

INSIDE

HOKIESPORTS

The Official Publication of Virginia Tech Athletics

TECH SETS THE PACE

Behind Will Mulherin's first-place finish, the Virginia Tech men's cross country team claims its first ACC title

WHAT'S INSIDE:

Bruce Taylor hasn't let past obstacles get in his way of becoming a great player and great leader at Tech



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Published by the Virginia Tech Athletics Department

Inside Hokie Sports (ISSN 8750-9148, periodical postage paid at Blacksburg Va. 24060 and additional mailing offices) covers Virginia Tech athletics and is published 11 times annually - monthly from August through June. The publisher is the Virginia Tech Athletics Department, 460-E Jamerson Athletic Center, Blacksburg, Va. 24061-0502.

SUBSCRIPTION PRICES: \$37.95 for one year (11 issues) and \$69.95 for two years. You can get an online subscription for \$25 and both the online and the print version for \$50. Mail all subscription inquiries, renewals, address changes, written inquiries and complaints to Inside Hokie Sports, 460-E Jamerson Athletic Center, Blacksburg, Va. 24061-0502 or call (540) 231-3908.

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

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

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13. Publication Title		14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below	
Inside Hokie Sports		November, 2011	
15. Extent and Nature of Circulation		Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
Coverage of Virginia Tech sports			
a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run)		13,500	13,500
b. Paid Circulation (By Mail and Outside the Mail)	(1) Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3841 (Include paid distribution above normal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)	11,828	11,937
	(2) Mailed In-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3841 (Include paid distribution above normal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)	0	0
	(3) Paid Distribution Outside the Mail Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS®	200	200
	(4) Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS (e.g. First-Class Mail®)	25	24
c. Total Paid Distribution (Sum of 13b (1), (2), (3), and (4))		12,053	12,161
d. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (By Mail and Outside the Mail)	(1) Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies Included on PS Form 3841	0	0
	(2) Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies Included on PS Form 3841	0	0
	(3) Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS (e.g. First-Class Mail®)	0	0
	(4) Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers or other means)	300	300
e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of 13d (1), (2), (3), and (4))		300	300
f. Total Distribution (Sum of 13c and 13e)		12,353	12,461
g. Copies not Distributed (See instructions to Publishers #4 (page #2))		1,147	1,039
h. Total (Sum of 13f and g)		13,500	13,500
i. Percent Paid (13c divided by 13h times 100)		97.6	97.6
16. Publication of Statement of Ownership			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If the publication is a general publication, publication of this statement is required. Will be printed in the <u>November</u> issue of this publication.		<input type="checkbox"/> Publication not required.	
17. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner			Date
Jimmy Robertson, Editor, Inside Hokie Sports			10/20/2011
I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).			
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BREAKING FROM THE PACK

The Virginia Tech men's cross country team used its knowledge of its home course to pull away from the field and win its first ACC cross country championship and its first conference title since 1997. Will Mulherin (No. 234, in the middle) became the first Tech runner to win an individual ACC crown, setting the course record in a time of 23 minutes, 37.3 seconds.





THE STUDENT-ATHLETE EXPERIENCE

"I'm very thankful for the time I've had at Tech.
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RYAN HAGEN
Senior | Cross Country

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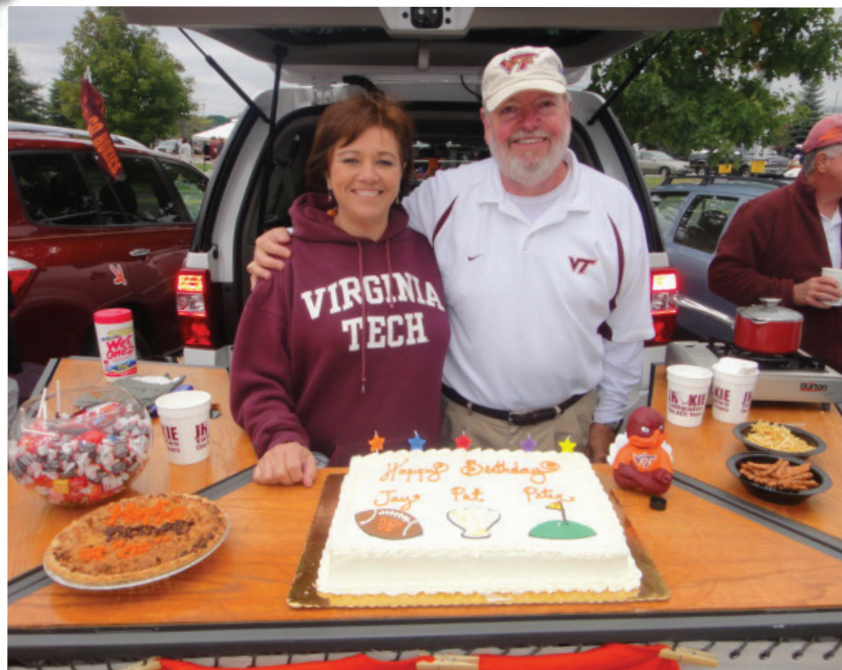
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1978

FAMILY:
WIFE-SHELLY, SON-TOM (DECEASED,
BUT STILL A GREAT AMERICAN)



Q&A

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

A: Many of our closest and best friends are folks whom we met through Virginia Tech athletics and the Hokie Club. Our Hokie family helped us get through the death of our son. We don't know how we would have gotten through without everybody. John Moody is the epitome of this - raising money for athletics, which is a critical part of the success of the program, but always remembering that the most important part of Virginia Tech is the people.

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: For me, it was the first time I attended a game at Lane Stadium before I was even in high school. For Shelly, it was her first game at Lane Stadium after our marriage when she realized what the language in the pre-nuptial agreement really meant: "Love me, Love my Hokies."

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

A: We like to get to our space about four hours before game time while it is still quiet. We propose a quiet toast to Tom Poole, his pal Waddey Harvey, Brian R. Blum and Tom's Meema. Tom likes the attention.

Q: You play a key role in the success of the Hackin' Hokies Too event serving as auctioneer each year. Tell us about the event and about what being a part of this group of donors means to you.

A: I love being the center of attention and what better way to be the center of attention than be the auctioneer at a charity auction with a bunch of characters like those attending the Hackin' Hokies Too event. But more than that, it's about having fun and good times with great friends and good Hokies. Like the song says, "That's what it's all about!"

