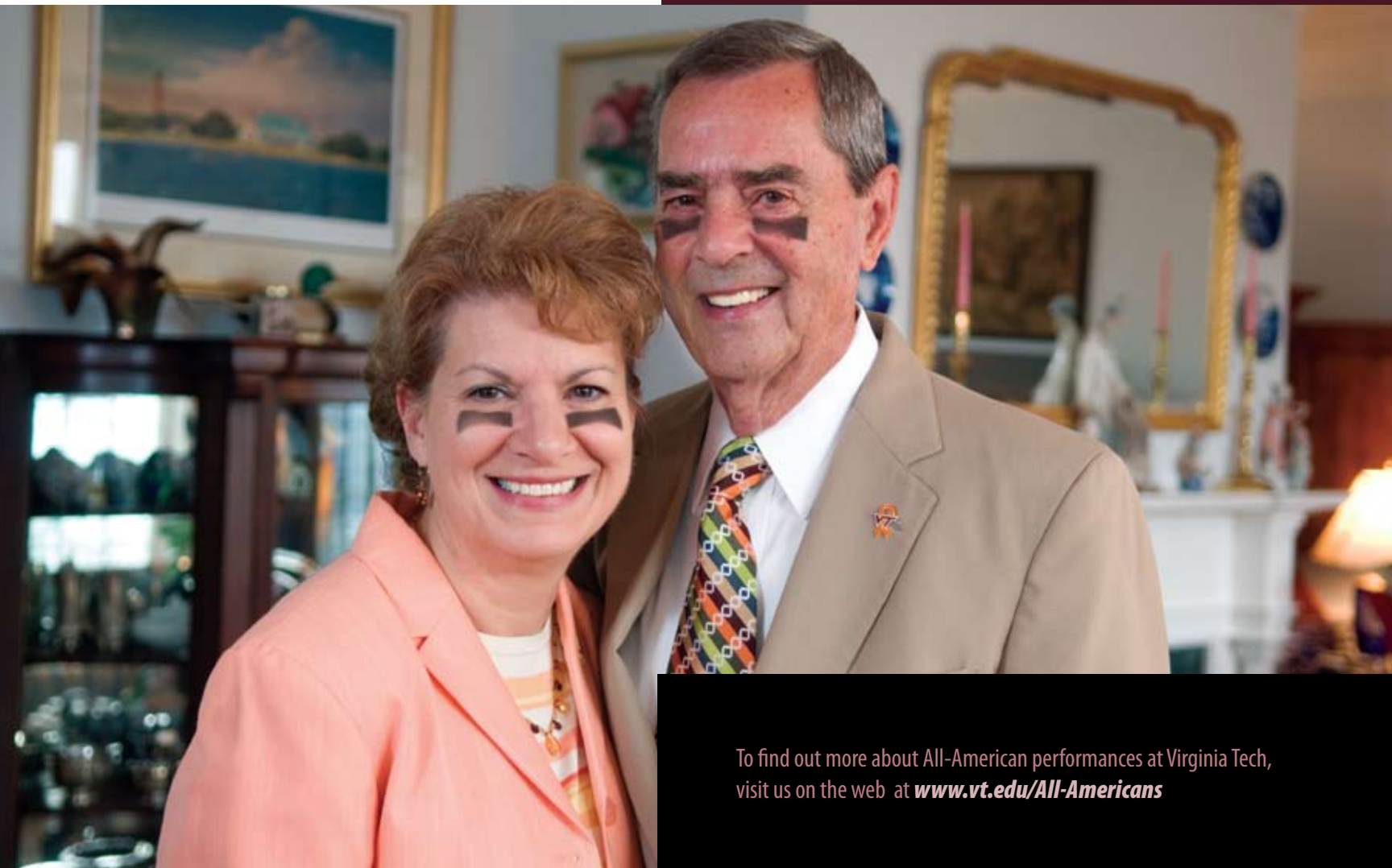


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