

inside

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HOKIES SPORTS

Official Publication of Virginia Tech Athletics

2013-14 BASKETBALL PREVIEW

Leading scorer Monet Tellier returns to headline the women's squad, while Jarell Eddie will be counted on to be a leader for a young men's team

WHAT'S INSIDE:

A summer trip with Athletes in Action has put life into perspective for defensive end J.R. Collins





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STARS OF TODAY - AND TOMORROW

Members of the Virginia Tech men's soccer team welcomed two New River United under-11 soccer teams - BRS� and Skyline - to Thompson Field for the Hokies' game against Clemson. Players from the two teams got to walk out with Tech players for pregame introductions, and then the two teams played a short scrimmage at halftime of the Hokies-Tigers contest. Tech and Clemson battled to a scoreless tie thanks to Tech goalie Kyle Renfro's 10 saves.





"I would really like to thank all of the Hokie Club members for their continued support of all our student-athletes here at Virginia Tech. Their generous support enables me to attend the university of my dreams! "

David Clemens
Senior | Men's Soccer

"I want to thank the Hokie Club for their continued support of Virginia Tech men's soccer. Without their contributions, we wouldn't be able to receive athletic scholarships and be blessed with the state-of-the-art facilities that we have."

Kyle Renfro
Senior | Men's Soccer





The Donor File

Chuck Parron

HOKIE CLUB LEVEL: Hokie Benefactor

HOKIE CLUB MEMBER SINCE: 1988

CURRENTLY RESIDES: Christiansburg, Va.

WHAT YEAR DID YOU GRADUATE? 1978

FAMILY: Andi (wife), Jon (son) and Sarah (daughter-in-law). Jon and Sarah are both Virginia Tech grads!



Q&A

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

A: I love my school and am very proud to have graduated from Virginia Tech. We only moved to the area this past summer, and as a big fan of collegiate athletics, going to football and basketball games provided my family and me with an opportunity to be a part of the Hokie community as well as a way to keep up with all of the changes on campus. It is exciting to watch how the growth and success of the athletics programs are contributing to the overall growth and success of the university.

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

A: When I was in high school in 1973, Bobby Stevens hit the shot at the buzzer in overtime against Notre Dame that helped Virginia Tech to win the NIT. From that moment, I knew that I would go to Tech and be a Hokie for life. My wife, however, being a Buckeye, truly realized

she was a Hokie after the 2007 shootings. Her heart has been knit with Virginia Tech ever since that April day.

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

A: Since the early 1990s, we have been tailgating with a group of Hokies who are or were (some of us have retired) work colleagues. Each family is in charge of a game and sets a theme or menu. One year, after a loss, our friends did not like some of the negativity, so for the next game, they brought a three-foot Yoda with a piece of VT Hokie Stone in front of it. They told everyone who had made a negative comment in the previous game to rub the stone and “confess” to Yoda. That was at least five years ago, and Yoda still comes to every tailgate. Many who pass by have made a habit of stopping to “confess,” too.

Q: When you drive into Blacksburg, Va., for a game, are there any “must-do” things for you and your family?

A: When our family and friends arrive, we

enjoy taking them to the Blackstone Grill or River Company before going to campus for a tour, and if possible, to take in an athletics event. We have also become fans of the Cascade Falls and try to make sure no one leaves without experiencing it.

Q: Virginia Tech has had a lot of successful teams and wins over the years. Do you have a favorite team/season or game that stands out the most?

A: Absolutely – the 1999 undefeated football season. What a joy it was to watch that team play game after game! I still get tears in my eyes when I watch replays of the national championship game. However, I have yet to watch a replay of the fourth quarter.

Q: My all-time favorite Virginia Tech football player is (player’s name) and my favorite memory of (player’s name) is ...

A: One of my favorite players is Michael Vick. My favorite memory is of his run down the sideline late in the fourth quarter of the West Virginia game that set up Shayne Graham’s game-winning field goal and preserved our undefeated season.



HOKIE CLUB FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

As we move into fall and start thinking about the end of the year and our benefits deadline, the Hokie Club staff fields many related questions. To better serve our membership, we've compiled some of these questions, and we present them to you here for your benefit. If you have additional questions, please don't hesitate to contact the Hokie Club office, as we are more than happy to assist you.

Where does my annual donation go and does it make a difference?

Your annual donation to the Hokie Club is very important and makes a tremendous difference in the lives of our Virginia Tech student-athletes. Tuition continues to rise, and our scholarship bill this year is \$11.4 million. Approximately 20 percent of the scholarship bill is funded through our VTAF Endowment, and your contributions to the Athletic Annual Fund are critical to complete the remainder of the scholarship bill for more than 500 student-athletes. The Annual Fund for 2012-2013 was \$9.6 million, and we are focusing on the *Hokie Referrals* program and obtaining new members to grow the Athletic Annual Fund. As tuition continues to rise, you can see how critical the growth and sustainability of the Annual Fund on a yearly basis is vital to the success of our student-athletes. We appreciate your continued support as all gifts make a difference to our athletics program.

Why should I upgrade my membership level?

Benefits for all Hokie Club members are based on the Hokie Club point priority system. Upgrading your membership level not only increases the support we are able to provide for more than 500 student athletes through scholarship support, capital projects and programmatic needs, but it also improves your Hokie Club rank within the point priority system. This increase will allow you to strengthen and enhance the benefits that are offered to you as a member.

Should I renew my membership on my anniversary month rather than waiting until the end of the year?

Yes, if you are a Hokie Club member, we

ask that you please renew your membership on your anniversary month. As you approach the end of your 12-month annual membership, you will receive reminder letters from our office, and we encourage you not to allow your membership to become "inactive." We would also encourage you not to wait until the end of the year to renew your membership, as you will miss out on several benefits during this time, such as Inside Hokie Sports magazine, which is provided monthly to all active Hokie Club members.

For the recent graduate, or the current student, how do I get involved in the Hokie Club?

If you are a recent graduate (undergraduate or advanced degree) within the past two years, you can join our Recent Graduate program and receive a two-year membership for the price of one year, which is a 50 percent discount. To join the Recent Graduate program, a qualifying recent graduate must take the following steps:

- Online - visit hokieclub.com to submit an application. On the giving page, select the desired annual giving level and enter the associated dollar amount. Type "Recent Graduate" in the comments field at the bottom of the form.
- Using Paper Application - write "Recent Graduate" on the application.

If you are a current student, you will need to join the Hokie Club as a regular member, and you can do so online at hokieclub.com or submit a paper application.

Is Hokie Club parking assigned yearly? How is it determined?

Parking privileges for football and basketball season ticket holders are some of the most highly desired benefits of Hokie Club membership. Parking privileges for both sports are assigned each year, and all assignments are based on Hokie Club member's point priority rank.

What is Hokie Matic? Can I alter or add it before the benefits deadline?

The easiest way to make your Hokie Club donation is by using Hokie Matic, the Hokie Club's monthly electronic transfer program. Using either your checking or savings

ANNUAL GIVING LEVELS

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

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- Golden Hokie • \$2,000-4,999**
- Platinum Hokie • \$5,000-9,999**
- Diamond Hokie • \$10,000 & up**

account, you can have your Hokie Club donation deducted monthly to avoid having to pay a lump sum once a year. This option is very popular, especially with our younger members, and is a great option to consider.

November 30 is the last day to set up or upgrade your membership using either Hokie Matic or Employee Payroll Deduction to qualify for privileges to be awarded before the Benefits Deadline. To stop a Hokie Matic, please send written notice to the Hokie Club Office. To make any changes to an existing Hokie Matic, please submit a new form indicating the updated information.

What is the Hokie Rep program, and what role does a Hokie Rep play in the annual fund?

Established in 1986, the Hokie Rep program's goal is to provide outside assistance through volunteer efforts to meet the Hokie Club's three-part fundraising mission of raising money for scholarships, capital projects and the programmatic needs of the athletics department. With more than 450 Hokie Reps in communities throughout Virginia and in surrounding states, the Hokie Rep program has allowed the Hokie Club to spread its mission and expand its reach to Hokies that have a desire to financially support Virginia Tech athletics.



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news & notes *by Jimmy Robertson*

Davis named an ACC Legend

Andre Davis, a former Tech receiver in the late 1990s and early 2000s, was selected to be a member of the 2013 Class of Legends by the Atlantic Coast Conference. The legends will be honored Dec. 6, the night before the league's football championship game in Charlotte, N.C., and also during ceremonies at the game.

Davis still holds the Tech record for most yards per catch in a season, averaging 27.5 yards per reception in 1999, and the record for most receiving yards in a season (962 in 1999). That season, he caught 35 passes for 962 yards and nine touchdowns in helping Tech to an 11-0 record and a spot in the BCS national championship game. His nine touchdown catches tied the single-season

school record that still stands today.

Davis also excelled as a punt returner, setting school records in return yardage average for a season (22.0 in 2000) and a career (15.9), and also tying the single-season mark for touchdowns on returns (three in 2000).

Davis, who now lives in Myrtle Beach, S.C., joins Mike Cloud (BC), Terry Kinard (Clemson), Wes Chesson (Duke), Jamie Dukes (Florida State), Robert Lavette (Georgia Tech), Boomer Esiason (Maryland), Edgerrin James (Miami), Ken Willard (North Carolina), Dave Buckey (NC State), Don Buckey (NC State), Johnny Majors (Pittsburgh), Floyd Little (Syracuse), Tom Scott (Virginia) and Jay Venuto (Wake Forest) as 2013 ACC legends.

Another Tech Hall of Famer passes away

For the second time in less than a month, a Tech Hall of Famer has passed away.

Dickie Beard, a running back who played in the early 1950s, passed away on Sept. 7 in Roanoke, Va. The 79-year-old had been diagnosed with lymphoma just seven weeks prior to passing, according to a Roanoke Times story.

Beard played with Jack Prater, a Hall of Famer who passed away on Aug. 27. The two were part of the 1954 Tech team that went 8-0-1 under head coach Frank Moseley. That team finished 16th in the final Associated Press poll.

Beard was the leading rusher on the 1954 team,

finishing with 647 yards and two touchdowns, and he made 15 extra points. His 647 yards rushing marked a Tech single-season record for a modern era player (post-1950), a record that stood for 11 years.

Beard rushed for 1,378 yards in his career, becoming the first Tech player in the modern era to rush for more than 1,000 yards in a career. In 1954, he was an honorable mention All-American and the state's athlete of the year by The Associated Press.

The Cumberland, Md., native was inducted into the Virginia Tech Sports Hall of Fame in 1987.

Cline the 10th true freshman to play

Kalvin Cline, a native of Boca Raton, Fla., became the 10th true freshman to play this season when he took the field during the Tech-Western Carolina game. The 10 true freshmen to play this season are the most ever under Frank Beamer at Tech. In 2002, nine true freshmen played.

Cline, who committed to the Hokies after the signing period, only played one year of high school football, catching 19 passes for 411 yards and nine touchdowns as a senior at Pine Crest High School. But the 6-foot-4, 238-pounder enjoyed a good debut for the Hokies, catching four passes for 46 yards against the Catamounts.

"He's athletic, and he's smart," Beamer said. "Offensively, we move around a lot and shift, so there's a lot of stuff going on. We threw him in there, and he didn't miss much. To not be around it and not getting reps, to being thrown in there and picking up most of it is really pretty impressive.


"He's got some toughness, and he cares. I like the kid. He gives us a little stretch there. You'd like to see him get a little bit bigger and stronger, and he will in time. He's only a true freshman. He's an athletic tight end, and hopefully he can help this year."

Tech guard ruled ineligible for the season

The NCAA ruled that Virginia Tech freshman guard Malik Mueller is ineligible for the 2013-14 basketball season because of issues dealing with initial eligibility requirements. The native of Ehingen, Germany, will remain on scholarship and be able to practice with the team, but not play in any games.

"I am extremely disappointed for Malik," Tech men's basketball coach James Johnson

said. "This young man has worked very hard this summer both in workouts and in the classroom. I know that Malik will use this year to improve as a better basketball player and will continue his strong work in his academics. He will help this team in practice and from the sidelines."

Mueller will have four years of eligibility remaining when he is allowed to begin competing in games in the fall of 2014. 



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editor's desk | by Jimmy Robertson

Facyson and Fuller creating excitement now and for the future

Coming into the season, Virginia Tech's coaching staff expected many freshmen to contribute this fall, but they probably didn't expect any of them to contribute in the secondary, where four starters were returning.

Yet here we are, entering the stretch run, and Brandon Facyson and Kendall Fuller keep making all the big plays.

It's enough to make a former defensive back smile.

"Did you see my stats as a freshman?" Tech coach Frank Beamer said recently.

When informed that he didn't play as a freshman, Beamer chuckled.

"Only because they weren't eligible then," he said.

"Nah, both those guys have got some real ability. They're pretty amazing."

Indeed.

It took Facyson all of five games to tie the single-season record for interceptions by a freshman at Tech. His fourth interception of the year came in the Hokies' clutch win at Georgia Tech and tied him with Eric Green (2000) for most picks by a first-year player. In that same game, he also recovered a fumble that led to the Hokies' first touchdown, and he later caused a fumble. He added two solo tackles, two assists and a quarterback hurry.

Fuller has been good, too. He picked off two passes in his first five games, and in that span, he had more tackles than James Gayle, Detrick Bonner and his brother, Kyle. He sealed the Hokies' win over Georgia Tech with his interception in the final minute.

The two of them more than made up for the

production lost when Antone Exum missed the first part of the season while recovering from his knee injury suffered last winter. In fact, the two played so well that they left defensive backs coach Torrian Gray and defensive coordinator Bud Foster trying to figure out how to juggle four guys at two spots once Exum returned for the North Carolina game.

Kendall plays the whip linebacker spot in Tech's nickel package, so that leaves Facyson sort of as the odd man out. But Gray said he plans on splitting reps between Exum and Facyson, at least until Exum gets in game shape, and the staff also decided to give Facyson some reps at wide receiver.

"It's not an easy decision. You have a kid who is playing at an extremely high level," Gray said of splitting the reps. "At the same time, Antone, at the end of last year, was probably one of the best players in the country. It's one of those situations where I don't know if I'll have this many corners again. It's a hard problem to have, but a good problem to have."

Tech's coaches broached the subject of giving some reps at receiver to both Fuller and Facyson before the season even started. Fuller, in fact, was the Washington Post's offensive player of the year last season.

But Fuller gives the Hokies a cover guy at the whip spot, something of extreme value. And Facyson possesses the makings of a good receiver, given his height, his smarts – he plans on being a heart surgeon – and his ball skills.

"How many people get to play receiver and corner?" Facyson said. "I wasn't against it. I'm a

defensive back, but I'm also a receiver. I played it in high school. I love to go up and get the ball. I think that's what makes me a great defensive back."

Facyson understands how the game is played. He also understands how *the game* is played.

He knows that senior All-Americans get every chance to reclaim their spots once they return from injury. He also knows that young guys need to be patient no matter how hard that may be.

"Everyone wants to be on the field," he said. "Tone [Exum] is a great player. He's proven himself for two or three years. He's been here longer. I'm still learning from him. It's a great opportunity for me to keep learning and keep going."

He hopes to get enough reps to add more interceptions to his total and keep his lead over his good buddy and roommate, Fuller. The two share a suite with a couple of others over in Cochrane Hall, and while they're the best of friends, they're also typical athletes.

In other words, competitive.

"I've told him to watch out," Fuller said. "I'm going to try and catch him."

"We've been best friends since we got here," Facyson said. "It's competitive. It's been fun. If we do say anything, it's all in fun. We know we've got to stay hungry."

A year ago, Gray barely had enough cornerbacks to fill a starting lineup. Now his options seem limitless.

Fortunately, Facyson and Fuller will be around for at least two more years. That means Tech's cornerback positions are in good hands.

Literally. 




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kroger roth report | by Bill Roth



Hokies' 2013 toughness a byproduct of grueling offseason



Andrew Miller and his teammates worked harder in the offseason than ever before, lifting four days a week and running every day in preparation for the 2013 season.

From the time he trotted onto the field for his first practice at Virginia Tech under the watchful eye of his mentor and head coach Jerry Claiborne during the summer of 1966 until today, Frank Beamer has always valued toughness.