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

A: Go straight to our house in Blacksburg, The Lodge at Jay's Mountain Resort.

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: The football game which stands out for me is when we beat Miami at home in 1995 - our first win against the 'Canes. Coach Beamer had talked a lot about all of us - players, coaches and fans - being in this thing together. I think that game was really the first game when all of us began to figure out what that really meant. The rest is history.

Q: My all-time favorite Virginia Tech student-athlete is _____ and my favorite memory of him or her is ...

A: Brendon de Jonge from golf. We like Brendon because he has stayed with us when he was on the Nationwide Tour and he is a great ambassador for Virginia Tech and the Hokie Nation on the PGA Tour.

LETTER FROM LU

Dear Hokie Club Members,

The Hokie Club is preparing for the end-of-the-year giving activity, and it will be an important time for all of our donors. Each one of you has made a significant personal investment in our athletics program, and you have made a difference for our student-athletes. I hope that you will continue to support these outstanding young men and women who proudly wear the orange and maroon as they compete in their chosen sports.



As we look toward the end of the year, I think it's important that I share with you some of the important dates and deadlines that affect our membership. 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 make any changes to an existing Hokie Matic, including increasing your monthly deduction, please submit a new form indicating the updated information. Hokie Matic forms can be found on the forms page of our website, hokieclub.com.

The benefits deadline of Dec. 31, 2012, is perhaps the most important deadline for Hokie Club members behind your anniversary month membership renewal, so I wanted to bring it to your attention, as we are approximately a month and a half away. The benefits deadline serves as the deadline for all Hokie Club benefits for the 2013 year. As we look toward the benefits deadline, I will encourage you to think about your membership and your giving level within the Hokie Club. If you would like to upgrade your membership or would like to simply give within your giving level to improve your standing, please contact our office so we can assist you.

Because of the university's holiday schedule and the Hokies potential bowl game schedule, I would ask that you make every effort to speak with the Hokie Club staff or visit our office now if you have questions about your membership. Remember, checks must be postmarked by Dec. 31, 2012, and online contributions must be made at hokieclub.com by midnight EST, Dec. 31, 2012.

Coinciding with this year's benefits deadline is the deadline for giving as related to the upcoming reseating of Cassell Coliseum for men's and women's basketball. Detailed reseating information in the form of a brochure has recently been mailed to all Hokie Club members and more information about the online process will follow in 2013 after the basketball order deadline. Just as with the football reseating of Lane Stadium during the summer of 2012, we will again utilize Ballena Technologies to assist us with the reseating process. We were very pleased with the online software used during the football reseating, and we heard lots of positive feedback from our membership. We feel certain that you will have a similarly positive experience with this online technology with the reseating of Cassell Coliseum.

As we close out the fall semester of 2012, let me express how thankful I am for our consistently successful athletics program, as witnessed recently with senior Will Mulherin winning the ACC men's cross country title on Virginia Tech's home course. With the win, he also helped secure Virginia Tech's first ACC men's cross country title. It's effort like this that makes us all proud to be a Hokie. On behalf of the Hokie Club staff, let me take this opportunity to wish all of you a Happy Thanksgiving.

Go Hokies,

LU MERRITT

Senior Director of Development for Intercollegiate Athletics

McCray to move to tight end

Zack McCray, a highly touted recruit out of the 2010 football recruiting class, agreed to a position change shortly after the Hokies' loss to Miami in Florida. The 6-foot-5, 256-pound redshirt sophomore, will spend the rest of this season at tight end after spending the bulk of nearly three seasons on the defensive line.

McCray spent his first two seasons at defensive end (one was a redshirt year) and this season at defensive tackle, as defensive line coach Charley Wiles and defensive coordinator Bud Foster thought McCray fit in better at defensive tackle. Unfortunately, the move hasn't worked out for McCray, who has barely played this season. Most of his reps have come on special teams.

"Tackle wasn't really a good

position for me," McCray said. "I think it made me better in a lot of ways playing defensive tackle, but right now, I'm not at the size to play there, and it's just not a natural fit for me.

"I talked with the coaches, and we thought it would be best for me to move, with a couple of tight ends leaving after this year. It'll be better for me to move now and learn some of the stuff and then battle at the position in the spring."

The Hokies lose three tight ends after this season – Eric Martin, Randall Dunn and George George. McCray played tight end at Brookville High School in Lynchburg, Va., catching passes from current Tech quarterback Logan Thomas during McCray's junior season. Thomas, a year older than McCray, led

Brookville to the state title game his senior season.


McCray will be battling Ryan Malleck, Duan Perez-Means, Darius Redman and Dakota Jackson for playing time next spring. None of those will be a senior next season.

"It's been frustrating for me because obviously you want to be on the field playing," McCray said. "Obviously, I think this move is for the better. I try to be optimistic about things, and I believe God has a plan. This is a learning lesson. I wouldn't change anything about my career at Tech – from redshirting to playing at end and then moving to tackle. I think all those things have made me better in some aspect, and I think that will help me further down the road in my career."

Tech golfer competes at World Am

Virginia Tech golfer Scott Vincent, a sophomore from Harare, Zimbabwe, competed in the World Amateur Team Championship held Oct. 6-7 in Ankara, Turkey, and Vincent's home country of Zimbabwe finished in 17th place in the team competition.

Vincent came in 32nd in the individual race at the weather-shortened event held at both Cornelia Golf Club and Antalya Golf Club. The event featured three-man teams representing 72 different countries, with the top two scorers in each round counting toward the team total. Vincent shot a 3-under-par 68 in the final round and mixed in rounds of 70 and 74 to finish with a total of 212. He paced the three-man Zimbabwe team in the tournament.

The United States team won the event with a record-setting score of 24-under-par 404, five strokes better than Mexico. 

Former player gives back

Nick Cullen, a former Tech wide receiver in the late 1980s, and his family came back to Blacksburg for the Tech-Duke game on Oct. 13, and the athletics department recognized him for making a major donation to the Tech football program. As a result of his generosity, a position meeting room – fittingly, the receivers meeting room – has been named in Cullen's honor and features an artist's drawing of Cullen from his playing days at Tech.

"I'm really proud of Nick, and I really appreciate him giving back," Tech head coach Frank Beamer said. "That's what makes it all worthwhile is to see guys like him be successful and giving to the university. We really do appreciate that so much."