Claiborne's teams – and Beamer's better squads – have always been built around resilient, hardened guys who play football with a rugged attitude. Think of your favorite scene from a Clint Eastwood movie and that signature, gravelly snarl. It's a look that Beamer enjoys seeing in orange and maroon.

The fact is that Beamer's 2013 Hokies don't win many points for aesthetic beauty. But boy, are they some tough hombres.

You have the sense that, following a third-down sack, Tech defenders like James Gayle and J.R. Collins look into the quarterback's eyes, and in Gran Torino-style say, "Get off my lawn."

"We're not pretty, but we get it done," Tech senior quarterback Logan Thomas said. "We'll do pretty much anything to go out there and get a win. Play through pain, whatever it may be."

Gayle separated his shoulder at East Carolina. The trainers popped it back into place, and he returned to action and recorded a key sack and forced a fumble that led to a safety in the waning moments.

Thomas couldn't practice the week of the Georgia Tech game because of an abdominal strain. But he battering-rammed his way to 58

grueling rushing yards and a touchdown, leading the Hokies to a huge road win.

Center David Wang had to snap the ball with his opposite hand in practice because of a shoulder injury in the week leading up to the game against the Yellow Jackets. Receiver Willie Byrn sprained his knee in the first half of the Georgia Tech game, but he returned for the second half.

"I think we have a mentally tough football team and a physically tough football team," Beamer said after the win at Georgia Tech. "What we've done over the last 12 days – three games, two of them away from Blacksburg – and we come in here [Atlanta], a short week and not much rest and the kids said, 'Hey, we don't want any excuses. We want to go down there and get it done.' And that's what we did. This is a special win right here."

It was a win, and a team, that Claiborne would've enjoyed.

"I'll say this about our team," Beamer said a few days later. "We move on to the next play. When something goes wrong, we just move on, line up and make it right on the next play. That's mental toughness. I like that about this team."

Beamer and staff put this in motion last spring with the "T-Time" drill. See for yourself: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=9SuMHkib9ps#t=14

"We did a lot of things last spring and over the summer that were harder on our guys than usual," said Dr. Mike Gentry, Tech's associate AD

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for athletics performance. “We had some new lifts. We had more running. We challenged our players more this past offseason. Not that we weren’t challenging them before, but we did some different things since the end of last year.”

Ah yes, last year. The Hokies’ 7-6 record in 2012 was their worst in 20 years.

“Unacceptable,” senior lineman Andrew Miller said. “Unacceptable.”

How to fix it?

“We worked harder this past year than ever,” Miller said. “We lifted four days a week and ran every day. It was the hardest we’ve worked in the offseason since I’ve been here, and I’m in the best shape I’ve ever been in, I can tell you that.”

The results?

“We’ve seen some good and some bad throughout the weeks,” Miller said. “But the main thing I think you should see out of all of this is how we’ve gotten better from week to week.”

Big challenges lie ahead in November for the Hokies. Their margin for error is small.

They may not “wow” with talent, but they should earn your respect with their effort, their unity, and their toughness.

“I think it has a lot to do with how we’re brought up,” Thomas said. “Never say no. That’s not who I am. Those guys (Gentry, his staff and the coaching staff) are installing those qualities in us.”

They’ll block a would-be game-winning field goal in overtime to extend a game. They’ll play hurt, with sprained knees, and snap the football with the off-hand. As their coach likes to say, they’ll “hit you in the mouth.”

“Being tough and never giving up. You see that throughout our team,” Miller said. “We find a way to grind it out and find a way to win. We play until the last whistle blows.”

Addressing a hot issue

Many people have been asking questions about

the many early kickoffs this season, so here is my in-depth take on the issue.

Under its contract with the ACC (and other conferences), ESPN is allowed to set the kickoff times for any game it televises. ESPN owns the rights to all ACC home games (including nonconference contests played at ACC stadiums) and will televise about 450 games from throughout the country this regular season. That’s a lot of games to show on ESPN, ESPN2 and ESPNU.

If you look closely at your Virginia Tech ticket, there are no times listed on them whatsoever, not even the letters “TBA.”

Why?

ESPN, under its billion-dollar contracts with the ACC and other conferences, has the right to set game times and wait until 12 days before kickoff, and in some instances, only six, to inform the league office as to the schedule.

ESPN’s football brass considers options for upcoming games and makes sure the best matchups get the best time slots on the various ESPN networks. After decisions are made, ESPN notifies the conference office as to game times and channels. The league then send out an e-mail with the kickoff times to the athletic directors and the media.

There haven’t been many prime-time games yet this year for ACC teams. The SEC deserves, and is getting, many of those slots. Next year, many SEC football games will move to the SEC Network, which, in an odd way, may help the ACC in that it could open up some later time slots on ESPN’s other networks. But winning and having teams ranked in the top 10 is the sure way to get the most attractive kickoff times.

But keep in mind, ESPN doesn’t consider noon a bad time slot. Some of its biggest games this year are early kicks. Here are a couple of those

games:

- Ohio State vs. Michigan, noon
- Florida at Miami, noon
- Oklahoma-Texas in Dallas (actually, 11 a.m. Central)

Keep in mind that every Big 10, SEC and Big 12 game played in the Central time zone that kicks at noon Eastern is actually starting at 11 a.m. locally—even a game like UCLA at Nebraska or No. 1 Alabama’s home game with Georgia State.

Fortunately, all ACC schools are in the Eastern time zone, so there are no 11 a.m. kickoffs for Hokie fans. But the noon games can be a challenge for folks in D.C., Richmond or Hampton Roads.

For the record, I went back and charted the kickoff times for every ACC team over the past five seasons. The Hokies have played 19 games that kicked at noon or 12:30. That’s second only to North Carolina’s 22 appearances in the early games, but not much more than most of the other teams in the league.

Here’s the number of noon or 12:30 kickoffs since the start of the 2009 season for ACC teams:

Team	Number of noon or 12:30 kickoffs
North Carolina	22
Duke	19
Virginia Tech	19
Georgia Tech	18
Maryland	18
N.C. State	17
Boston College	16
Maryland	16
Virginia	16
Clemson	15
Miami	15
Wake Forest	15
Florida State	12




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Keeping up with Compliance

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

Q: I keep seeing conflicting reports about Antone Exum's chances at getting a medical redshirt. Some are saying that he has a chance, but I didn't think that was the case because Tariq Edwards couldn't get one last year. Can you please clear this up? Thanks, Kent in Pearisburg, Va.

TP: "You are the one who is correct. This is a topic we've addressed before, but it is confusing, so I'll come at it from a different angle. The key question is: Even if he does qualify for a medical redshirt this year, will he get the chance to use it?"

"All student-athletes entering an NCAA Division I school have five years within which to compete during four seasons. To have the chance to compete during a sixth year, a student-athlete has to miss all or most of two seasons for circumstances beyond his/her control. It could be related to injuries, or maybe missing seasons because of an illness in the family – something like that.

"A traditional redshirt year – during which a student-athlete who otherwise could compete refrains from competition – does not constitute a circumstance beyond one's control. As viewed by the NCAA rules, a student-athlete elects to redshirt, even though it's nearly always at the encouragement of the coaching staff. An overwhelming majority of the time, a redshirt year is justified and beneficial to the student-

athlete because it allows him or her to get bigger and stronger and more mature, and to adjust to college academics without the pressure of competing.

"But again, by the NCAA's definition, a redshirt year is not beyond one's control. So in Antone's case and in Tariq's case, neither would be able to receive a sixth year based on their current collegiate histories. Both engaged in a traditional redshirt year in 2009, and did not miss that season due to circumstances beyond their control."

Q: Does the NCAA allow student-athletes to endorse a product as long as they don't get paid? For example, if I wanted to get Logan Thomas to endorse my new clothing line, could he do it as long as he didn't get paid by me? Thanks, Jack in Christiansburg.

TP: "No, he couldn't. Even if he didn't receive compensation, he couldn't do it. NCAA regulations forbid expressly or implicitly endorsing commercial products or services. The penalty for violating this rule is loss of eligibility.


"However, if you wanted to employ a student-athlete, that is permissible as long as the student-athlete is paid the going rate in that locality for similar work. The compensation cannot include an increased amount due to his/her athletics reputation. Student-athletes who engage in

employment are required to fill out some paperwork here in the compliance office, which we keep on file."

Q: I've heard that Virginia Tech football players who play well in games that the Hokies win actually receive a game ball. Wouldn't that be an extra benefit and constitute a violation? Thanks, Amber in Philadelphia.

TP: "Historically, the provision of game balls has been viewed as a violation of NCAA Bylaw 16.1.4, which states that, 'awards for specialized performances in a single contest may only be provided by the conference and an outside organization (e.g., local business) and must be a certificate, medal or plaque limited to \$80 in value.'

"However, the NCAA staff this September released a memo clarifying that, 'an institution may provide a memento of nominal value (e.g., game ball, t-shirt, hat, etc.), which may not include cash or cash equivalents, to a student-athlete in recognition of an accomplishment in a particular contest or event as a benefit incidental to participation.'

"So, game balls are now permissible. Student-athletes, though, are not allowed to sell any items received from their respective athletics departments. Some have in the past (e.g. Ohio State) and it can result in a boatload of trouble." 



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The Hokies will need for Cadarian Raines to improve on his averages of 6.6 points and 6.4 rebounds per game of last season, but his leadership to a young team will be just as important.



JOHNSON ERA ENTERS SECOND SEASON

Despite seeing Erick Green graduate, Tech coach James Johnson finally has a full roster and is optimistic about the Hokies' 2013-14 chances in his second year at the helm

by Jimmy Robertson

A couple of weeks before practice started for the upcoming 2013-14 men's basketball season, Tech head coach James Johnson looked at a new glass exhibit in the Hahn Hurst Practice Center that commemorated Erick Green's accomplishments last year.

As Johnson walks to his office every day, he goes past that exhibit – and it will serve as a reminder of what he needs to replace heading into this season.

"I may have to go in a different way," he said, laughing.

Green was the major highlight of last season, becoming the first Tech player ever to lead the nation in scoring and to win the ACC's Player of the Year honor. Behind Green, the Hokies won their first seven games – their best start in 30 years. But injuries and a lack of depth on the roster caught up with Tech, and the Hokies lost 13 of their final 15 games en route to a 13-19 record in Johnson's debut season as the head coach.

Johnson dealt with numerous issues once he

got the job and throughout the season. Talented recruit Montrezl Harrell decided to transfer. Prominent players Marshall Wood and Marquis Rankin missed games with injuries. Rankin and Robert Brown missed games with the flu. Johnson held C.J. Barksdale out of a game as a disciplinary measure. Finally, a brutal ACC schedule took its toll on a team that, on a couple of occasions, went into games with six scholarship players.

"I learned that you need depth in this league and throughout the grueling season," Johnson said. "There were so many things that happened with injuries, sickness and foul trouble. You need depth and consistency.

"We weren't consistent enough on the defensive end of the floor. Then we didn't have guys stepping up on the offensive end. Defensively, we weren't as good as we needed to be. We didn't get the stops we needed at certain times. Offensively, we had Erick Green and we had other guys here and there, but we didn't have enough on the same night. The depth came into play at Clemson [a 77-

70 loss], in overtime at NC State [a 90-86 defeat], in overtime at North Carolina [a 72-60 loss] and late in the game at Duke [an 85-57 defeat]. Our consistency on both ends of the floor is something we've got to tighten up this year."

Now, Johnson faces a preseason without Green, who graduated and took his 25 points per game to the professional ranks. Johnson also saw Brown, a 25-game starter a year ago, transfer after last season.

Despite that, Johnson remains optimistic about the 2013-14 bunch of Hokies. At the very least, he will have more depth at his disposal, as he and his staff brought in five freshmen, a group that represents the future of Tech basketball as it heads into a bigger and more talented Atlantic Coast Conference.

The freshman class includes two post players and three perimeter players, and Johnson also gets to use guard Adam Smith this season. Smith, a redshirt sophomore, sat out last season after transferring from UNC Wilmington.

So with the additional players and three returning starters at his disposal in the form of Jarell Eddie, Cadarian Raines and Barksdale, Johnson at least figures to be able to play a style that more fits into his coaching philosophy.

"It starts with competition in practice," he said. "It's wide open now. We've got guys competing at every spot now. Competition is a healthy thing.

"We want to play a little more the way we'd like to play. We want to be more up-tempo on offense and attack more on defense. We want to be more attacking on both sides of the floor. Having bodies in practice similar to what we're going to see in the league is going to help. Our walk-ons did a tremendous job last year, but our depth is going to help us in practice with the competition we'll have, and hopefully we'll be able to play a little different."

Johnson's first task is to find someone, or multiple people, to replace Green's immense production. In addition to averaging 25 points per game, Green also led the team in assists at 3.78 per game, and he averaged four rebounds per game. For good measure, he led the team with 42 steals.

Leading the battle for the point guard job is Rankin, a junior from Charlotte, N.C., who started seven games last season. He got off to a slow start a year ago because of a knee injury, but he finished strong, scoring a career-high 15 points against Wake Forest in the regular-season finale and eight against NC State in the ACC Tournament. He has the skills to be a solid point guard, but needs to stay healthy.

Devin Wilson is also in the mix. The native of McKees Rocks, Pa., averaged 16.4 points per game last season and earned the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review Player of the Year honor.

Johnson and his staff suffered a loss when the NCAA ruled freshman Malik Mueller ineligible for the season. The native of Germany burst on the scene at the 2010 Jordan Brand Classic International as a 16 year old, scoring 21 points and hitting four 3-pointers while playing for the German Under-18 squad.

Mueller, who will be eligible to play next season and have four years left, was vying for time as the point guard this season. So Johnson desperately needs for Rankin to stay healthy and for Wilson to develop.

"He was definitely a guy who was challenging for playing time and challenging for a starting position," Johnson said of Mueller. "We're looking at Marquis and Devin at that spot. Marquis has the most experience playing the position, and Adam Smith may swing over to point guard in certain situations."

Smith can score, as evidenced by his 13.7

points-per-game average as a freshman at UNC Wilmington. He scored 20 points or more on six occasions that year, including a 32-point outburst against Wake Forest.

Smith and freshman Ben Emelogu are the best bets to fill that shooting guard role, though Johnson said Wilson could swing over to that spot. Also, Will Johnston, a former walk-on, will get a look. Johnston started four games last season and played in 29. He gave the Hokies solid minutes, averaging about 10 minutes per game, and for his efforts, Johnson put him on scholarship for this season.

Emelogu, though, may be the most intriguing of the group. He led his South Grand Prairie High School team to the Texas 5A championship game, scoring 13 points in a losing effort. He averaged 14 points per game for the season.

"Emelogu gives us a bigger body there," Johnson said. "He could play the 2 or the 3, which I'm calling a wing guard. A lot of times, we're going to play with three guards on the floor. Jarell is really the only small forward we have in the program, so a lot of times, we'll have a three-guard look. Ben is a bigger guy at [6-foot-5], 205, and gives us a bigger 2-guard and can give us size at the wing guard, if we move him over there. We'll have some flexibility on the perimeter."

At the small forward spot, Eddie returns after an up-and-down season. The senior from Charlotte, N.C., finished second on the team in scoring at 12.3 points per game last season, and he also averaged 5.6 rebounds per game. But he shot just 39.6 percent from the floor and went through his share of struggles during ACC play.

In the post, Raines anchors things. He gives the Hokies some size at 6-9 and nearly 240 pounds, and he averaged 6.6 points per game and a team-leading 6.4 rebounds per game a year ago. He also led the team with 34 blocked shots.

Johnson wants both Eddie and Raines to fill the leadership void created when Green departed.

"Erick was a leader by example and doing it on the floor," Johnson said. "I think these guys [Eddie and Raines] got to do both. They've got to lead by example, and we need for them to be vocal. We've got a young group. We've got five freshmen and a transfer, and they haven't played an ACC game yet. We've got to have those guys ready to go. They've [Eddie and Raines] got to take ownership in this team. I think they've shown in the preseason that they're poised to do it. We have some others who have shown leadership, but it's going to come down to those two seniors."

Barksdale, a junior, could assume a leadership

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role, too. He averaged 5.6 points and 4.7 rebounds per game, and he led the regulars by shooting 52.3 percent from the floor.

After a one-game suspension, Barksdale started playing better, and he played well down the stretch, scoring in double figures in four of the final seven games. The Hokies went 6-3 in games in which Barksdale reached double figures.

Both Barksdale and Raines, though, will be challenged. Sophomore Marshall Wood returns after a broken foot sidelined him for a chunk of last season. But the 6-8, 230-pounder possesses the ability to knock down 3-pointers and was averaging 6 points and 6 rebounds per game before getting hurt.

Joey van Zegeren, Christian Beyer and Greg Donlon return as well. Van Zegeren, a 6-10 redshirt sophomore, started four games and played in all 32, averaging 3.3 points and 3.1 rebounds per game. Beyer, a walk-on, played in 23 games and gave the Hokies some solid minutes as a reserve. Donlon played in nine games.

Two incoming freshmen hope to be able to help this season. Trevor Thompson, a 6-11, 210-pound center from Indianapolis, Ind., and Maurice Kirby, a 6-9, 235-pound forward/center from Chandler, Ariz., give the Hokies length and size in the post.

"I think we're definitely improved in the post,"

Johnson said. "C.J. Barksdale ended ACC play at a high level, and his confidence is high right now. I think Marshall Wood is back healthy right now.

"This is the deepest we've been up front and we're probably as big as any Virginia Tech team has been in a long time around here. We have Cadarian Raines, Joey van Zegeren and Maurice Kirby battling at the center spot. Then you've got Trevor Thompson, who could play the 4 or 5, and he's 6-11. We're deep up front. I think that's where our strength lies. We're 6-11, 6-10, 6-9, 6-9, 6-8 and 6-8."

Johnson hopes the added size up front and the overall depth of the team will result in better play on the defensive end. The Hokies ranked last in the ACC a year ago in scoring defense (74.8 ppg) and ninth in field-goal percentage defense (43.6). They also ranked last in steals at 4.3 per game.

Tech gave up 80 or more points in 11 games last season. Its record in those games was 2-9, including 0-7 in ACC games. So improving the defense is a must.

"That was probably the most disappointing thing about last season," Johnson said. "We have to improve on that. I'm not making excuses, but I think depth had something to do with that.


"But we've got to be a better defensive team, and part of that is rebounding. A lot of times, we did a good job of getting the initial stop, but we'd

give up a second shot. I thought we got better as the season went along, but we've got to be a better rebounding team. That ties into defense."

Though they finished six games under .500, the Hokies weren't far off last season. They lost five games by seven points or less, and another one – at UNC – by 12 in overtime when they had a shot to win it at the end of regulation. A bounce or two here and there, and the Hokies make postseason play.

Johnson hopes his young squad gets those bounces this season. But he also knows that teams create their own bounces. In a tough league, this young team will need to grow up quickly and be tough from the onset.

"I'm excited about the team, excited to see where we are and what we can do," Johnson said. "Last year was tough, but I can honestly say those guys gave me everything they had. There were nights when the ball wasn't going down and nights when we didn't defend the way we needed to, but the effort was there. There were times we didn't have it, whether we couldn't make the play or we were too tired to make the play. We just didn't have it. But the effort was there. That was one of the things I never had to coach last year.

"I see that with this group here. They're working hard. How good will they be? I don't know. But we're working hard." 

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WOLFF OPTIMISTIC ABOUT WOMEN'S CHANCES IN 2013-14

Tech women's basketball coach Dennis Wolff thinks his team will have more offensive weapons this season, but keeping people healthy is a key

by Marc Mullen

A lot was being asked of the 2012-13 Virginia Tech women's basketball team as it entered preseason a year ago. A stronger nonconference schedule awaited the team, and the squad would be missing two key components at the start – players who were certainly going to make the Hokies a better team.

Injuries then plagued the team, as head coach Dennis Wolff was forced to use 13 different starting combinations and none more than eight times. The NCAA sat Uju Ugoka for the first nine games, and she later missed four games with an injury. Taijah Campbell, expected to contribute as a freshman, missed 13 games with a foot injury. Also, Hannah Young didn't enroll until the spring semester. Thus, the Hokies struggled on offense and produced a 10-win season.

Entering the 2013-14 season, Wolff acknowledged the drawbacks he faced last year, but he is very optimistic of the Hokies' chances for the upcoming campaign.

"My overview of where we're at with the team is this ... I think this is the best team that we've had in the three years that I've been the coach," Wolff said. "I think, without question, staying healthy is the No. 1 most important factor. We had very few games last year where both Uju and Taijah were healthy, and then when you factor in the fact that Hannah missed the first semester as well, we didn't have three kids that we were kind of counting on last year.

"Now, they're all back. They got good experience, even though it was a little disjointed last year. I expect the three of them to be three kids that are going to contribute because they've already shown glimpses of the fact that they can be good ACC players."

The Hokies have a nice one-two punch when it comes to their offense in the form of guard Monet Tellier and Ugoka. Both averaged more than 10 points a contest, with Tellier leading the way at 13.2 points per game and Ugoka going for 12.5 a game.

But the Hokies need to find a No. 3 and No. 4 scorer on the team. The departure of Alyssa Fenyn (7.0 ppg) leaves a drop in scoring. Sophomores Campbell and Lauren Evans (4.7 ppg each) were the only others above 3.5 per game.

"At the end of last year, I thought we were playing defense like an ACC team that would like to win," Wolff said. "Our problems were that we had trouble converting near the basket and making outside shots. So returning players like Monet, Lauren and Hannah have spent a lot of time in the gym, and they've shot a lot.

"But we've added four freshmen – Vanessa Panousis, Maddison Penn, Sami Hill and Serafina Maulupe – and they are all perimeter players and they are all a bit different. The one common denominator for all of them is that they are all good shooters. So I think in regards to being a more efficient offensive team, they are going to play a big part in it."

Defense was a big emphasis for Wolff when

he first took over the program – as was keeping control of the ball. In his first two seasons, the Hokies have seen their opponents' scoring drop from 66.1 points a game the year prior to Wolff's arrival to 62.3 in his first year and 56.1 last year – the lowest season per-game average since the 2003-04 season (56.0 ppg) when Tech won 23 games.

Turnovers were his other point of emphasis, and in his first year guiding the Hokies, they committed a total of 467 turnovers, the fewest by a Tech team since the Metro days (454 in 1990-91). Last year's 514 turnovers were just a smidge above the 2004-05 Hokies who turned it over 506 times.

"At any place that I've ever been, I think that, if you want to have a good team, you've got to play good defense," Wolff said. "When you take over a program, you're going to have to fix some things. It's difficult. I'd like to think that I'm a good coach, but I don't think I am a miracle worker, so you can't fix everything at once.

"We thought the thing that was the easiest to try and make a point of emphasis was trying to play good defense, and then the second part was trying not to turn the ball over as much as they had. And I think, in those two areas, we've improved.

"Now, we have to get out of those 40-point [scoring] games. We'd like to run more and play

a little bit of a more up-tempo style of basketball, and I think, with the roster being what it is now, we can do that."

The Hokies' roster now features six international players, including another Canadian (Hill) and two more from Australia (Panousis and Penn), thanks to a former Wolff connection.

"I had a friend on the men's side that went over to Australia and befriended some people over there," Wolff said. "So when I got hired, my friend called me and said 'Look, I've spent six months in Australia, and I have a friend that's involved with the national program in Australia and he could be a good resource for you.'

"About a year ago, we spoke, and he said that there were some girls coming up that might work out, and the first one was Hannah. The other two girls he spoke about were going to be a bit tougher to get because they were playing for the national U-19 team that actually finished third in the World Championships.

"Sami was involved in the Canadian national team and was a teammate of Taijah's, so that's kind of how that happened. And if these players were coming up the grapevine in the States, they would have been highly rated. But what I found here is, once the international kids leave their home and come to the States, what's the difference between going to Blacksburg or any


other place, and they just really like it here."

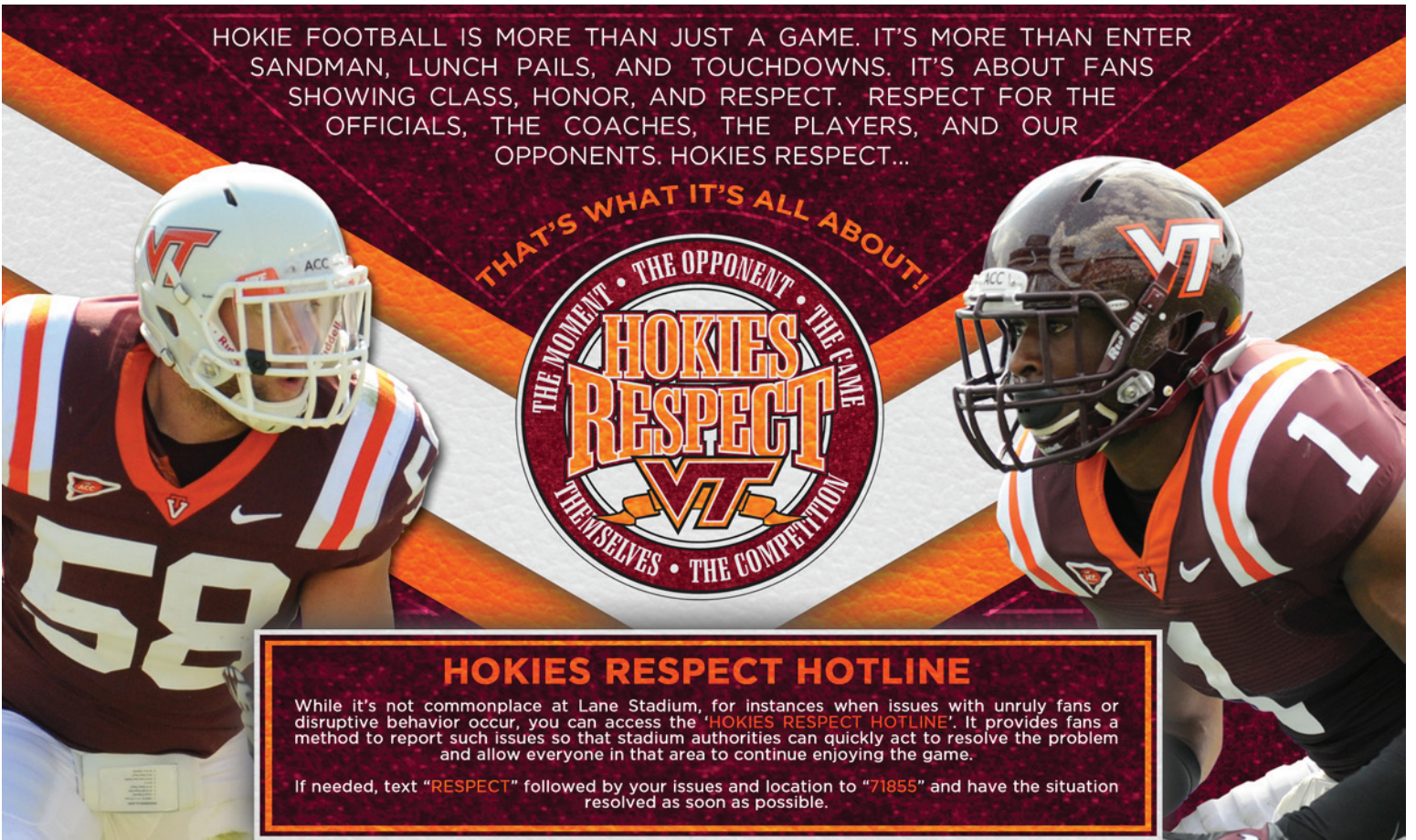
Last year's Hokies faced one of the strongest schedules in the nation – their strength of schedule was ranked in the mid-20s – and that wasn't just relegated to the ACC slate. Eight of their 11 nonconference opponents made the postseason (three NCAA teams) and seven won at least 19 games.

Tech will face another tough test again in 2013-14, with five postseason teams on the early slate and a much-improved ACC that welcomes three new teams.

"The schedule this year is a challenging one," Wolff said. "I think last year, in an attempt not only to help our own program, but also to help the ACC, we went along with the scheduling guidelines, and we had one of the toughest schedules in general of any team in the country.

"And we have a similar schedule this year, as we try to schedule good nonconference games, and we're trying to play some nationally named schools. And then with the addition of Notre Dame and Pittsburgh and Syracuse into the league, it's going to be a very challenging schedule, but also it's going to be an entertaining schedule for the fans."

Fans will get a great chance to see the Hokies early in the season, as Tech will play five of its first seven games at Cassell Coliseum, with the home opener slated for Nov. 9 at 3 p.m. 



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2013-14 MEN'S BASKETBALL PROFILES



INSIDE THE NUMBERS: Averaged 6.6 points and 6.4 rebounds per game last season ... Scored in double figures on eight occasions and reached double figures in rebounds four times ... Started 30 of 32 games ... Shot 48.2 percent from the floor and only 43.4 percent from the free-throw line ... Blocked a team-leading 34 shots ... Had 13 steals and 13 assists.

ANALYZING RAINES' GAME: Raines possesses size and strength to be a productive low-post presence for the Hokies, and his low-post moves have gotten better each year. But a year ago, he was a little inconsistent and only scored in double figures one time in the Hokies' final 10 games. Shooting better from the free-throw line would help. Tech needs for him to be more productive in his final season, but that also means getting him the ball a little more – he only got in double figures in shot attempts in five games. He's a physical presence on the defensive end, and overall, he should lead this team in rebounding and blocks.

COACH JOHNSON'S TAKE: "He's had a great offseason. He's playing much more confidently right now. Last year was really his first year playing. He got his feet wet. I think he'll be more comfortable out there on the floor this year. We need for him to give us some scoring and rebounding. A lot of teams tried to take him away with double-teaming last year, and that was one of the biggest things he learned. He had never seen that. He had to learn to play with that, but now he's a lot more confident."



INSIDE THE NUMBERS: Averaged 12.3 points and 5.6 rebounds per game last season ... Started 28 of 32 games ... Finished second on the team in scoring ... Shot 39.6 percent from the floor and 32.1 percent from beyond the 3-point arc ... Connected on 84.2 percent of his free-throw attempts ... Dished out 42 assists and had 24 blocks and 11 steals.

ANALYZING EDDIE'S GAME: Eddie got off to a good start last season, scoring in double figures in 10 of the team's first 13 games. He tailed off in January, though, scoring in double figures just twice that month. He did score in double figures in the final three games of the season, including a 21-point outing against NC State in the ACC Tournament. He's way too good of a shooter to have shot less than 40 percent from the floor. If he improves his intermediate game and takes the ball to the basket more and gets fouled – he excels at the free-throw line – he could be in for a huge offensive season. Like most of Tech's perimeter players, he needs to improve his on-ball defense.

COACH JOHNSON'S TAKE: "I look forward to him having a good year. He's been more consistent throughout the entire preseason. He's one of the best shooters in the ACC. He has a big body and can go down low and post up some. He's a good 3-point shooter. We expect him to play both ends of the floor and rebound the basketball. He's in the best condition of his career."



INSIDE THE NUMBERS: Averaged 3.4 points and one rebound per game last year ... Started in seven of the 29 games in which he played ... Shot 39.3 percent from the floor and 32.6 percent from beyond the 3-point arc ... Shot 58.3 percent from the free-throw line ... Dished out 26 assists and had 17 steals.

ANALYZING RANKIN'S GAME: Rankin got off to a slow start last season, missing the first two games with a knee injury. He scored in double figures just twice the entire season, including a 15-point outing in the regular-season finale at Wake Forest. He is a better shooter than his percentages indicate, but Rankin's game isn't scoring. He's more of a distributor of the basketball, and he really gets into people on the defensive end. He may well be the Hokies' best on-ball defender, and the Hokies need for him to be a defensive stopper on the perimeter this season.

COACH JOHNSON'S TAKE: "Marquis has taken an unbelievable jump from last year. He works hard. He competes. He's starting to be more of a vocal leader on the floor, which, as a point guard, you have to be. We need for him to stay healthy. His body broke down some last year, so we need for him to stay healthy. That's a big key for us. He's

a veteran and has played some. We need that experience and leadership."