Cullen, who was lightly recruited out of Upper St. Clair High School near Pittsburgh, went on to become a very good receiver at Tech. During his senior year in 1990, he tied a school record for receptions in a game when

he caught 13 passes against Southern Miss (Donald Snell caught 13 in a 1985 game vs. Cincinnati) for 170 yards – a record that still stands. For his career, he caught 70 passes for 946 yards, including five for touchdowns.

Cullen works as the managing director at Goldman Sachs in New York City. He graduated from Tech with a degree in finance in 1991 and later got his master's of business administration from Northwestern University.



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editor's desk | by Jimmy Robertson

Recent hurricane puts football into perspective for one Tech player

Sometimes it takes a natural disaster of epic proportions to put the sport of football into its proper perspective.

A few weeks ago, on the night of Oct. 29, most Tech fans fretted about the Hokies' upcoming game against Miami, considering the team's struggles this season. They worried over the offense's play, they expressed anxiety about the defense going up against Miami's talented backs, and they showed anguish about their team having only four wins heading into the month of November.

Meanwhile, Ryan Malleck, Tech's starting tight end, went home after practice on that particular evening and watched coverage of Hurricane Sandy, the biggest Atlantic hurricane on record, with winds spanning 1,100 miles. His apprehension wasn't about football, but rather, for his family, as the hurricane barreled directly toward his family's home on the New Jersey coast.

His apprehension escalated, as prognosticators and experts predicted record storm surge, and his family's home in Point Pleasant sits just a mile off the beach. Not one to panic, Malleck became a little worried because his parents had decided to ride out the storm at their home.

"I was worried when I didn't get a call the next day, and I couldn't get in contact with them," Malleck said. "That's when I was worried. But I was able to finally text and get through, and they were fine."

As it turns out, Malleck's family was one of the lucky ones. Their home withstood Sandy's

powerful winds and dodged the storm surge, and while they lost electricity for a week, they considered themselves lucky. Point Pleasant, however, was not so fortunate.

The borough of slightly less than 20,000 people sits between New York City and Atlantic City, not far from where the eye of the storm passed. The surge destroyed most of the homes in Point Pleasant, and the sand left by the surge made it difficult to bring in relief supplies.

Many of the boardwalks where Malleck used to roam with his friends are now gone. The roller coaster in Seaside Heights, a town south of Point Pleasant, sits in the ocean – a shocking example of nature's power.

"The places I used to go to – the Boardwalk and Seaside – they're all underwater," Malleck said. "A few of my friends, the downstairs of their houses are full of water. It's affected my town and my family."

"It stinks because I grew up there and used to do those things as a kid. My whole family from North Carolina would come up, and we'd all go there. Places like the aquarium, those places are gone now. The whole pier is gone, and the stuff I used to do as a kid is gone."

Malleck's older brother has been helping with the cleanup efforts, shoveling sand out of the streets and helping people find their belongings. While on an excursion through the flooded streets to help a friend find a cat, Malleck's brother shot video, which he sent to Malleck.

"They were kayaking through the town,"

Malleck said. "He had a video of them going through town, and it was just crazy. You look right and you look left, and there were houses just full of water – houses that I recognized. It was crazy."


Despite his concern for his family, Malleck still managed to find a way to focus during the Hokies' Thursday night game at Miami. Interestingly enough, he played arguably his best game, catching four passes for 58 yards – both career highs.

"I tried to put it out of mind, but it was still in the back of my head," Malleck said. "I guess I played a little harder. My brother and one of my best friends from high school and two of my coaches were supposed to go, but they couldn't get out."

His family continues to do fine, despite the circumstances. As of press time, they didn't have electricity. Malleck was contemplating going home after the Florida State game and checking on things.

In the short term, he'll concentrate on his studies and on football and keep closer tabs on his family. In the long term, he hopes to see his hometown and surrounding areas rebuilt. But he knows that, unfortunately, it will take a while. It probably won't happen until after his career at Tech concludes.

"I think it'll recover," he said. "But it's going to take a while. I'd guess five or 10 years to build it back to the way it was."

That may seem like a long time to many, but Malleck understands what will be rebuilt can't begin to replace what has been lost. For many in his hometown, they've lost a lifetime. 

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Lots for an AD to consider when it comes to nonconference scheduling

When Virginia Tech AD Jim Weaver was forced to find additional nonconference football games starting next year, there were plenty of factors to consider – the financial implication of a new series, finding an attractive opponent for fans and for television, and the strength of schedule component that will be part of college football’s new postseason format beginning in 2014.

Oh, and he had to consider things like density altitude and runway length.

Weaver announced that Tech would renew its series with East Carolina, an eight-game series that goes through the 2020 season, but few knew that the Roanoke airport – and its limitations – were a factor in his decision-making process.

“ECU is an attractive opponent because Greenville is close for our fans, particularly those in the eastern part of the state,” Weaver explained. “ECU fans also come when the game is in Blacksburg and buy tickets here. And third, quite frankly, we don’t want to bus to Greensboro to fly to the West Coast to play a football game. We can’t fill up a plane with all our people, and all our gear and fly out of Roanoke.”

You’ve heard that similar statement from Weaver and other Tech officials for years, but to get the actual scoop on the Roanoke Airport and how it affects the Hokies and nonconference football scheduling, I turned to aviation expert Tom Bibbins of Blacksburg. Following a 10-year career of flying fighter jets in the U.S. Navy, Bibbins spent 30 years with US Airways,

flying 737’s, 757’s, and Airbus passenger aircraft around the country and the world.

So what’s the deal, Tom?

“Each airport and capability of aircraft is different because of the density altitude and the temperature,” Bibbins said. “In Roanoke, you have 1,200 feet of altitude and just over 6,000 feet of runway. Greensboro is different because of the elevation and the length of the runways.

“Lift and engine performance are impacted by density altitude. And in Roanoke, the fuel we can put on a plane to fly a long distance is a factor. Fuel weighs 6.7 pounds per gallon, and you can get about 26,000 pounds of fuel on a 737 and about 48,000 pounds on a 757.”

That’s a lot of jet fuel.

“Yes, but you can’t fill it with fuel and 150 people and all that gear and fly to the West Coast out of Roanoke,” Bibbins said. “Any flight over two or 2.5 hours can’t be done because of the altitude and the length of the runway there. You simply can’t fill the plane with fuel.”

UPS flies large aircraft in and out of Roanoke each day, but Bibbins pointed out that those planes are only flying to Greensboro or Louisville, which are very short flights – about 17 minutes to Greensboro and 45 to Louisville – that require little fuel.

For a jet filled with passengers, gear, and fuel, safety is the issue, as well as the simple laws of physics.

“You have what’s called a ‘stop-go’ distance, or ‘V-1’ where you either have to pull it off the ground

or stop [the plane]. The V-1 in Roanoke is much shorter,” Bibbins said. “You also have the second-segment climb in Roanoke over the hills, and the climb rate is factored in as well.”

The bottom line: “You can’t take an entire football team a long distance out of Roanoke,” Bibbins said.

Are there any circumstances where it could be done?

“If the temperature was under 59 degrees and the conditions were perfect, then maybe,” he said. “But when you have high density altitude and high temperatures, you need a longer runway, and your rate of climb is impacted. That’s an issue when you have mountains around an airport, like Roanoke.”

So a flight to Boston or Miami or Greenville, N.C., is fine for Tech or any opposing team trying to fly in or out of Roanoke. Anything longer than say three hours is problematic, regardless of how big the plane is.

Just another factor administrators consider when making their nonconference schedules.

Hite has seen it all

It’s been a tough season for Tech’s football team, and especially for Billy Hite, the longtime Tech assistant who is serving as senior advisor to head coach Frank Beamer. After 34 years on the Tech coaching staff, Hite assumed his new role in 2011.

“No, I didn’t expect this team to have this type of season,” Hite said. “We’ve made some mistakes, but we’ve also had a lot of bad bounces. Back in

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1999, when we went undefeated, it seemed like we got some breaks and some calls, and things went our way in close games. This year, it's the opposite. We've had turnovers at the worst possible times, and we've seen the other team get a bounce here or there."

Tech's inability to run the football consistently has been disappointing for a guy who coached 28 backs at Tech who signed with NFL teams.

"I watch these guys, and they're going to be good," Hite said. "Michael Holmes can be special, but they're all just young right now. They're just learning what they need to do, and it doesn't happen as fast as we'd like, or anyone would like."

The impact of losing three straight running backs early to the NFL – Darren Evans, Ryan Williams and David Wilson – is a factor here, according to Hite.

"You've got to assume, in recruiting, that everyone at that position is going to leave early and just try to sign a great one each year," he said. "It's a factor because high school kids don't want to sit. They want to play. So in recruiting, you've got to assume that [after a junior season] you're losing your better players anyway."

It's been tough for Hite – and Hokie fans everywhere – but he says brighter days are ahead.

"We just got caught with too many young players playing key positions at the same time," he said. "But we'll be better. No doubt about it."

Hoops busy early

James Johnson's basketball team will play six games in November and then a busy December takes the team from Morgantown to Las Vegas to Salt Lake City.

"It's a busy schedule, and we'll adjust our practice time a bit – shorter practices – with just eight scholarship guys," Johnson said. "We're not going to change the way I want us to play, which



Jarell Eddie averaged 9.1 points per game, and new men's coach James Johnson expects even more production from Eddie this upcoming season.

is fast. But we don't want to wear them out in practice."

Tech played two exhibition games – at home against Ohio University and at South Carolina – and senior point guard Erick Green stood out in both. Green was amazingly consistent last season, scoring in double figures 30 times in 31 games. He should have a terrific season, but don't be shocked if Jarell Eddie really takes a gigantic step forward during his junior year.

Why? First, he's in the best shape of his career and has developed a better floor game. Plus, like Robert Brown, he'll be freed up to shoot a bit more this season.

For a guy like Eddie, who averaged one foul every 8.9 minutes last year, this will be an interesting season. Eddie was forced to play power forward and that was an issue on the defensive end because of his size (6-7, 218). He is one guy to watch during the first 10-to-15 games of this season at both ends of the floor. We know he can shoot, but can he guard a small forward consistently?

This Tech team should be able to score despite

its lack of depth. However, since joining the ACC, the Hokies never finished higher than seventh in the conference in scoring and saw their scoring numbers drop dramatically over the past couple of years. Last year, the Hokies didn't score 70 points in regulation time during a single ACC game and averaged just 65.1 points per game.

Year	PPG	ACC Rank
2005	68.5	11th
2006	68.7	10th
2007	71.5	10th
2008	70.2	11th
2009	72.6	8th
2010	72.7	7th
2011	70.3	7th
2012	65.1	8th

The bottom line is this: Tech should average more than 70 points per game this season. It should be a very fast-paced fun team to watch. If the Hokies can guard well enough, particularly in the post, they will have a fun season.

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Certain Hokies make most of summer opportunities

by Reyna Gilbert-Lowry

While many students caught up on the R&R that comes along with summer break, several Tech student-athletes took advantage of reduced course loads and competition schedules. With what seems like yearlong dedication to their respective sports, many student-athletes have limited opportunities to study abroad or add internship experience to their resumé. The following two Hokies made the most of their opportunities this past summer:

- Leigh Allin, a mechanical engineering student and redshirt junior on the track and field team, was accepted for the Nike Innovations Internship and spent much of her summer on the Nike campus in Eugene, Ore. She worked in Equipment Innovation, a relatively small department where the next “big” ideas in equipment are developed. She spent much of her time in a test lab, working on materials research and durability testing for baseball fielding gloves. Allin also worked on a cross-functional project with nine other interns whose challenge was to solve a big-picture problem at Nike, specifically dealing with Brazil’s supply chain.

“Nike’s definitely not what I expected, but one thing I’ve learned is that you can never know what to expect,” Allin said. “Everyone at Nike has a different story, passion, perspective and nugget of advice. I now have a better awareness of the career opportunities at Nike and elsewhere, and I am developing a much

clearer picture of the direction I want my career to take.”

In October, the collegiate programs coordinator from Nike was on campus to speak to a small group of student-athletes about the internship and Allin was on hand to provide a personal testimony about her experience.

- Camille Bouvet, a sophomore on the track and field team, participated in the Coach for College program, a global initiative to promote higher education through sports. She traveled to Hau Giang Province in Vietnam and spent three weeks alongside other ACC student-athletes, coaching and teaching academics and life skills to middle school students. They partnered with local Vietnamese college students who helped lead the daily activities and assisted with the language barrier.

“I thought the experience was a great opportunity for any student-athlete who wishes he or she could either study abroad and/or participate in a non-profit teaching opportunity,” Bouvet said. “I loved how I was able to work with other ACC student-athletes and get to know a group of Vietnamese college students as well.”