INSIDE THE NUMBERS: Played in nine games last season for a total of 18 minutes ... Played a personal-best seven minutes in Tech's win over Mississippi Valley State ... Scored one point, which came in the Hokies' loss at BYU ... Took only one shot attempt and made 1 of 2 from the free-throw line ... Had one rebound.

ANALYZING DONLON'S GAME: Donlon gives the Hokies depth in the post, but his most important contributions come in practice. The walk-on uses his big, physical presence to make the other post players work hard, and he also serves as a scout-team player of sorts by helping run the opposing team's plays.

COACH JOHNSON'S TAKE: "He's the ultimate teammate. I'm pleased to have him as a member of our team. He's a hard-working kid. He gets the most out of what he has."



INSIDE THE NUMBERS: Played in 23 games a year ago ... Averaged 1.8 points and 2.8 rebounds per game ... Scored a personal-best nine points and grabbed a personal-best 11 rebounds in the Hokies' loss at BYU ... Shot 40.5 percent from the floor and 68.8 percent from the free-throw line ... Had three blocked shots and four steals.

ANALYZING BEYER'S GAME: Beyer was surprisingly productive last season in his first as a Hokie. He gave Tech quality minutes in the post for much of the season, playing tough defense and being active on the glass, particularly on the offensive glass. He figured to be more of a practice player who would make Tech's players better, but he developed into more, becoming a solid reserve. He should see some minutes in a backup role again this season.

COACH JOHNSON'S TAKE: "He's a hard-working kid. He helped us in some games last year. He adds depth and athleticism to our frontcourt. He was very good in our pressing last year. He'd be more of a 'face-up' 4 type of guy."



Junior • Guard • 6-4 • 205 • Midlothian, Va.

INSIDE THE NUMBERS: Played in 29 games last season, starting four of them ... Averaged two points and less than a rebound and an assist per game ... Scored a personal-best nine points in back-to-back games versus VMI and UNC Greensboro ... Shot 34.6 percent from the floor, but shot better from beyond the 3-point arc (35.4 percent) ... Connected on 45.5 percent of his free-throw attempts ... Dished out eight assists and had seven steals.

ANALYZING JOHNSTON'S GAME: Johnston played more than any of Tech's walk-ons last season, as he won the coaching staff's trust and gave the Hokies solid minutes. His smart, heady play made him a valuable reserve, and he hopes to continue in that role after using the last year and this past summer to improve his shooting and ball handling. If he makes shots and holds up on the defensive end, he could help this team.

COACH JOHNSON'S TAKE: "He's deep a 3-point shooter. He has worked on his body and gotten bigger. He's worked on putting the ball on the floor and not making himself just a 3-point shooter. But that's [3-point shooting] his strong point. He's a great kid and a great teammate."



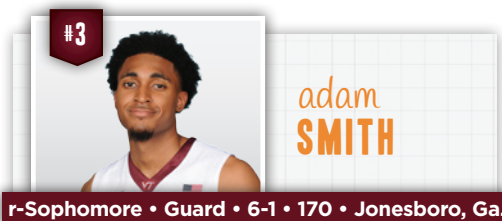
Junior • Forward • 6-8 • 235 • Danville, Va.

INSIDE THE NUMBERS: Started 30 of 31 games last season ... Averaged 5.6 points and 4.7 rebounds per game ... Shot 52.3 percent from the floor and 77.1 percent from the free-throw line ... Led the team among regulars in field-goal percentage and finished third in free-throw percentage ... Scored in double figures on nine occasions last season, including five times in ACC games ... Scored a career-high 17 points in the Hokies' win over Florida State ... Had 19 assists, 16 blocks and 12 steals.

ANALYZING BARKSDALE'S GAME: Barksdale got a lot better as the season rolled along last year, giving the staff optimism heading into this season. He scored in double figures in four of

the final seven games of last season. He's a big, physical presence inside and has the range to shoot from 15-18 feet. Plus, he makes his free throws. He's a solid defender on the other end, and overall, the coaches expect him to improve on his progress from last season.

COACH JOHNSON'S TAKE: "I'm hoping C.J. can pick up where he left off in ACC play last year. It took him a little while to get going and get accustomed to how I coach and do things, but once he figured it out, he was a force in the ACC. I'm expecting him to do similar things right from the start. He can score inside and outside. At 6-8, 235, he's another physical guy."



r-Sophomore • Guard • 6-1 • 170 • Jonesboro, Ga.

INSIDE THE NUMBERS: Sat out last season while meeting the NCAA's residency requirements after transferring from UNC Wilmington ... Averaged 13.7 points per game as a freshman two years ago ... Started in 29 of 31 games that season ... Scored in double figures in 20 games and scored 20 or more points six times ... Shot 37.9 percent from the floor, including 33.1 percent from beyond the 3-point arc.

ANALYZING SMITH'S GAME: From most accounts, Smith is a big-time scorer from the guard spot and should replace some of the scoring that left when Erick Green departed. He averaged just 1.6 assists per game as a freshman at Wilmington, so it remains to be seen if he's a pure point guard or a combo guard. He also needs to get a little better defensively. But Smith can score, and the Hokies are going to need that.

COACH JOHNSON'S TAKE: "He's a prolific scorer. I can sum it up best by saying he's a scorer. He can make an array of shots in many different ways. He can make shots off the bounce, coming off screens, tough shots, contested shots ... he's just a scorer. He'll get a lot of shots with our up-tempo style. His size on the defensive end is a little bit of a concern, but with his quickness and athleticism, I think he'll be able to pester some guys."



r-Sophomore • Forward • 6-10 • 225 • Hoogeveen, The Netherlands

INSIDE THE NUMBERS: Played in all 32 games, starting four of them ... Averaged 3.3 points and 3.1 rebounds per game ... Shot 52.6 percent from the floor and 45.5 percent from the free-throw line ... Finished third on the team with 21 blocked shots ... Had nine steals and four assists ... Scored a career-high 10 points in the Hokies' win over Iowa and added 10 points in the loss at Maryland – his first career start.

ANALYZING VAN ZEGEREN'S GAME: Last year, van Zegeren showed flashes of being a productive player. He has some offensive skills, and his length on the defensive end creates problems for opponents. Plus, he does a nice job of drawing charges despite being 6-10. Van Zegeren, though, needs to continue getting stronger and playing more physically on both ends. If he does that, he could help the Hokies this season.

COACH JOHNSON'S TAKE: "Joey is much improved. I think last year he got his feet wet after the redshirt year. He'll feel a little more confident in the post on the offensive end, but he's our presence on the defensive end. He's a shot blocker, but he's also always in position to take a charge. He's getting more comfortable using his skills."



Sophomore • Forward • 6-8 • 230 • Rustburg, Va.

INSIDE THE NUMBERS: Played in 25 games a year ago, missing seven games with a fractured bone in his foot ... Averaged 3.6 points and 3.8 rebounds per game ... Scored a personal-best 14 points in the Hokies' loss at NC State ... Shot 30.3 percent from the floor and 23.6 percent from beyond the 3-point arc ... Hit 63.9 percent of his free-throw attempts ... Had 10 blocks and three steals.

ANALYZING WOOD'S GAME: Wood struggled once he came back from the broken foot, going scoreless in 10 of the final 15 games, but he showed his potential with his 14-point, 16-rebound performance against NC State. He is long and big and could create matchup problems

for other teams. He possesses the ability to score and rebound, and with more confidence, he could be a very good player.

COACH JOHNSON'S TAKE: "He's a face-up 4. He's a hard-playing kid. He can do a lot of things. His 3-point shooting is what he does best, but he's worked hard at putting the ball on the floor and scoring in different ways. He's making himself more versatile, and he's a very good rebounder. I'm happy to see him healthy, and hopefully he can stay healthy."



#15
ben
EMELOGU
Freshman • Guard • 6-5 • 205
• Grand Prairie, Texas

INSIDE THE NUMBERS: Averaged 14 points, 5 rebounds, 2.2 assists and 1.2 steals as a senior for 5A state runner-up South Grand Prairie High School ... Had 27 points and 16 rebounds in two games at the state tournament and was named to the all-tournament team ... First-team all-area by The Dallas News ... An all-state selection according to the Texas Association of Basketball Coaches.

ANALYZING EMELOGU'S GAME: Emelogu is a big, strong, physical guard with tons of athleticism. He also possesses the ability to knock down shots. He excels in transition by running the floor and spotting up for open jumpers. He needs to work on his ball handling and will need to rebound more for this team, but Johnson loves his potential and expects him to play significant minutes this season.

COACH JOHNSON'S TAKE: "Ben is going to figure big into what we're doing. He's a big, strong, physical guard. He can shoot it with deep range. He can score off the bounce. He could be a very good defender. At 6-5, he's a good rebounder for his position."



#11
devin
WILSON
Freshman • Guard • 6-4 • 185 • McKees Rocks, Pa.

INSIDE THE NUMBERS: Averaged 17 points per game as a senior at Montour High School ... Finished his career with 1,438 points ... Named the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette's Male Athlete of the Year ... Led Montour this past year to its second WPIAL championship in three years and a spot in the PIAA semifinals ... A first-team All-Class AAA selection as a senior.

ANALYZING WILSON'S GAME: Wilson is a pure point guard who loves to pass, and at 6-4, he can see over the top of smaller defenders. He's a good ball handler, and as a shooter, he has good range. He may be the most advanced defender among the freshmen, using his smarts and instincts more than his physical attributes. Johnson likes him because of his toughness and his work ethic.

COACH JOHNSON'S TAKE: "Devin has a winning mentality. He won in football, and he won in basketball in high school. He's a tough kid. He could be one of our better defenders on the team. He's a pass-first point guard. He looks to get the others involved. He's a kid that the guys like playing with."



#32
trevor
THOMPSON
Freshman • Forward • 6-11 • 210 • Indianapolis, Ind.

INSIDE THE NUMBERS: Averaged 10 points, six rebounds and four blocked shots as a senior at Ben Davis High School before spending a postgraduate year at St. John's Northwestern Military Academy in Wisconsin.

ANALYZING THOMPSON'S GAME: There is a lot to like about Thompson's game. For starters, offensively, he is a little more polished than the typical freshman post player. He has good moves, and he runs the court well for a big guy – something Johnson wants to see from his post players. Defensively, his length enables him to block or alter a lot of shots. He needs to get stronger to be able to defend in the post and to establish position on the offensive end. The upside with him is there. It's just a matter of him getting stronger and maturing into a finished product.

COACH JOHNSON'S TAKE: "He's a talented young forward/center. He's long and athletic and can really run the floor. He's got very good skills. He needs to get stronger, but he could potentially be a very good piece for us. He's a lot more advanced. As he gets stronger and more mature, he could be a very good scoring option for us. We're looking for him to help us rebound the basketball."



#21
maurice
KIRBY
Freshman • Forward • 6-9 • 235 • Chandler, Ariz.

INSIDE THE NUMBERS: Averaged 15.6 points and 11.5 rebounds per game as a senior at Basha

High School ... Also averaged two assists and 1.8 blocked shots ... Shot 44 percent from the floor and 44 percent from the free-throw line ... Averaged 7.5 points, 7.8 rebounds, two assists and 1.2 blocks per game as a junior ... A first-team all-district selection following his senior season.

ANALYZING KIRBY'S GAME: Kirby has a lot of skills and potential. He already possesses ACC quality size and length, and that enables him to get his hands on a lot of balls on the defensive end. On offense, he has a soft touch, but he needs to refine his post moves. In particular, he needs to work on his footwork and remaining in balance. He's very similar to Cadarian Raines when Raines was a freshman. With his work ethic, Kirby could develop into a very good post player.


COACH JOHNSON'S TAKE: "Maurice gives us a big, physical body up front. He adds depth to the frontcourt. He's an extremely hard worker. He's a very good rebounder. He's also a good defender. He's a little raw offensively, but I think he can help us this year."



#1
malik
MUELLER
Freshman • Guard • 6-3 • 210 • Ebingen, Germany

INSIDE THE NUMBERS: Was the MVP of the Jordan Brand Classic international game in 2010 at Madison Square Garden ... Had 21 points and four 3-pointers in that game ... Was 16 years old at the time ... Led his Urspring team to the championship of the Arby's Classic last December in Bristol, Tenn. ... Scored 11, 17, 23, 29 and nine points in the five games of the Arby's Classic, earning the tournament's most valuable player honor.

ANALYZING MUELLER'S GAME: Mueller will sit out this season after being ruled ineligible by the NCAA. He is a big, thick point guard with tons of international experience, and at 19 years old, possesses a little more maturity than the other freshmen. He'll work on his game and return next season. The staff likes him because he can score, with the ability to hit the 3-pointer, and he also gets to the basket. He's a solid defender who uses his intelligence more so than his athleticism. He should help the other guards get better by making them work harder in practice.

COACH JOHNSON'S TAKE: "I'm disappointed for Malik. He worked hard over the summer, but I know that he'll use the year to improve as a player and work on his academics. He'll help us in practice and on the sidelines." 

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2013-14 WOMEN'S BASKETBALL PROFILES



#22

**porschia
HADLEY**

r-Senior • Forward/Center • 6-3
• Montezuma, Ga.

INSIDE THE NUMBERS: Started 18 games – the fourth-most on the team – and played in all 30 games ... Averaged 2.8 points and 2.9 rebounds per game ... Was fifth on the squad in both offensive (29) and total rebounds (88) and was second in blocks shots (16) ... Hit just 37 of 110 shot attempts and 8 of 16 free throws.

ANALYZING HADLEY'S GAME: Most of Hadley's numbers dipped during the 2012-13 season mainly because of a reduction in playing time. To return to the numbers she put up the previous season – 5.6 points and 3.9 rebounds a game – she will need to stay out of foul trouble, as she committed the third-most fouls on the team. She will be looked upon to provide needed depth in the frontcourt.

COACH WOLFF'S TAKE: "Porschia is a fabulous kid who's already graduated. This will be her fifth year here, and I hope this will be her best year. She's a good facing-the-basket shooter, but we'll need her to play a little more physical out there."



#14

**uju
UGOKA**

Senior • Forward • 6-1 • Lagos, Nigeria

INSIDE THE NUMBERS: Started in 10 games and played in 17 contests ... Led the team with 63 offensive rebounds and averaged a team-leading 8.5 rebounds per game (145 total) ... Was second on the team in points (212), points per game (12.5), field-goal percentage (38.8 percent, 83 of 214) and average minutes played (28.9).

ANALYZING UGOKA'S GAME: After sitting out nine games to start the season, Ugoka showed flashes of her ability throughout the year, notching five double-doubles (four in the ACC). She will need to stay healthy – she missed four games after her debut – and will need to be patient on the offensive side to maximize her playing potential.

COACH WOLFF'S TAKE: "Uju had, unfortunately, a disjuncted year, and it showed. At times, she was really good, and at times, she was a little bit too rushed. She had a fabulous year academically

and could graduate sum cum laude or higher, far exceeding what we thought could happen academically. On the court, she's in a good place, and because of that, she'll play well."



#20

**nia
EVANS**

Senior • Forward • 6-0 • Decatur, Ga.

INSIDE THE NUMBERS: Played in 29 games, making a pair of starts ... Was third on the team in field-goal percentage (37.7 percent, 40 of 106) ... Finished fourth on the team with 90 rebounds and fifth on the team in scoring with 100 points ... Averaged 3.4 points and 3.1 rebounds per game ... Added 10 blocks and 17 steals to her totals.

ANALYZING EVANS' GAME: Evans returned to her freshman form after battling injuries throughout the 2011-12 season, but she needs to improve on those numbers as a senior. She needs to stay out of foul trouble, as she committed a team-high 70 fouls last year, to provide depth in the frontcourt.

COACH WOLFF'S TAKE: "Nia is a little bit undersized for her position, but plays with a high motor. I hope she can sustain that more. She has really good moments, and then she gets fatigued and then the bottom falls out. She's in good shape after working hard over the summer, and some of the things we are working on offensively will help her out."



#31

**monet
TELLIER**

Senior • Guard • 5-11 • Charlotte, N.C.

INSIDE THE NUMBERS: Played in all 30 games and made 27 starts ... Led the team in most offensive categories, including minutes played (980), points (396), field goals made (135), 3-pointers made (30), free throws made (96), defensive rebounds (114), total rebounds (167), assists (96) and steals (36) ... Averaged 13.2 points and 5.6 rebounds per game ... Shot 37.5 percent from the floor and team-bests 34.1 percent from beyond the 3-point arc and 72.2 percent from the free-throw line.

ANALYZING TELLIER'S GAME: Tellier will end her Hokie career as arguably the best player Tech has

put on the floor since joining the ACC and one of the top 10 all-time. Her versatility and ability will give her a chance to place her name in the school's record book in 12 categories. The addition of four guards to the roster should free her up to focus more on scoring and rebounding.

COACH WOLFF'S TAKE: "Monet has improved each of the years that we have been here. The key factor in her having as good of a year as she can have is her staying grounded emotionally as best as she can. She's had fewer and fewer games like that, but that's the key. She's improved her ball handling, but she's not going to have to handle it as much. And because we aren't going to be asking her to do everything, she's going to have her best year."



#33

**kelsey
CONYERS**

Junior • Guard • 5-9 • Chesterfield, Va.

INSIDE THE NUMBERS: Played in 10 games ... Scored four points, had a steal and a rebound in 25 minutes of action ... Saw limited time because of nagging injuries.

ANALYZING CONYERS' GAME: Conyers played 29 games as a walk-on two years ago and provided much-needed depth at the guard position. If healthy, she'll be looked to continue in that role this season.

COACH WOLFF'S TAKE: "Kelsey has been an incredibly valuable member of the team in every way. She played a little bit more as a freshman than last year, due to some knee problems, but she's healthy. As a student-athlete, she embodies everything that Virginia Tech is all about."



#10

**lauren
EVANS**

Sophomore • Guard • 6-0 • Phoenix, Ariz.

INSIDE THE NUMBERS: Made 28 starts – tied for the most on the squad – and played in all 30 games ... Averaged 4.7 points and 2.1 rebounds per game ... Was second on the team with 35 steals, while finishing fourth in points (140), assists (44) and blocks (11) ... Hit 37.3 percent from the floor and converted 70.8 percent of her free-throw attempts.

ANALYZING EVANS' GAME: As a freshman, Evans was thrust into the starting point guard role, earning it through hard work and dedication, and she held her own against some stiff competition. Her knowledge and experience from last year will be invaluable to the four new guards entering the program.

COACH WOLFF'S TAKE: "Lauren had a very good freshman year. We asked her to do a bunch of things that we never thought we would ask of a freshman, but she performed well in that role. She's a proud, competitive kid. I would look for her to continue to contribute in the same way as last year."



#24
taijah
CAMPBELL
Sophomore • Forward • 6-3
• Ajax, Ontario, Canada

INSIDE THE NUMBERS: Started 15 of the 17 games she played in as a freshman ... Shot a team-best 42.2 percent from the floor and blocked a team-high 23 shots ... Scored 80 points and grabbed 77 boards in her limited action a season ago ... Averaged 4.7 points and 4.5 rebounds per game.

ANALYZING CAMPBELL'S GAME: Staying healthy will be the key for Campbell to keep getting better in both practices and in games. She got her feet wet playing in eight ACC games a year ago and showed great ability on both ends of the court. A full season should help her talents progress further.

COACH WOLFF'S TAKE: "We hope she can stay healthy this year. When healthy, she's proven that she can compete with any of the post players in the league, and she's a good defender. She's got size, can run the floor and can rebound out of her space. Unfortunately, the injuries slowed her down, but if she can stay healthy, that will certainly impact the type of season we can have."



#4
hannah
YOUNG
Sophomore • Forward • 6-1
• Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia

INSIDE THE NUMBERS: Did not enroll until the spring semester ... Played in 21 games and made

four starts ... Scored 27 points and pulled down 61 rebounds, while adding 21 assists and 15 steals to her totals.

ANALYZING YOUNG'S GAME: Young had to adapt very quickly to Tech basketball last year, missing the entire first semester (practices included) while working out eligibility issues with the NCAA. She had to learn everything on the fly, which may have hindered her performances last season.

COACH WOLFF'S TAKE: "Hannah is one of the most talented players on the team, and I don't think anyone really saw that last year. She gave us some glimpses, where she rebounded well at times or shot the 3 well. I think she'll be able to give us a little bit more consistency because she should feel more comfortable and settled in. And she is a good defender that can guard every position other than the point."



#25
samantha
HILL
Freshman • Guard • 5-10
• Toronto, Ontario, Canada

NOTES ON HILL: Hill was a member of the Canadian U-19 national team that competed in the 2013 FIBA World Championships. As a member of North Toronto club team, Hill helped the team win gold at the U-19 provincial championship in 2012. She earned all-defensive team and all-star honors. In 2008, Hill won the provincial gold medal. She was an MVP for three years and competed in the All-Canada Classic All-Star game.

COACH WOLFF'S TAKE: "Sammy is an extremely good athlete – maybe the best athlete on the team. She's really fast. She's active. She's long. She's still trying to morph into her comfort zone on offense. She's got good skills. She's just got to package it, but she's a good defender."



#3
serafina
MAULUPE
Freshman • Guard • 5-8 • Murrieta, Calif.

NOTES ON MAULUPE: Maulupe is a combo guard from Vista Murrieta High School and finished her career with 1,617 points to finish second all-time in her school's record book. She set the record for

the number of 3-pointers made in her four years as a starter at Vista. During her senior season, Maulupe averaged 21 points, 4.5 rebounds and 3.3 steals per game.

COACH WOLFF'S TAKE: "Serafina is an extremely competitive player whom everyone should fall in love with because of her personality. She's going to have to make a conversion from a 2-guard to the point – she has to in this league. She's a strong, tough kid, and she can shoot."



#35
tara
NAHODIL
Freshman • Center • 6-4 • Pine Grove, Pa.

NOTES ON NAHODIL: Nahodil was the 20th-ranked post player in the country by ESPN HoopGurlz. She earned all-state honors three times and was an all-area honoree all four years. During her senior campaign at Tri-Valley High School, Nahodil helped the team to the Pennsylvania state title. Nahodil finished her career with more than 1,700 points and 1,000 rebounds.

COACH WOLFF'S TAKE: "Tara came to us later due to a coaching change at another school. Tara is a bigger girl who has good potential. She's just going to have to get used to the pace of the play in the ACC."



#5
vanessa
PANOUSIS
Freshman • Guard • 5-7
• Sydney, New South Wales, Australia

NOTES ON PANOUSIS: Panousis competed on the international stage as a member of the Australian U-19 national team that won bronze at the 2013 FIBA World Championships. She was also on the U-17 World Championship team that finished fifth in the FIBA 2012 event. Panousis attended Brigidine College Randwick and competed for the Sydney Comets.

COACH WOLFF'S TAKE: "Vanessa has a lot of international experience. She's been the starting point guard on the Australian national team (U-19). She's a very mature girl who really understands basketball. She can shoot and can be a threat from the outside and can be very clever with the ball."




#15

maddison
PENN

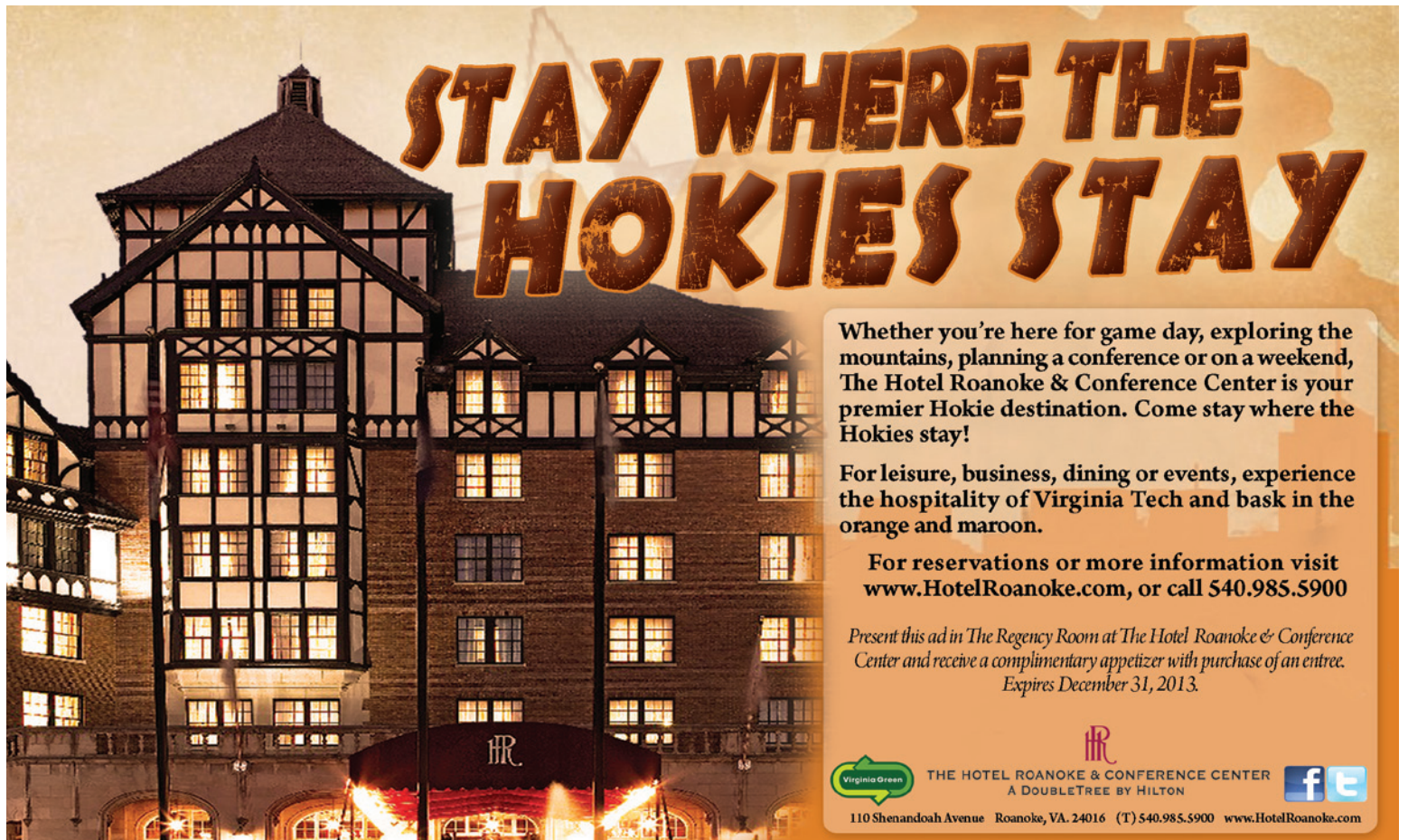
Freshman • Guard • 6-0
• Avoca Beach, New South Wales, Australia

NOTES ON PENN: Penn was a member of the Australian U-19 national team that won a bronze medal at the 2013 FIBA World Championships and a gold medal in 2012 at the FIBA Oceania Championships. In addition, she was selected to represent Australia in the 2013 Tour of China and Tour of France. Penn also competed for Pymble Ladies College, where she helped the team capture the national title in 2011 and helped the team to a second-place finish in 2010.

COACH WOLFF'S TAKE: "Maddison is kind of an 'old-school' player. She's a very good, deep 3-point shooter. She releases it easy and shoots it as much like a guy as any of us have ever seen on the women's side. She knows how to play and really wants to be a good basketball player." 



With the addition of four new guards, Uju Ugoka and her teammates should find easier shots in the paint this upcoming season, which hopefully will translate into more points and more victories.





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J.R. Collins played the best game of his career with his two-sack, seven-hurry performance in the Hokies' win over Marshall.



FAITH AND FOOTBALL COME INTO FOCUS FOR COLLINS

A rededication to faith has enabled Tech defensive end J.R. Collins to turn his game and his life in a positive direction

by Jimmy Robertson

He spotted her from a distance, and the young woman timidly approached him.

He had wanted this exact moment, an opportunity not just to help others, but also to expand his faith and to grow as a person. He wanted to learn more about being a leader, the type willing to do a job and willing to tell others how to do it and help them along the way.

The location was “Skid Row,” America’s hometown for the homeless, and J.R. Collins was there with Athletes in Action, a group of Christian athletes who use sports as a platform to spread the gospel.

But at this moment, Collins was alone, thousands of miles from home and the comfort of those whom he knew. This spot in Los Angeles serves as the home for the highest concentration of homeless people in the United States, the place where dumpster diving is imperative for survival, and Collins was about to meet one of its citizens.

This reserved young man, nearly 2,000 miles from his hometown of Stafford, Va., and his own sheltered world, was understandably nervous.

“She was probably in her late 20s,” Collins said. “She told me a little bit about herself. She shared a story about how she turned dates for

money and how she wanted to change her life.

“She asked me for some money because it was Father’s Day and she wanted to go see her dad. I gave her some information about the homeless shelters that feed people weekly, and I gave her \$5 to catch the bus. I didn’t want to question her, so I just gave her the money. That’s what felt right.”

It also felt good, as it so often does when one helps another. The chance encounter left him feeling humbled. The trip did as well.

This was a new feeling for Collins, who readily admits that he hasn’t always been one to

appreciate his own opportunities. Last season's disaster on the football field opened his eyes to what he was missing. His summer trip to California only reaffirmed it.

"Going to Cali [California], I saw that some of them don't have the access to the things I had or the resources, and they're not doing the things I'm doing because they don't have the opportunity," he said. "I was humbled – again."

With those experiences under his belt, he's taken advantage of his senior season so far, and he feels fortunate.

It was an opportunity that he almost didn't get.

In the past, Collins had always been one to appreciate opportunities. He learned as a kid not to take things for granted.

That lesson came about primarily because of his father's career choice, and later, his older sister's.

Lanford Collins, who, according to J.R., played football at Mississippi Valley State and later tried out for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, joined the U.S. Army reserves after getting cut by the Buccaneers. His military obligations eventually took the family from Mississippi to Northern Virginia to be closer to government agencies and the Pentagon.

J.R. developed an appreciation for those who serve in the military and an understanding of the sacrifice that those people and their families make, particularly in light of what transpired on Sept. 11, 2001. Lanford Collins often worked in the Pentagon, but fortunately wasn't there that day when terrorists hijacked a plane taking off from Dulles International Airport and flew it into the building.

"He wasn't in it, but he took pictures as he was driving away from it," J.R. said.

Lanford Collins has traveled all over the world. He spent time in Korea, and he also served two tours in Iraq. One of those stints came during J.R.'s freshman year of high school and the other came during his senior year.

J.R. and his siblings – an older sister and a younger sister and brother – grew used to seeing their father leave for long stints. Their mother, Connie, did her best to reassure them, especially during the Iraq tours. They watched little in the way of national news and rarely read the newspapers. They feared becoming paralyzed with fear.

"We were definitely worried because he was over in Iraq, and there were guns and bombs everywhere," Collins said. "You never know what's going to happen. You're hoping for the best."

"He told me some bombs went off close to him, but he doesn't really talk about what happened.



Carrying the American flag means a little more to J.R. Collins, whose father and sister both serve in the U.S. Army reserves.

We were used to him being gone. One time, he went to Korea for about six or eight months, so him being away was something we were used to. But with him being in Iraq ... you hear everything on TV that was going on, and you think, 'Why does this have to be happening to my dad?'"

Collins' older sister also joined the U.S. Army reserves and left the family home in Northern Virginia. Today, she is currently in Germany. So the family knows a lot about sacrificing for the greater good of a country.

To keep his mind off the potential dangers that his father and older sister faced, he decided to stay active. That meant playing football, lots and lots of it.

He developed into a 6-foot-2, 240-pound defensive end. His final two years at Brooke Point High School, he recorded 16 sacks and 24 tackles for a loss.

Collins visited Penn State and BC. But he didn't want to stray too far from home, so he ended up choosing Tech.

"At first, I didn't know what to think when picking a college," he said. "But it came down to staying in Virginia and being at a school that I knew had some success. Isaiah Hamlette [former

Tech defensive tackle who played with Collins at Brooke Point High] was going to school here and Jake Johnson [a former Tech linebacker who played against Collins while at Stafford High] was here. There were two people I knew I could connect with and get some information from. They all said that the program wasn't the No. 1 program, but they see it being a powerhouse in the years to come.