Many students use their summers to work or take advantage of internship opportunities to get a head start on their career goals. For many student-athletes, the summer is one of the only chances they have to intern or engage in non-competition related travel.

“As student-athletes, we don’t really get an



Camille Bouvet took advantage of some time off this summer to go to Vietnam and teach middle school students as part of the “Coach for College” initiative.

opportunity to study abroad or engage in jobs or internships throughout the school year,” Bouvet said. “The experience has made me more appreciative of my opportunities as an American, with college being so accessible and all the resources we are given throughout school.”

Most opportunities only come around once, and these Hokies know personally how important it is to take advantage of them. Whether it’s improving their athletics or academic credentials, for these accomplished young women, summer time was definitely not spent resting on their laurels. 

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HOKIES LEAVE THE FIELD BEHIND

Thanks in large part to Will Mulherin's first-place finish, the Virginia Tech men's cross country team won its first ACC championship and its first conference title since 1997

by Jimmy Robertson

To gain an appreciation for just how much Will Mulherin loves Virginia Tech, one only needs to consider this:

A fan of the school since he was 3, the young man applied for early decision to Virginia Tech in high school (and was accepted). He planned on following in his parents' and brother's footsteps and coming to Tech, never once thinking about what the future might hold for him in his beloved sport of cross country.

"Coach [Ben] Thomas called me up and said, 'You're coming here. Do you want to run cross country?'" Mulherin said. "I always joke that I came up on a visit only to make sure the guys on the team weren't jerks. Because if they were, I wasn't going to run. I'd just come here for school."

"Good thing he liked the guys," Thomas laughed in response.

Indeed.

Mulherin, a redshirt senior from Yorktown,

Va., became a part of Tech cross country history after he won the individual title at the ACC Cross Country Championships held Oct. 27 at the Hokies' home course on campus. Behind Mulherin and two other runners who finished in the top seven, the Tech men's team claimed its first ACC team title with 55 points, six clear of second-place and in-state rival Virginia.

Mulherin became the ninth men's runner at Tech to win a conference championship, the first to win an ACC individual title and the first Tech runner to win a conference title since 1999 when Chris Seaton won the Atlantic 10's individual crown. The men's team championship, its 13th overall, marked Tech's first since 1997 when the Hokies won the second of back-to-back team titles while in the Atlantic 10.

"I went into the day thinking we had about a 50 percent chance," Mulherin said. "If we ran a great race and everything fell our way, we'd get it. But there were teams out there that were really

good – UVa, Florida State, Duke, NC State. They were all really good teams. I was confident, but I was worried. I didn't want to be overconfident.

"I know a lot of guys were confident. They were saying, 'When we win the ACCs, it's going to be great.' I was like, 'If, guys, if. Let's not be overconfident.' But I knew if we were going to do it, this was going to be the year, and I really didn't want to waste the opportunity. I think a lot of people on the team felt that way."

Tech won the team title because it attacked right from the start. The Hokies wanted to stay with the lead pack through the first three quarters of the race and then take advantage of the hilly part of the course toward the end. The last kilometer of the course features hills, and the Hokies figured opposing runners would fade in that stretch.

The strategy worked out perfectly, as Mulherin burst from the pack in the final kilometer. He set a course record with a time of 23 minutes, 37.3

seconds. Florida State's Breandan O'Neill finished second, five seconds behind Mulherin.

"I'm not a person who runs from the gun, puts a gap on everyone and wins the race," Mulherin said. "I've never been able to do that. I just planned on hanging with the group and seeing if I could pull away from there. I tend to pull away at the end, not the beginning.

"I was hoping I'd have an advantage on the hills because I've run them more often, and so I hit the bottom of the first hill, and at the bottom, I told myself that I was going to hit those hills harder than I've ever hit them before. I didn't want to have any energy left. I wanted to stumble into the finish line. As I went up the hill, I felt everyone else fall back, and that's when I knew it would work out."

"We were either going to win or go home," Thomas said. "We weren't going to try and come from off the pace. We were going to dictate the pace, and that's tough to do on a course that's challenging.

"The kids, they were all in with that. Let's roll the dice and take the race to them, and if we lose, so be it. At least we gave it our best shot."

Mulherin got plenty of help from his teammates, including unexpected high finishes from sophomores Brayden Burleigh and Thomas Curtin. Burleigh took sixth with a time of 23:54.7 and Curtin came in right behind him, running the course in 23:56.3. Both finished with times under 24 minutes for the first time in their careers, and both earned All-ACC honors, along with Mulherin. Redshirt senior Michael Hammond came in at 19th, while junior Leoule Degfae took 22nd, rounding out Tech's top five.

The team victory was an improbable one for the Hokies. After all, both Florida State and Duke entered the competition ranked 14th and 18th, respectively, and a year ago NC State claimed its second crown in three years and 16th overall. But Tech's home course knowledge and a surprisingly large and boisterous crowd helped them overcome any talent deficiencies.

"We've been in the ballpark before," Thomas said. "We've been third. We've been fourth. But we've never had a solid race through five guys. You have to be good enough so that you don't have to have a perfect race from all five guys. You have to be strong enough that you have five guys just all having good races and still win. We had a little more than that, but that's the kind of depth you need and this is the first year we've had that. So yeah, until you win one, it seems like a big obstacle there."

The team victory was also a sweet one for Thomas, who took over as the head of Tech's

cross country and distance programs in 2001. Two years ago, the 1992 graduate of Tech came up with the idea of redshirting both Mulherin and Hammond, while Degfae sat out after transferring from Tennessee. Thomas foresaw this year's team, with those three in the lineup, as having a great opportunity at making a run at the ACC title.

"It's a plan that really started three years ago when we redshirted Will and Michael and Lee [Degfae] to give those guys two years together to put ourselves in position to win an ACC title," Thomas said. "It's an amazing accomplishment for this group considering where they came from. They weren't bad runners in high school, but when you look at what the ACC brings in terms of talent and you go into a meet and you're off a little bit, then you're fourth or fifth. You really have to nail it and have a little bit of luck.

"Then doing it at home, it really was the perfect storm. Guys ran tough and aggressive, and other teams ran well, too. That's what I'm proud of. They didn't run bad races. We just took their best shot and were able to do it. I'm very excited for the group and very proud of them."


On the women's side of the ledger, the Tech team finished 10th with 260 points. Florida State won the team title with 35 points, while Duke finished in second with 67 points. Florida State's Violah Lagat won the individual crown in a time of 20:00.1.