"And Coach [Bud] Foster was a big reason. He's a good defensive coordinator, and I wanted to play on a good defense."

Collins was going to be a college football player, just like his dad. Could he be the same type of leader?

Collins' career at Tech kicked off in the right way. After a redshirting season, he played in 13 games as a redshirt freshman, starting one. The next season, he won the starting job and finished with 57 tackles, including 9.5 for a loss, and six sacks. For that, he earned honorable mention All-ACC honors.

"The year before [his redshirt freshman year], I had some experience, but I wasn't really counted on to be the No. 1 guy," he said. "I think that

helped because I wasn't all the way there yet. The second year, I was able to use what I had learned the previous year. I had a little bit of success. It was a lot of fun playing out there and being a starter. Me and James [Gayle], we competed a lot, and when we both got the starting job, it was fun, on the field and off the field. We hung out a lot."

His career trajectory seemed to be going upward. But something happened last year.

Collins played decently in 2012, but not great. He certainly did not take the next step in the usual progression of a player. In fact, he probably took a step back.

Collins' numbers were down in every statistical category. He started seven straight games early in the season, but after the Hokies' 38-17 loss to Clemson, he lost his starting job. He gained too much weight during the season and found himself moved to defensive tackle. He started arriving late to position meetings and appeared too tired to pay attention.

The changes mystified the coaches, and maybe to an extent, Collins himself. Looking back, he chalked up last season to being immature.

"Yeah, I wasn't as mature as I am this season," he said. "All the things Coach Foster said to watch out for, the minute you start feeling good about yourself, someone knocks you on the your butt. I didn't think that was me, but it was. I was feeling too good about myself.

"Last year, I felt I didn't have a horrible season, but at the same time, there were plays that I could have made if I had taken things more seriously. Just practicing hard and taking it one day at a time. I think I was so worried about stats and all that, and I wasn't getting the little things done. It was definitely a lesson learned last year."

Things came to a head shortly before the end of the regular season. Late one time too many,

he received a summons to head coach Frank Beamer's office. Beamer gave him an ultimatum – show up late for anything else and stay home for the bowl game.

Collins survived the rest of the season, but at its conclusion, vowed to change.

Part of Collins' rebuilding of himself started with getting into shape. He lost 27 pounds over the spring and summer in preparation for this season.

Part of it involved finishing his classwork toward his degree in human development. He took care of all his academic responsibilities this spring, and in May, received that degree to eliminate a lot of stress.

Part of it came from weekly meetings with former team chaplain Johnny Shelton. Collins, like many people, had strayed from his faith. Shelton helped him find the path and provided him with a voice to encourage him to stay on it.

But the biggest part of Collins' personal reclamation project came when he made the decision to take that trip with Athletes in Action to Los Angeles this past June. He got away from football for the first time in his life – and got back to faith.

"I wanted to take some time off from football and focus in on developing my faith," Collins said. "I felt a lot of times in my career that I was focused on football and getting to the next level, and I wasn't taking care of the little things, or taking care of what was important. Going there showed me that I was taking a lot of the resources here for granted."

The trip involved working with underprivileged children at various recreational centers throughout the city. Collins found himself chosen to be a leader of a group of six that mentored those children.

The group also went to Skid Row, the area with a large homeless population, and to MacArthur Park, an area that has been the location of gang violence. Collins witnessed a different world, one that made him appreciative of the one he currently lives in.

Perhaps that serves as the reason for his dominance on the field for the Hokies this season. He already has more sacks than last season, and his performance against Marshall earned him 73 points on the coaches' grading scale – the most ever by a defensive player since the staff implemented this scale.

"Coming from the depths he came from, he has flipped it 180," Tech defensive line coach Charley Wiles said. "It's been a good story. I've never seen anything like it."

But for Collins, the story hasn't ended. The conclusion hasn't been written.

He is in discussions with the Blacksburg Recreation Center in hopes of working one day a week as a mentor. He also hopes one day to run his own rec center back in Stafford County.

"I'd like to make something where kids could go and play sports and get some tutoring – something like what we have here [at Tech]," Collins said. "That way, a lot more guys could go to college instead of being at home not doing anything. It would give them something to do because we don't really have an area for sports [in Stafford County]. I'd love to coach at my high school and be the head coach. Eventually, that would be nice."

He wants to help young children grow, go to college and realize the opportunities that he has realized in his time at Tech. This summer, he saw the alternative. It came in the form of a young, homeless woman on a street in Los Angeles.

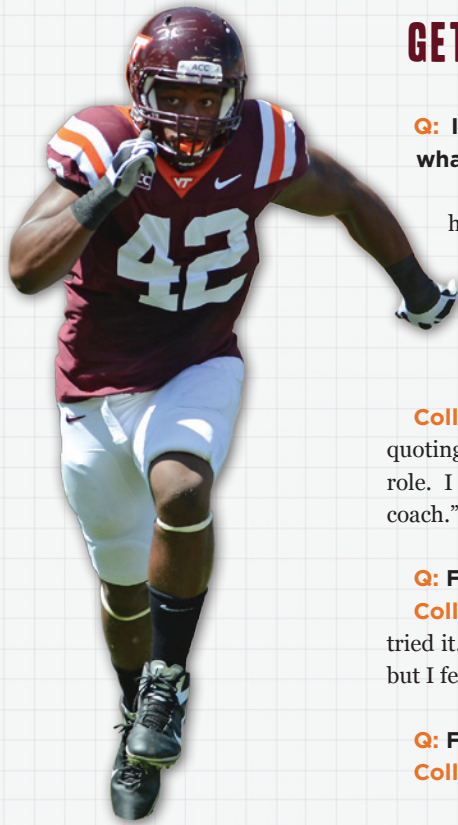
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GETTING TO KNOW J.R. COLLINS

Q: It's a Friday night in the offseason, what are you doing?

Collins: "Probably playing Xbox or hanging out. Maybe watching a movie. If I'm at home, I'm hanging out with my family. You don't get too much time to hang out with your family."

Q: Favorite movie?

Collins: "Remember the Titans. I'm always quoting that movie. I like Denzel Washington's role. I always envision me being that type of coach."

Q: Facebook or Twitter?

Collins: "I don't have any [social media]. I tried it. It's not my thing. I used to have Twitter, but I felt like it was a waste of my time."

Q: Favorite TV show?

Collins: "I just got cable last week [last week

of Sept.]. I was sleeping and watching film in my free time. Watching film is probably my favorite TV show. I like figuring something new out and having success with it. That feels good."

Q: If you could trade places with someone for a day, who would it be?

Collins: "Probably someone famous. I've always wondered what LeBron [James with the Miami Heat] does on a daily basis. Maybe Ray Lewis [former Baltimore Ravens linebacker]. He's more exciting. Probably LeBron for all the flashy stuff, but Ray Lewis is always amped up to do something."

Q: In 10 years, what will you be doing?

Collins: "I see myself playing in the NFL or coaching, maybe coaching Brooke Point. Hopefully, my brother is in the NFL. It'd be nice if we could play against each other. We're seven years apart, though."



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Athletics department gets approval on indoor practice facility

by Jimmy Robertson

It took Tech AD Jim Weaver 15 years, but he's finally going to see a new indoor practice facility get built.

The Virginia Tech athletics department received some much-anticipated good news on Sept. 9, as a building and grounds committee of the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors approved a location for an indoor football practice facility at the Board of Visitors' meeting on the Virginia Tech campus.

The decision ended a somewhat lengthy process, as the university and the athletics department worked out issues related to the site for the facility. The two sides came to an agreement that the best place for the facility was on part of the existing football practice fields – specifically, the one practice field adjacent to the football locker room.

"I'm very pleased with the approved location for the new indoor field house," Weaver said. "I think it's going to be extremely beneficial to our football program. It will give them a location that is very conducive to practicing in bad weather. We won't have to worry about people crossing Spring Road at peak hours [to go to Rector Field House for practice], and the preparations for practice during inclement weather will be so much easier, as far as getting all the [tackling] dummies and sleds and other gear ready.

"This facility will also help many of our other sports teams. It will allow for a permanent indoor track in Rector Field House, and our baseball, softball and lacrosse programs will be able to practice inside [at the new facility] when the weather is bad. So I'm excited about this project.

This is going to help so many people."

For Weaver, the approval from the Board of Visitors ends a rather long wait for him. He received permission in 1998 from then-president Dr. Paul Torgersen to build an indoor practice facility, seeing a need to get the facility closer to the football locker room, strength and conditioning area and Lane Stadium.

But other facility needs took precedence – mainly enhancements to Lane Stadium. A new south end zone structure allowed for suites and premium seating, and seeing more potential, Weaver and the athletics department decided to rebuild the west side of the stadium to include more suites and club seating.

"As I continued to evaluate things, it became crystal clear to me that it [the indoor practice facility] wasn't the most important part of the facilities ball game," Weaver said. "We needed other things. We needed work done to the stadium, in both the north and south end zones and the west side. We desperately needed a basketball practice facility. We built a new football locker room, which created locker room space for other sports, and we built a new Olympic sports weight room, which has helped us immensely.

"So yes, it's [the indoor practice facility] the first facility I identified when I first got here, and it's become the last one to get built. But I'm glad we're going to get it done. It's something I think is needed and is really going to benefit us."

The project figures to cost around \$25 million and essentially consists of two parts – the

building of the indoor football practice facility and then the renovation of Rector Field House, the current indoor facility where the football team practices during inclement weather. Athletics department officials want to keep the indoor track up permanently at Rector (they take it down after the indoor track season ends in March), and they want to add halftime locker rooms for soccer and lacrosse matches since Rector sits next to Thompson Field, the home of the soccer and lacrosse programs. They also want to build a hitting area adjacent to Tech Softball Park for the softball team.

The new indoor practice facility will eliminate the interruptions during practices because of weather, while also providing a huge space for conditioning drills, if the strength and conditioning staff needs it. When storms hit Blacksburg, they often force the football team back to the locker room to change cleats and then the players and coaches have to walk down to Rector to resume practice. The lightning and rain and the traffic on Spring Road create logistical problems and certain safety concerns.

For those reasons, Beamer was willing to give up an outdoor practice field to get the indoor facility.

"There was some give and take there both ways, but that's the way it needs to happen at Virginia Tech and do what's right for everyone," Beamer said. "But having that facility next to those practice fields ... it's exactly where it belongs. We'll have big doors, and we might just go in there some and

work the offensive line, defensive line or whatever.

“What’s really beneficial is sometimes you’re out there practicing and a bolt of lightning comes. Now we can go in there in about three minutes and resume practicing. It used to be we’d have to go inside and change and go down to Rector. So I’m really pleased about that.”

Athletics department officials, including Beamer and senior associate AD Tom Gabbard, already have a good idea of what they envision for an indoor practice facility. Gabbard said the facility would be approximately 210 feet wide and 400 feet long. It also will be tall enough for punting and kicking.

“We can have two smaller outdoor practice fields next to it or one 100-yard field,” Gabbard said. “Of the two smaller fields, one will be 75 yards and one will be 65 yards. But we can always have a 100-yard field if we turn it. It [the 100-yard field] would be parallel to the indoor practice facility.”

The athletics department plans on using a design-build approach to construct the facility. In this process, a design criteria consultant comes in and organizes the criteria for what the project entails (size, scope, etc.). That plan then goes to various architects and builders on a national scale, and the architects and builders put together design-build “teams” and do the actual designing of the facility. The various teams will then pitch their designs to the athletics department – namely,

Weaver, Gabbard, Beamer and John Ballein, Tech’s associate AD for football operations.

The athletics department already has an agreement in place with SportsPLAN Studio out of Kansas City, Mo., as the design criteria consultant to put together and organize the criteria for the project. This same group, under the leadership of Joel Leider, handled the planning of the Hokies’ football locker room project. Leider and his group will have approximately 60 days to put together Tech’s design criteria into a plan.

“We hired him two years ago, but we couldn’t do anything because we didn’t have a site yet,” Gabbard said. “He’ll take into consideration some of the restrictions that the site presents. It will take him about 60 days to do that, and then he’ll give that to the design-build teams out there – there are about five or six of them who have already contacted us – and then we’ll give them about 60 days to present to us the best practice facility in America for the price we want. We’ll pick one and turn them loose, and they’ll build it.

“The thing I like about this process is that the architects and the builders are talking, so the change orders get reduced and you never lose the creativity of the architect, yet the builder keeps reeling him [the architect] in on the costs.”

The athletics department will build the indoor facility first before starting on the Rector Field House part, and Gabbard said that he would like


to start site work in early 2014. The football team would lose the practice field next to the locker room for next spring and fall, but the coaches can use the game field at Lane Stadium for practice on occasions or use Rector Field House to reduce wear and tear on the practice field next to the Merryman Center.

“Certainly, I’d like for it [the indoor practice facility] to be ready by the spring of 2015,” Gabbard said. “No later than preseason of 2015. That’s where I’d like to be.

“Once we get our plan for the indoor practice facility fixed, I’d like to start on Rector. I want to get the track and softball coaches involved, and the operations people involved. There is some stuff we want to do over there, so we’ll need to get together on that. But the first thing is getting Joel [Leider] here and starting on the practice facility.”

Weaver said the department has roughly \$11 million in cash or pledges for the new indoor facility. He added that it’s been a little difficult to raise money without a design to show people, but that fundraising efforts will really ramp up early next year once a design gets chosen.

Beamer agreed.

“We’ve got to raise some money,” he said. “But now that we know where it is and have a plan – or will have a plan – for the building, if our supporters are anything like they have been, we’ll raise that money pretty quickly.” 

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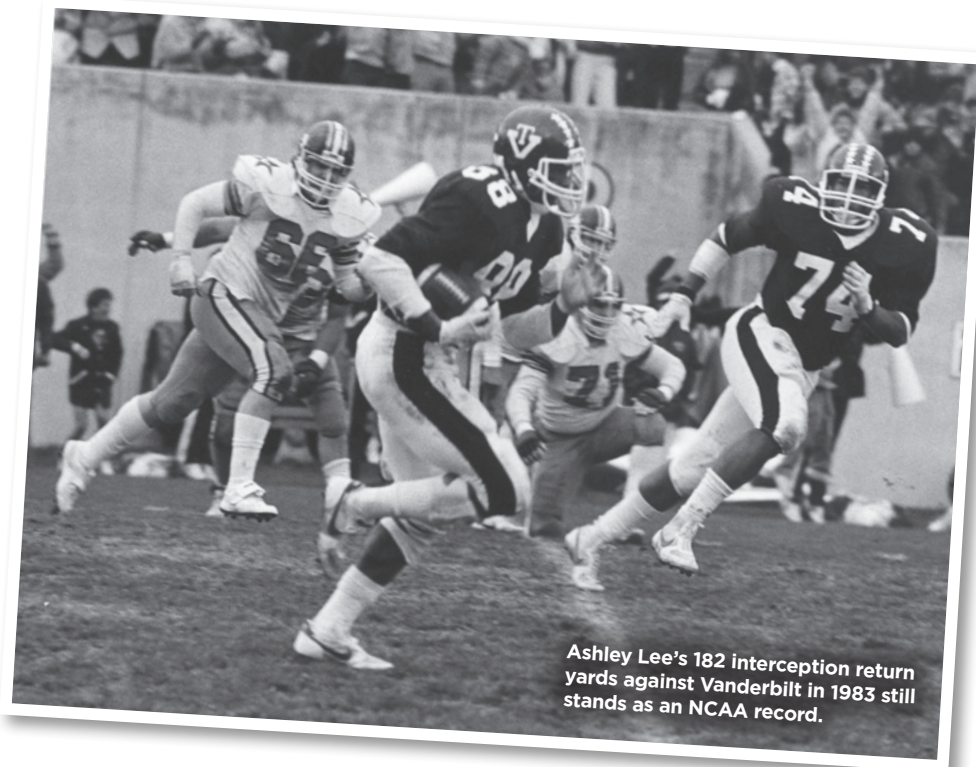
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STILL STANDING

Back living and working in his hometown of Franklin, Va., Ashley Lee vividly remembers the NCAA record he broke 30 years ago – one that still stands today

by Jimmy Robertson



Ashley Lee's 182 interception return yards against Vanderbilt in 1983 still stands as an NCAA record.

Former Tech player Ashley Lee doesn't own just his own business these days. He still owns an NCAA record.

And he's owned it for 30 years.

Actually, the 30-year anniversary of Lee's accomplishment is approaching. In a Nov. 12, 1983 game against Vanderbilt at Lane Stadium, Lee intercepted two passes and returned both of them for touchdowns. His first return went for 88 yards and the second went for 94 yards, enabling him to break the NCAA Division I mark for interception return yardage in a single game. His 182 return yards snapped the record held by Southern California's Charles Phillips, who recorded 181 yards on two interceptions in a game against Iowa in 1974.

"I do. I still get asked about it," Lee said via phone from his hometown of Franklin, Va., where he owns a home improvement business. "People ask, and I tell them that I attribute my success in that game to knowing what your opponent is going to do. That week, I watched enough film. I knew, on third-and-short, they ran a certain play. Every time in third-and-short, they ran the exact same play. So when it got to be third-and-short, I knew what was coming."

Lee remembers the plays vividly. His first interception was a bit of a fluke. Tech and Vanderbilt were involved in a scoreless tie in the third quarter, but the Commodores drove to the Tech 12.

Vanderbilt quarterback Kurt Page then attempted a shovel pass, but the running back bobbled the ball. It bounced into the air and into

the hands of Lee.

"He never got control of it," Lee said. "So when he came through the line bobbling it, it came directly to me, and I intercepted it and ran it the length of the field."

According to various articles about the game, Lee dodged eight would-be tacklers en route to the end zone on the play. His second interception came about a little more traditionally.

The Hokies led 14-3 in the fourth quarter, but again Vanderbilt drove deep into Tech territory and faced a third down. Page dropped back to pass and threw the ball, but Lee stepped in front of the intended receiver at the 6 and raced 94 yards to the end zone – and into the record books.

"They ran the play I had been anticipating," Lee said.

Those were just two of many great plays made by Lee during a Hall of Fame worthy career, though he is not in the Virginia Tech Sports Hall of Fame. He arrived on campus in the fall of 1980 after winning two state championships at Southampton High School in Franklin, Va., a remote town not far from Suffolk, Va. He turned down an offer from Ohio State and decided to follow in the footsteps of a couple of other Tech players from Southampton – Cass Camp and Cyrus Lawrence, who went on to become the school's all-time leading rusher (and still is).

"Virginia Tech was one of the top teams recruiting me, and when I went there for my official visit, I liked the school," Lee said. "It was between Virginia Tech and Ohio State. I just liked

the school, and the setting and the environment. That's where I ended up."

Lee jumped into the starting lineup right away. Though only around 185 pounds, he found himself at linebacker in then-head coach Bill Dooley's system. His speed and instincts made up for his lack of size, and he recorded 95 tackles (54 solo) as a freshman, including eight for a loss. He earned freshman All-America honors by Football News.

The next season, he played even better, finishing with 146 tackles (75 solo), including five for a loss. He led the team in tackles both seasons on a defense that featured guys like Robert Brown, Bruce Smith, Jesse Penn and Mike Johnson.

On the first play of his junior season, though, he tore the ACL and MCL in his knee. The injury forced him to miss the season, and when he returned, he found himself at another position. Dooley and his staff decided to move Lee to free safety.

"It was a different position," Lee said. "When you're a linebacker, you're taught to attack. As a defensive back, you have to watch and let things develop. It took me a while to get there. My second year, I played the position like I knew it. I studied film tremendously. I knew what the opponents were going to do.

"I loved the position. I probably should have been in the defensive backfield from day 1. But I did some things in high school that they [the coaches] saw, and they just believed that I could play the position [linebacker]."

Lee played well as a junior, recording 77 tackles and breaking up 10 passes. As a senior, though, he played better, intercepting seven passes and finishing with 105 tackles.

Lee led the team in interceptions his senior season and led the team in tackles his sophomore and senior seasons. He finished his career with 423 tackles and 11 interceptions – a number that ranks tied for 10th on Tech’s all-time list. Perhaps more impressively, Tech’s defense ranked as one of the best nationally during his career, allowing just 11 touchdowns the entire season in 1980 and 1983 (11 games each year).

“We had a lot of guys that wanted to win,” Lee said. “If we could have mustered out a little more offense, we could have been a 10-1 or 11-0 team. I really believe that. We always said that if our offense could score 21 points every game, we’d win every game. But it didn’t happen.”

The Hokies, though, enjoyed winning seasons in the four years that Lee played. They went 9-2 his junior year in 1983 and 8-4 his senior season. Lee played in the 1980 Peach Bowl and the 1984 Independence Bowl.

His best memory of his days at Tech, though, comes from his freshman season. The Hokies lost to Florida State 31-7 in Tallahassee, Fla., but Lee said he was the Chevrolet Most Valuable Player of the Game.

“I was a freshman, and it [the game] was on regional TV,” he said. “My parents had a chance to watch me play. Once the game got started, I got lost in it. I didn’t know I had won it [the honor]. Winning that was gratifying. I think Florida State was No. 2 in the country. So that was gratifying.”

In 1985, the Atlanta Falcons selected Lee in the eighth round of the NFL Draft. He lasted in the Falcons’ preseason camp until the last cut before the Falcons’ staff released him. He tried to land a job in the United States Football League, but that league folded shortly thereafter.

Lee got his degree in sociology from Tech in 1986. He spent some time in Maryland before deciding to go back home to live in Franklin, Va., to be near his mother. Some of his friends got him involved in building additions to homes and remodeling homes, and after learning from them, he later decided to strike out on his own, forming Tomorrow Enterprise – the name of his home remodeling business.

Lee and his wife, Dora, have two children – Ashley Jr., a 22-year-old son who is in the U.S. Army reserves and is currently deployed in Afghanistan, and a 17-year-old daughter named Asya, who is a freshman at Tidewater Community College.

“I’m proud of them,” Lee said. “You have kids and you raise them to be young men or young


women. It’s a great accomplishment.”

Lee and some of his old teammates, guys like Smith and Johnson and Tony Paige, get together for a reunion once a year, rotating it among places like Hampton, Richmond and Virginia Beach. Occasionally, they come to Blacksburg for a game.

This past spring, a group of them got together and came to Blacksburg for the lettermen’s reunion and to watch the spring game. For Lee, the memories came flooding back.

“Initially I did miss the game [of football],” he said. “I missed it tremendously. As time goes on, you tend to grow up and grow out of it and do other things. I got married and had two kids. Once they came along, my whole attitude changed. It was about raising them and preparing them for life. But I still love the game.”

Then he added, laughing, “I was at the spring game this past year, and me and Coach Beamer had a short talk. I said, ‘Coach, let me suit up just one more time. I want to hear the roar [of the crowd] one more time.’”

On a November day 30 years ago, he was the one creating the roar. He still owns the record and the memories, and like many others, he’d like to own a Hall of Fame plaque. But if he doesn’t get the call, he doesn’t need to worry. His name and exploits will never be forgotten. 

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Leoule Degfae (left), and his twin brother, Tihut, hope to run to more success in their final season in Blacksburg.



TWINS STICK TOGETHER

Leoule Degfae spent a year at Tennessee, but transferred to Blacksburg four years ago to be with his twin brother, Tihut, and now the two hope to be double trouble to opponents of Tech's track and field and cross country teams in their final season

by Marc Mullen

They really have come a long way, in every sense of the phrase, from their younger days. Leoule and Tihut Degfae, fraternal twins born in Ethiopia, used to dominate the sport of soccer as kids and amass homemade trophies for winning those “backyard” tournaments.

However, a couple of life-changing events brought these two Virginia Tech runners to the United States, where they stumbled into the sport of cross country. Together, they have helped the Hokies’ cross country and track teams collect three team championship trophies and are looking for a couple more before their time in Blacksburg is complete.

To tell their story and give it justice means going back to the beginning, to their days growing up in a small town in Ethiopia. Leoule, whose name is pronounced “Lay-oooh” but prefers to go by the shorter “Lee,” is the older of the twins by about five minutes. Tihut (pronounced Tay-hoot) likes to be called “T.” They are the only children of Degfae Setegn and Aselefech Elala.

“It’s kind of complicated,” Tihut said. “It’s an Ethiopian tradition that, when you get married, your mom and your dad both keep their last names, and when they have children, the last name of the child is the first name of the father. My dad’s first name is Degfae, so that’s our last name.”

“Yeah, that’s right, and whenever I tell someone that, they are a bit confused,” Leoule said. “So my kids will have my first name as their last name, but we’ll see. It’s weird to have my first name as someone’s last name because I’m Americanized now.”

“I think I will keep the Degfae last name. I don’t think it’s that hard to say, but my first name is hard to say, and that’s why I just call myself ‘Lee.’ I was getting tired. It was just painful to hear people try to pronounce it. My brother is the one who actually made up that name when we were young, and it just stuck.”

In their descriptions of life growing up in Ethiopia, it didn’t seem all too different from growing up anywhere else. The only difference for them was that their father was away during most of their childhood, continuing his education in England.

They attended school. They played sports with their friends. They even watched TV.

“It was a typical school. It was based on the English system,” Tihut said. “We went to a private school in Ethiopia, and it was pretty strict. We would study a little bit of French and English – those were the top languages you had to learn. Then, we were also learning Amharic, the Ethiopian language, so we were learning three languages.”

“We lived in the city, and it was about a

20-minute bus ride to school. It was crowded with 60 to 70 students,” Leoule said. “I just remember going to school was the tough part, and no matter what, my parents did whatever they could to get us to school. If we missed the bus, we’d get into a horse carriage and just go. So we never missed school. That was our parents’ main focus and still is.”

They didn’t grow up clamoring to be cross country runner. Actually, they grew up playing soccer. After school and on weekends, the duo would play with their friends and the sport of choice was soccer for the most part.

“I just remember us having the freedom to roam around and do whatever we wanted,” Tihut said. “We played soccer. That’s basically all we played. There was a big field out there, and with all the kids in the neighborhood, we would have soccer tournaments.”

“The only funny story I have that I usually tell my friends is that we used to make soccer balls. We used to collect little plastic bags all around the neighborhood, and we would make soccer balls out of the plastic bags and rubber bands. That would be our ball if we lost one. That’s about the only

“We lived in a pretty standard home and were probably the only house in our whole neighborhood that had TV,” Tihut said. “It was only on for about four or five hours a day, from, like, 7 p.m. to midnight. After 12, the national anthem would play and then [the TV would] cutoff. But we were pretty lucky to have one.”

“Everyone would come to our house to watch this one show – Ababa Tesfaye. It’s a kids’ show like Mr. Rogers [Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood],” Leoule said. “Everyone would just gather around in a room in our house and just watch that one show. And that was because we only had one channel, so whenever it came on, we watched it, and after that, there was nothing else to do, so we just went and played outside.”

The first major change in their lives came when they were 9. Their father, done with his studies, moved to the United States, and the time had come for the family to live together. They made the 7,000-plus mile journey from their hometown of Awasa to the United States in the summer of 1999, and they settled down in Alexandria, Va.

As can be imagined, it was an exciting time, but a huge shock to the system as well.



At the age of 9, the Degfae twins moved with their family from Ethiopia and settled in Alexandria, Va., and they later graduated from Thomas Edison High School.

story that has really stuck with me from there.”

The balls weren’t the only things homemade. The reward for winning was a homemade item as well.

“We would have these soccer tournaments, and whoever would win the tournaments would get these bottle caps,” Leoule said. “We would form them into trophies. We would put them together so that they would look like a trophy. We would do that almost every day.”

One other thing the Degfaes would do is invite their friends over to watch television. But the viewing party wouldn’t last long.

“Well, the first thing was that we were so excited to see our father for the first time in a while,” Tihut said. “Then, when we got settled down, we were sort of treated like guests for a while, so it was pretty nice getting treated like that.”

“Eating McDonald’s for the first time, we hated it. We didn’t like the nuggets or ketchup. We just wanted some enjera, some Ethiopian food, so that was kind of hard to get transitioned to eating here.”

Eating a different style of food wasn’t the only difficult transition. Getting accustomed to the school system and making new friends had its difficulties as well.

cross country spotlight | degfae twins

"It was a major shock to me because there was a lot of technology around me," Leoule said. "They also put us in ESOL [English for Speakers of Other Languages] classes at first, so we could get transitioned into communicating better, but my brother and I picked it up pretty quick.

"Playing outside was the hard part because we didn't know anyone, so we just sat inside and did nothing, and that was different because we just sat there and watched TV. Our dad did this on purpose. He told us there was only

one channel here as well, and he would hide the remote and not let us use it. Then one day, we got the remote and started flipping through, and we were just both so amazed."

Eventually the twins made new friends, continued to play soccer, were introduced to new sports like football and cricket, and matriculated on the same level as their American counterparts. Interestingly, it wasn't until heading into their freshman year of high school that the idea of

running entered into their minds, and it was because of soccer.

"We were never really into running at all, and we just kind of accidentally fell upon it in high school," Tihut said. "We used to play football

"Yeah, that was the first year we weren't together, and it was weird because we would have different breaks from school, and the first question I would get back home was, 'Where's Lee?' So I had to deal with that for a while and be like, 'He's at Tennessee,' and people were kind of shocked that we didn't go to the same school. But we kept in touch the whole time. Then, his sophomore year, he transferred here. I guess he missed me too much."

- Tihut Degfae on missing his brother during his freshman year

and soccer, but our dad made us choose between soccer and football, and since we already made the commitment and already purchased all of the gear, we just decided to stay with soccer.

"Soccer kind of ends right before the fall and we had nothing to do. We already gave up on summer football training, so it was either cross country or golf. One of our friends who joined cross country because he was a little too small to play football said, "This is pretty fun. You guys should come try

it out. You guys are Ethiopian, so you guys should be pretty good at it.' So we joined the cross country team, and that's where it all started."

The teenagers dominated in the sport, with Leoule taking over the distance running events and Tihut later excelling in the shorter track events. Leoule was so good that he earned an All-American honor by placing 12th at the 2009 Foot Locker Cross Country National Championships, while Tihut was an All-American in track.

Next came their second major change, a minor one, but one that would see the pair split for the first time in their lives. Tihut had always wanted to come to Virginia Tech, while Leoule ended up at the University of Tennessee.

"I ended up at the University of Tennessee to be my own person," Leoule said. "I lived with my brother for, like, 19 years. I just wanted to see what it would be like without him. And the University of Tennessee was great. I experienced a lot of stuff. It was a wide eye-opening experience, and running was great."

"Yeah, that was the first year we weren't together, and it was weird because we would have different breaks from school, and the first question I would get back home was, 'Where's Lee?'" Tihut said. "So I had to deal with that for a while and be

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like, 'He's at Tennessee,' and people were kind of shocked that we didn't go to the same school. But we kept in touch the whole time.

"Then, his sophomore year, he transferred here. I guess he missed me too much."

Many factors went into Leoule's transfer to Tech, but the main one was moving back to a school in the state of Virginia. The coaches from UVa contacted him about being a Cavalier, but he said that was never an option.

Having the Degfaes on the Tech roster has been beneficial to the Hokies, as each has helped the program pull in its latest ACC team titles. Leoule was instrumental in the cross country's team victory last fall, placing 22nd at the championship meet. The day was bittersweet for him, though, because he wanted to run better.

"I ran my butt off last summer. I ran like 80-90 miles a week, and my whole senior year last year was effortless," he said. "I was, like, our No. 2 guy every single time except for ACCs. That was bad. I just didn't get a lot of sleep the night before, but we still won. Thank God, but the hardest part was knowing that I could have done better and been All-ACC."

The pair also helped the Hokies to the ACC indoor crown last winter, with Leoule placing fourth in the 3,000-meter run – the next-to-last race that solidified the team title. Tihut grabbed individual gold in the 800-meter race.

Some might consider Tihut one-upping his older brother with that win, but when asked about competitions between the two, neither one could really recall any type of sibling rivalry.