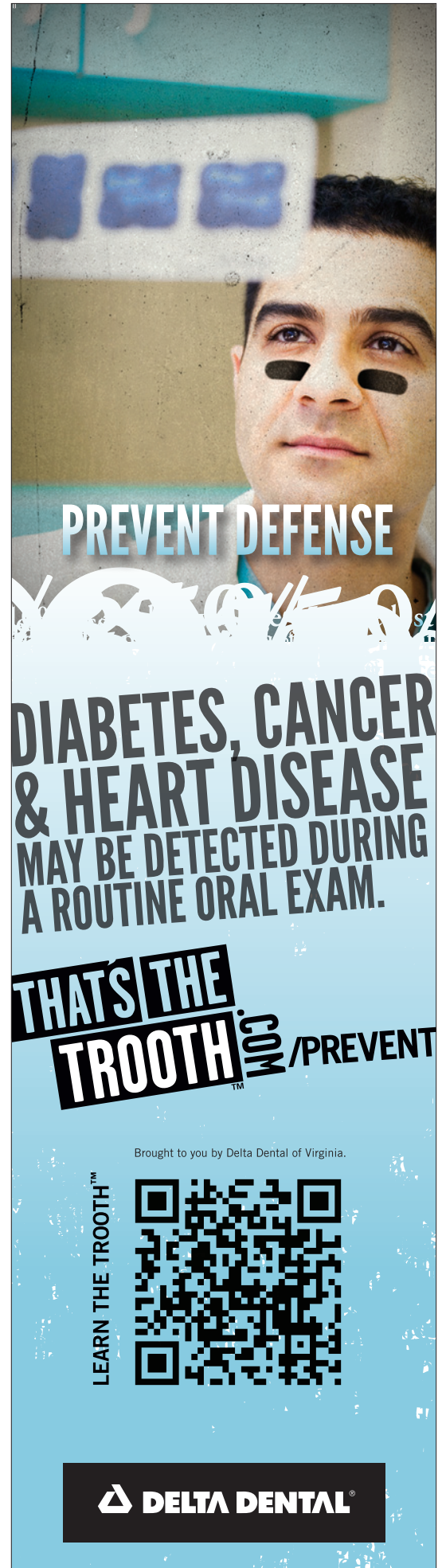
The Hokies' top finisher was junior Alex Watt, who came in 40th place with a time of 21:48.3. Sophomore Sarah Rapp finished 51st, while freshmen Hannah Gray, Lauren Jaeger and Katherine Sheridan finished 53rd, 55th, and 83rd, respectively.

Next up for Tech is the Southeast Regional to be run Nov. 9 in Charlotte. If the men's team qualifies, it will go to the NCAA's national meet held Nov. 17 in Louisville, Ky.

In the meantime, as he and the Hokies prepare, Thomas plans on keep the gigantic ACC team championship trophy firmly on his desk for all to see.

"Until someone comes and takes it away," Thomas said when asked how long the trophy will sit there. "I'm not going to lie. It feels super good. We have a chance to be a wrap-around Triple Crown, after winning outdoors in the spring [the ACC Outdoor Track and Field Championships] and now cross country, and we should have a strong team indoors this year. There would be no better way for these seniors to go out than to do that.

"So I'm going to keep this one [the trophy] here until we get the next one." 




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tackling ADVERSITY

Bruce Taylor hasn't let past obstacles get in his way of being a great player for Tech and well respected in the community for his efforts with Special Olympics

by **Jimmy Robertson**

It practically takes more than an atlas to find the town of Riceboro, Ga., a mere speck on Rand McNally's map of America. Even Google, with its answers for everything, churns a little uncertainly after one types the town's name into its search engine.

But this place exists, a tiny dot of a town in Georgia's coastal plain, with the massive Atlantic Ocean just to the east. The stately Southern city of Savannah sits off to the northeast, practically a half-day's carriage ride, if you will, up what most know as Interstate 95.

Riceboro has exactly 736 residents, according to the 2000 census. It's also the home of two stoplights, a post office, a paper mill and the modest beginnings of one Bruce Taylor, a three-year starter for the Virginia Tech football squad.

As a kid, Taylor's only football exploits consisted of those earned in his mother's backyard against his two older brothers. He lived his dreams there, catching the game-winning touchdown pass or making the game-saving interception, and after the game, he was hauled off the field by his teammates. He was all-state, All-American and

All-Pro, just like every other young boy that age.

He never played organized football as a kid. Riceboro could barely field one team, much less multiple squads for competition. Taylor's first crack at organized football came only after his mother made a life-altering decision to move the family to the Grand Strand – Myrtle Beach, S.C., vacation hotspot of the Mid-Atlantic.

He was 11 years old at the time.

"We were out in the country, and football wasn't as available as far as teams where I lived in Georgia," Taylor said. "I didn't start playing on a team until sixth grade when I moved to South Carolina. I played middle school ball. That's when I really first started."

He said that 10 years later, now a 22-year-old young man, a college graduate, a civil servant best known for working with the Special Olympics and a fine football player wrapping up a terrific college career. He now sits on the cusp of being an NFL player, living that dream he dreamed many times while playing on that patch of grass in South Georgia.

Given all that's happened to him, whatever may happen in the next phase of his life is really something hard to imagine.

Taylor returned to Riceboro in September of this year to attend his grandmother's funeral, and waves of memories bounced through his head. After all, he started his life in this humble town, and it was where his mother, Marcia Walker, raised him and his brothers. She worked in a food court at a nearby hospital to make ends meet, and for that, she holds a special place in Taylor's heart.

His father, Bruce Taylor Sr., wasn't around, at least not for the first five years of Taylor's life. He was in prison, and while the younger Taylor didn't want to get into the specifics of what landed his father there, suffice it to say, his father was another of life's victims of drug abuse and ill-fated decisions.

"My dad had a lot of issues with drugs and different things," Taylor said. "He's from West Baltimore, and that's an area where, if you're not doing the right thing, it's easy to get caught up in the wrong thing. That's something he regrets. He was a good student and a good athlete, but

he got caught up with the wrong crowd, and that followed him into his adult life. He made some bad decisions.”

His father’s absence thus left Taylor’s mom in charge, and often, too, his grandmother. The boys, for the most part, stayed out of trouble, turning away from the problems that vexed their father and later landed him in a difficult predicament.