"We weren't actually the competitive type. We would just always try to help each other out," Leoule said. "I remember in school, if he was a little better than me, I was always asking him how to do this, and he would ask me the same stuff. There were some parts in school where he was

GETTING TO KNOW THE DEGFAE TWINS

The Degfaes have tried to set themselves apart and it is clearly evident on the track. However, as brothers, they have very much in common, as the questions below indicate:

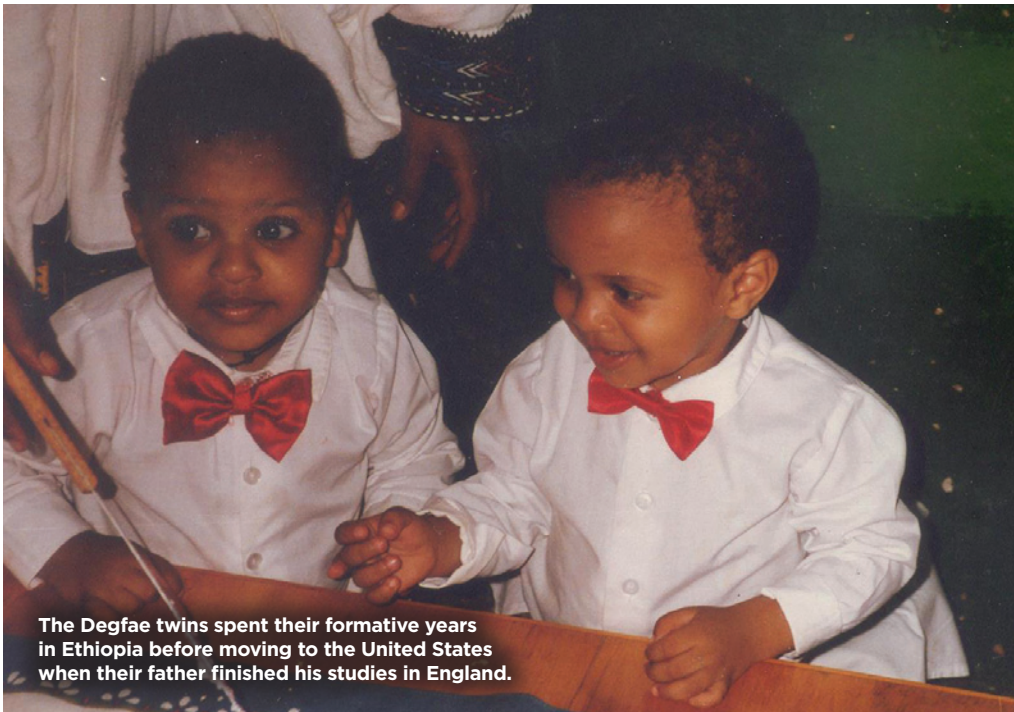
	Leoule	Tihut
Favorite food	Kitfo – it's ground up meat and a lot of butter and spices	Kitfo – you eat it with Ethiopian bread
Favorite event to run	The mile because it's short, for me	The 800
Favorite sport to watch	Football	Football
Favorite sport to play	Soccer	Soccer
Greatest personal sport highlight	Last year, winning the ACC cross country team title at home	Definitely winning the 800 title at the 2013 ACC indoor meet
Favorite Twitter to follow	Uber Facts - it has just some weird things on it	Fun Facts – it keeps you entertained
Website you visit the most	theCHIVE, that's the one I just goof around on	I go on theCHIVE a lot
Favorite movie	Endurance, a documentary about Ethiopian runner Haile Gebreselassie	Fifth Element with Bruce Willis
Favorite TV show	I don't really watch TV, but Breaking Bad	Breaking Bad, for sure
Favorite video game	I was really into Final Fantasy and Madden back in the day	Madden used to be 24/7 for me back in the day
Favorite musical artist	The Weeknd. It's more of a soul, R&B type	I'm in love with The Weeknd and his new album, Kiss Land
Free time is spent doing	I like to watch videos or read about other runners on Flotrack	Hanging out with friends and just relaxing
One thing you can do that he can't	Run the 10K. You could pay him \$1 million and he still wouldn't do it	Eat seafood. He hates shrimp.
What is your dream job	A job that travels around the world and helps underdeveloped countries	Working in a job that gets me traveling around the world or just the country

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The Degfae twins spent their formative years in Ethiopia before moving to the United States when their father finished his studies in England.

better and some parts that I was better, and the same with running.

“In cross country, I am better than him, and he’s better than me in the 800. To see us run in the same event was weird.”

However, in their final season together, that

might change as they may battle just one time on the indoor track.

“Actually this year, we’re going to have a competition – who’s going to win the mile because that’s right in the middle,” Leoule said. “I still haven’t raced him in the mile yet, and I told coach

[Ben Thomas] that we’ve got to race the mile to see who would win that one. I think it’s going to be close, but that’s what I am excited to do in indoor.

“That’s probably the most competitive I am ever going to be with my brother, at least running-wise. We aren’t too competitive, but whenever we talk about the mile, we get competitive with that. People ask us, ‘Who’s going to win the mile,’ and I always say, ‘Of course, I am.’ and he’s always like, ‘I doubt that.’ But we’re not too competitive. We usually just try to help each other rather than beat each other.”

Tihut has just cross country and indoor track eligibility left, while Leoule has all three remaining. Upon graduation, they plan to move back to the Northern Virginia area to find employment and continue on their quest of earning citizenship in the United States, which they estimate will take another five years.

They are also looking at adding just a few thousand more miles of travel into their schedule if they are able to fit it in, as they’d like to take a trip back to Ethiopia, a country they haven’t visited since their move to the States almost 15 years ago.

It’s a place that means a lot to them. And given their obviously close relationship, they’d love to go back – and go back in the only way possible.

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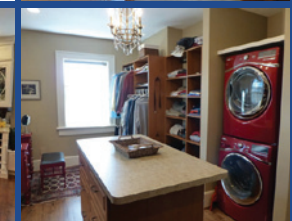
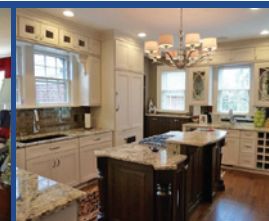
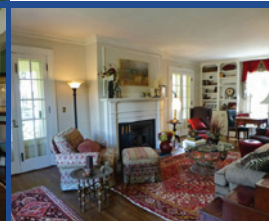
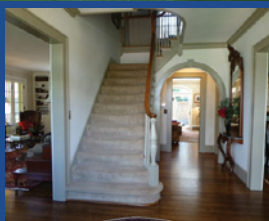
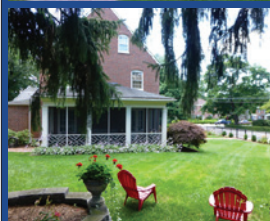
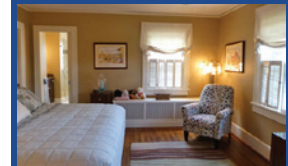
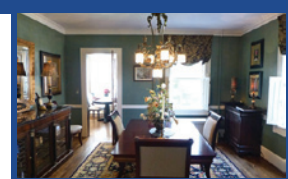


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Virginia Tech baseball players and coaches shaved their heads to raise awareness of childhood cancer and also raised more than \$25,000 to go toward cancer research.



Hokies hold another successful “Shave for the Brave” event

by Marc Mullen



For the fourth straight fall, the Virginia Tech baseball team held its annual “Shave for the Brave” event, with more than 60 players, coaches, staff members and friends and family of the Hokies shaving their heads to bring awareness to childhood cancer.

The event was held in association with the St. Baldrick's Foundation, which supports childhood cancer research, and the “46 Mommas Shave for the Brave” organization.

Thanks mostly to funds donated through the Internet – on the team's official donation page at <http://www.stbaldricks.org/events/mypage/9105/2013> – the program reached its targeted goal of \$25,000. The page, as of Sept. 30, showed a sum of \$22,503, but does not include almost \$3,000 committed to the event through cash donations, checks and company cash matches.

“Our ‘Shave for the Brave’ event was once again a tremendous success,” Tech

coach Pat Mason said. “The support from Hokieball Nation was truly amazing. On behalf of Virginia Tech baseball, I would like to thank everyone for their contributions.

“I would also like to recognize our players, managers and staff for their efforts and commitment to the cause. I could not be more proud of what they did for this event.”

The event is held in conjunction with the efforts put forth by Melina Brown, whose son, Levi – an adopted member of the Tech baseball team – was diagnosed with medulloblastoma, a highly malignant primary brain tumor, when he was 4. Now 13, he is cancer free, but every day, 46 mothers in the United States are told their child has cancer, so the fight never ends.

The Hokies started their annual event in 2010, and adding this year's total, the team has raised more than \$65,000 for childhood cancer research. 

Emmett Dignan's ability in the breaststroke helped the men's team win the 400 medley relay last season, and the senior should be a leader again for the Hokies this season.



TAKING THE NEXT STEP

The men's and women's swimming and diving teams finished second at the ACC Championships a year ago and have their sights set on bigger goals for the 2013-14 season

by Marc Mullen

It was more than a decade ago – and two leagues ago – when both the Virginia Tech men's and women's swimming and diving teams ended the league championship meet with as high a team finish as the Hokies accomplished at the 2013 ACC Championships.

Both squads placed second. For the men, it marked their second straight second-place finish at the league's meet, and for the women, it was their best finish ever at the ACC Championships. Both programs then swam on to top-25 finishes at the NCAA Championships for the second straight year.

The league finish was the best combined since the teams both took home the team trophies at the 2000 Atlantic 10 Conference meet, and the NCAA

finishes marked the first time both accomplished top-25 finishes in back-to-back years in school history.

However, the graduations of many on both rosters, including several All-Americans, the addition of two new teams into the ACC and a change in the scoring system at the league meet will test the 2013-14 Hokies as both teams attempt to break through and claim that first ACC team title.

"We graduated 18 seniors from last year's teams, so that has been a real challenge for us, but fortunately, we have a strong group of freshmen and transfers who have come in," Virginia Tech swimming and diving head coach Ned Skinner said. "We really feel optimistic about the year

knowing that it's just a lot of new faces, a lot of newness within the framework of our program. But we return a strong nucleus of ACC and NCAA performers, and we brought in a highly ranked recruiting class. We like to think that we are going to be every bit as strong."

What made the Hokies so successful last season was their depth and versatility. On the men's side, they took second despite winning just one ACC title – ironically, in an event that demands versatility, the 400-medley relay.

Those attributes need to be on full display when it comes to swimming at championships because [for those unfamiliar] a team is only allowed to take 18 student-athletes to either the league or the national meet. According to Skinner,



Katarina Filova placed in the top 11 in three different freestyle events at the ACC Championships a year ago and will be counted on to help the Hokies this season.

the ACC will begin scoring up to 24 places at the championships for the first time, so depth and versatility are key.

“Interestingly, [with the rule] divers are only counted as a half, so there is a little strategy there,” Skinner said. “If you take two divers, that means you can take 17 swimmers. Now, what we’ve done the last few years, we’ve taken four divers, so that means we can only take 16 swimmers. Each school has to decide on their own how to handle that. Now that they are scoring 24 places at the league meet, it does change the strategy a little bit.

“The depth of a program is very important in the ACC. We add Pittsburgh and Notre Dame, and next year, we add Louisville, so the conference is going to actually be a little thicker. So depth will be important, and you’re going to need to swim really, really fast to score points.

“That’s why having range in your events is important. A guy who swims just one event really well may not be as strong a contender to make our conference team as opposed to someone who can swim three events really well because you are allowed to swim up to three individual events in our sport.”

Seniors Emmett Dignan, Nick Tremols and Ryan Hawkins exemplify versatility.

Dignan was a member of the school-record setting 200 freestyle and 400 medley relay teams, the latter of which won gold at the ACC meet. The two teams then earned honorable-mention All-America honors at the national meet. Dignan has also clocked the second-fastest 200 breaststroke time ever at the school and the third-fastest 100 breaststroke.

Tremols was a member of the school-record setting 800 freestyle relay team, but has turned in (at the school) the third-fastest 100 butterfly and 200 IM times and the fourth-fastest 200 butterfly time.

Hawkins is a diver who not only was an Academic All-American, but also a two-time All-American, earning the honor in the 3-meter and platform events last year. He added an honorable mention All-America nod in the 1-meter event.

“Ryan Hawkins actually won most valuable performer for the Hokies last year because he went to the NCAAs and was in the top eight in two events and had an incredible season,” Skinner said. “He’s just a great story because he is one of the very few student-athletes who is studying architecture. So he is in a very interesting situation where he spends all day in the studio, and he can’t even practice until the evening. And hats off to Ron Piemonte, our head diving coach, who stays

after. He coaches the entire college team and then stays yet another two hours and coaches Ryan.”

Other notable swimmers on the men’s side include senior Nathan Hoisington, juniors Owen Burns, Harrison Cefalo and Collin Higgins, and sophomores Michal Szuba and Joe Bonk. Divers to keep an eye on are senior John Trope, junior Kyle Butts and sophomore Logan Stevens, and don’t count out a familiar name, T.J. Shinholser.

“There are three Shinholser,” Skinner said. “There is Logan, one of the greatest student-athletes ever for Virginia Tech in any sport. Colby is a diver at UVa, and then T.J., who is a freshman here at Virginia Tech and has quickly emerged in the sport. We think he will be a great one.

“But we feel that we have good balance in our classes, and then if these freshmen step up like we feel they might, we think we can have some really good balance across the board. That’s a reason why Virginia Tech has been able to be a runner-up a few years in a row because we maximize how many chances we can convert on at the ACC Championships.”

On the women’s side, the Hokies will acknowledge that winning ACC event titles is also a very manageable way to place second at the league meet, as the team captured five events at last season’s meet, tied for the most by Tech since

season preview | swimming & diving

2000. Two of those were relays, and of the medley variety (200 and 400).

Skinner certainly recognizes the importance of relay teams, particularly at the championship meets, as he places them in high regards when choosing his ACC squad.

“We certainly have identified diving as a very important area,” he said. “From there, my philosophy is to have a well-balanced swim program, which is important, and you have to be great on relays because, in swimming, relays are double [points], and so we know how important that is. We won both medley relays on the women and the men. In four of the five relays, we were in the top three, so that’s where you’ve got to take your hits.”

The women’s team lost the great Heather Savage, but features a great balance from class to class as Katarina Filova, Brittany Boone and Rachel Sepanski lead the senior class, and three divers – Kaylea Arnett, Kelli Stockton and Katie Bean – highlight the juniors.

“Just like with the men, we have a history of taking four divers to the ACCs the last several years, led by Kaylea, who is a couple-time ACC Most Valuable Diver and a multiple-time All-American,” Skinner said. “She’s followed by Kelli Stockton, who has scored and made the finals at ACCs, and is an improving diver, and Katie Bean, who transferred in from UMBC, and was a conference champion [1-meter in the America East Conference].

“We have a couple newcomers in Ashley Buchter, who was a junior national finalist and is coming off a great summer, and we have the coach’s daughter, Leah Piemonte, who is a great story. She was a state champion several times over. So on the women’s side, we feel we are going to have four strong divers at the ACC



Weronika Paluszek won an ACC title in the 200 breaststroke last year and owns the school record in the event.


Championships, which is so valuable in the team race and again why we finished second last year. We feel diving had a significant part in that.”

Also coming through for the Hokies last year was a strong class of freshmen, including Gabrielle Bishop, Holly Harper, Weronika Paluszek and Mackenzie Stewart. Skinner is also really high on the incoming freshmen.

“I think some of these sophomores will play an integral part for us,” Skinner said. “Weronika Paluszek is a returning ACC champion in the breaststroke. Holly Harper is one of the few women we’ve ever had to score in all three individual events at ACCs as a freshman [in the 100 backstroke, 200 backstroke and the 200 IM], and Mackenzie Stewart and Gabrielle Bishop all had good summers. So that sophomore class is a

real important class for us.

“The group of freshmen who are at Virginia Tech right now are ranked 10th in the country as a recruiting class. We are proud of that. The class is led by Fiona Donnelly, who’s from Scotland, and Maggie Gruber from Pennsylvania. She was one of the top recruits in the country. They are all really looking good in the preseason. We see quite a few of these freshmen being players, not only at the ACC level, but at the NCAA level as well.”

With the added teams and the new point system, it could be a challenge for the Tech coaches to plug in the right mix of swimmers and divers to maximize their point haul. However, with the depth and versatility the Hokies have developed over the years, they might be as poised as any team to win a title. 

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