In a way, the timing of the incarceration of Bruce Taylor Sr., turned out to be a blessing. He went to prison not long after Taylor’s birth, so Taylor accepted his life as it was. He knew nothing else.

“It wasn’t tough for me,” he said. “It’s tougher for those kids who went from having a father figure around to then having him removed from the household.

“But in my case, as far as I could remember, it was just my mom and my brothers. I didn’t know any better. I didn’t know what it was like to have a father figure there. I just knew my mom, and she did a great job of raising me and providing me with everything that I needed.”

Bruce Taylor Sr., was released from prison when Taylor turned 6. Today, he lives outside of Atlanta.

Walker, Taylor’s mom, took care of things. She remarried – she had divorced Taylor’s father – and then decided to move the family from South Georgia to tourist-haven Myrtle Beach after a job promotion called for relocation.

Taylor remembers the call he got from his mother telling him of the pending move. At home alone at the time, he took the decision hard. An 11-year-old, he already had his set of friends, and he wanted no part of finding new chums in a different world.

“It was tough because, at that age, I was heading into the sixth grade and had found my little group of friends that I would have been friends with through high school,” Taylor said. “I was so excited to play middle school ball, so it was crushing.

“It was tough, especially with all my family and friends being down there and moving to a place that I’d only been to once on vacation.”

Taylor, though, easily made new friends. Part of that stems from an engaging personality, but his success on the gridiron also helped immensely. After all, teenagers want to be associated with the football star.

And he became a star. He recorded 150 tackles in each of his three seasons as the starter at linebacker for Myrtle Beach High, and college recruiters took notice. He took visits to the home state schools, but Tech defensive line coach Charley Wiles actually gave him a scholarship offer first. That made an impression, one that



Bruce Taylor is one of those rare players who will finish his career at Tech with more than 200 total tackles.

ultimately helped him in his decision to come to Blacksburg.

“I took visits to South Carolina and Clemson and wasn’t crazy about either one of them,” Taylor said. “Virginia Tech was going to be here, as far as the coaching staff and how they did things. If you look at South Carolina or Clemson in 2008, none of those staffs are still intact. At Virginia Tech, it’s been the same staff for the past 25 years or however long Coach [Frank] Beamer has been here.

“The defense had a big part in my decision as well. I wanted to go to a school that was known for defense, and I met Coach [Bud] Foster [Tech’s defensive coordinator and linebackers coach]. I had been watching Virginia Tech for a number of years and knew how they played defense. That was something that intrigued me. I came up here on my visit, I liked what I saw, and the rest is history.”

Or maybe it was just the beginning.

Taylor’s career at Virginia Tech has resembled his high school career – steady ascension into a standout. He redshirted his first season, and while Tech’s staff worked him some at defensive end, the coaches ended up moving him back to mike linebacker, a position of leadership and one right

in the middle of all the action.

He played sparingly as a redshirt freshman, but enjoyed a breakout campaign as a redshirt sophomore, starting every game and developing into a tackling machine. He led the team with 91 tackles, including a team-high 15.5 for a loss.

Despite coming off shoulder surgery in the spring, he was on his way to becoming one of the nation’s best linebackers last season. In the first eight games, he recorded 53 tackles, including seven for a loss, and five sacks.

But in the Hokies’ 30-14 win over BC, Taylor injured his foot. A subsequent MRI revealed a dreaded Lisfranc sprain – a profanity-sparking injury in the sports medicine world. Surgery followed, costing Taylor his season.

He did enough on the field to earn honorable mention All-ACC honors. But the injury left him depressed, even though his teammates advanced to the ACC title game and earned a berth in the Sugar Bowl.

“It was very difficult,” Taylor said. “It was a time when I kind of got away from the team a little bit. I didn’t feel as close to the team as I once did. Your eyes open to certain things when you go from playing to being hurt. It was definitely a tough time for me. When I got back in the spring, I didn’t realize how much I had missed it. Just

being around the guys was a great feeling.”

An injury to fellow linebacker and good friend Tariq Edwards led to a position change for Taylor this past August. Foster slid him over to the backer spot – his third position at Tech – and moved Jack Tyler into the starting role at mike linebacker. Taylor had played backer once before, getting the start in the Orange Bowl game against Stanford after Lyndell Gibson went down with an injury. The results, though, were mixed, as he recorded seven tackles on a day when the defense gave up 40 points.

This season, he ranks third on the team in tackles as of press time. But that matters little to him. He’d swap tackles for victories any day, the Hokies’ five losses are already more than they’ve had in any season since he arrived.

“I take a lot of responsibility,” Taylor said. “I don’t know if that’s fair or not when we do good or when we do badly. Just dealing with the disappointments that we’ve had early in the season, and then not even showing up against North Carolina on the defensive side, it’s tough when you have to come back in on Monday and look at all the faces and try to keep their spirits lifted after some tough losses when people may be pointing fingers.

“I’ve tried to control some of that stuff and not let it happen. It’s been strenuous and taken a lot out of me. But it’s been fun. It’s something that can better me as a person, as a leader, and as a team leader.”

As the season winds down, he hopes to remember it for one last hurrah – a bowl victory – and not as being part of the first Tech team in 19 seasons not to play in college football’s postseason.

Taylor doesn’t have concrete plans for his future. Much like he does on the football field, he’ll tackle that when the time comes. Like every college football player in America, he expresses a desire to play in the NFL, but he’ll have other options.

He graduated last May with a degree in human development. As part of fulfilling his degree requirements, he performed an internship with the local Special Olympics organization here in the New River Valley and developed affection for the young men and women with intellectual disabilities who compete in a variety of sports. Working with that wonderful organization intrigues him.

“I’ve had friends who have worked with Special Olympics throughout the years, and I had gone with them to certain events and met a bunch of good people, so I knew that it would be something that I would enjoy,” he said. “It’s sports, and it’s a bunch of good people who play sports for the right reasons.

“I saw an opportunity for me to grow as a person, just being around people who might not be as blessed as me. They may have a disability, but they have that joy and passion about certain things. It was a learning experience doing that, and I would do it again in a heartbeat.”

He also tossed out the idea of getting into coaching. Given his knowledge and instincts for the game, he’d probably be a good one.

For sure, he won’t follow in the footsteps of his father, who taught Taylor a good lesson at a young age, though indirectly, and the two maintain a good relationship today. Taylor respects the way his father turned his life around.


“Me and my dad are real close, not so much father-son, but more like being buddies,” Taylor said. “We talk about football and girls and life and



Bruce Taylor

family. He wasn’t around when I was younger, but once he got out, he changed his life around.”

Taylor himself has changed, more mature and more confident. His character, after all, was framed in a small town in Southern Georgia and continually honed through experiences in Myrtle Beach and in Blacksburg.

Given that, truthfully, not many would have guessed he’d go on to such bigger things. 

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GETTING TO KNOW BRUCE TAYLOR

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

BT: "I'm probably with some of my teammates or some of my friends. We're probably heading to downtown Blacksburg and finding some place to hang out. I don't go out much during the season. I only go out if we win – I haven't gone out much this year. I make time for my social life, but only in the right situation."

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

BT: "I'd say the President. There are a lot of things out there in the world that don't quite make sense, and I feel like the leaders in the government know why things are the way they are. So I would take a day and snoop around everything and learn everything, like, is global warming real? Do UFO's exist? All that high security clearance stuff that the

President knows ... I wouldn't mind having that information."

Q: Facebook or Twitter?

BT: "I have both. I've been more on Twitter lately just because that's the popular thing right now. It's funny because Twitter is the fastest news source in the world right now. If you want to know what's going on, chances are you can get on Twitter and go through your news feed and figure it out. I've found out that certain guys on our team aren't traveling [for games] and certain guys are hurt. Different things that you feel like you'd find out from the team, it's on Twitter before anyone else knows."

Q: What are you reading these days?

BT: "I'm not a big reader. I've got this app on my phone called 'StumbleUpon,' and it has interesting things on there. I pick up the paper every now and then. I don't get it delivered to

my house, but I'll pick it up and flip through the pages. But no novels or anything like that. I'd rather read the news. You got to stay up on what's going on in the world."

Q: Who's your favorite football player?

BT: "Ray Lewis [of the Baltimore Ravens]. I was sad to see him get hurt. I love his passion for the game and his leadership qualities. He's a player I wish I could be more like, model myself after."

Q: Ten years from now, what will you be doing?

BT: "Hopefully, living in a big house on a lake somewhere either getting ready for a season or enjoying my family with whatever I might be doing – which is a good question. I'd like to have a decent-sized family and a decent-sized bank account. I'd like to be comfortable and have my family in a comfortable place."

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Billy Holsclaw (12), who played in the late 1950s, was the first Tech quarterback in the modern era to throw for more than 1,000 yards in a season.

Former Hokie QB will forever remain in the Tech record book

by *Jimmy Robertson*

Only his closest friends know this, and it rarely comes up in conversations these days given the high-powered aerial shows that dominate college football today. But Billy Holsclaw years ago etched his name in the Virginia Tech record book because of his ability to fling a football in an era unfortunately forgotten or ignored by many.

Holsclaw, who played football at Tech under legendary coach Frank Moseley from 1956-58, was the first Tech quarterback in the modern era to throw for more than 1,000 yards in a season. Tech's records only go back to 1950, but it's a safe likelihood that no one before 1950 eclipsed the 1,000-yard plateau, especially considering the ground-oriented attacks of yesteryear.

Holsclaw threw for 1,013 yards during the 1958 season, which saw the Hokies go 5-4-1 under Moseley. These days, college quarterbacks throw for that amount in less than five games, but the era and Moseley's conservative approach should not diminish Holsclaw's accomplishment.

"People used to bring it up," Holsclaw said of his place in the Tech record book. "But as time goes ... they don't say anything about it now."

Then he added, with a chuckle, "You tell people

that today [that he threw for 1,000 yards], and they're like 'What?' I guess it's not as impressive today."

That the now 76-year-old Holsclaw became a record-setting quarterback is an interesting tale. He never played quarterback at Charleston High School in Charleston, W.Va., before coming to Tech, following in the footsteps of his uncle, Duncan Holsclaw, who played at Tech in the early 1930s. Billy Holsclaw played in a single-wing offense at Charleston High and was thus more of a tailback.

When he got to Blacksburg, he sat out a year and then joined the varsity squad in 1956. He spent most of the 1956 and 1957 seasons on defense, where he played as a defensive back.

But guys like former quarterbacks Billy Cranwell and Jimmy Lugar started graduating, and Moseley called on Holsclaw to be the sole quarterback in 1958.

"I was a tailback in high school," Holsclaw said. "I had never played under center until I got to Tech. But he [Moseley] wanted me to go to the quarterback position, and I had played a little bit my first two years, but mostly, I was on the

defensive side of the ball. Then he named me the starter at quarterback my senior year."

Moseley probably wanted to take advantage of his personnel. After all, at one of his receiver spots was a young man named Carroll Dale, who went on to earn two All-America nods at Tech and later helped the NFL's Green Bay Packers win two Super Bowl rings.

Holsclaw completed 70 of his 127 pass attempts for 1,013 yards his final season, with nine touchdowns and seven interceptions. Twenty-five of those completions and six of those touchdowns went to Dale, who set modern-day records for receptions in a season, touchdown receptions in a season and receiving yards in a season (459) that year.

"We were running basically the same offense," Holsclaw said. "But we threw it [the football] much more. Coach Moseley decided to open it [the offense] up more, and obviously Carroll was a very good player."

Holsclaw guided the Hokies to five wins, but the season could have been so much more. Tech tied a game and lost two games by seven points and one point, respectively.

Holsclaw graduated from Tech in 1959 with a degree in distributive education. He wanted to get into coaching, in large part because of Moseley's influence. So after graduating, he embarked on what turned out to be a 40-year coaching career in the high school ranks.

"I enjoyed playing for Coach Moseley," Holsclaw said. "I liked the way he was. He got on everyone quite a bit, and he was tough. But he was fair."

"But just being in football for so many years [before graduating], I just loved it. Coach Moseley let me help coach the freshman team at Tech my last year there, and I really liked it. Coach Moseley helped me a lot. He gave me the start I needed."

Holsclaw's first job came at Spotsylvania High School, near Fredericksburg, Va., where he taught and coached for a couple of years before taking a job at Osbourn High School in Manassas, Va. He spent 10 years there, coaching and teaching history, social studies and driver's education.


After 10 years, he moved to Woodbridge High School in Woodbridge, Va., where he stayed until he retired in 1990. He remained involved with football after his retirement, though, helping out as an assistant coach for another 10 years.

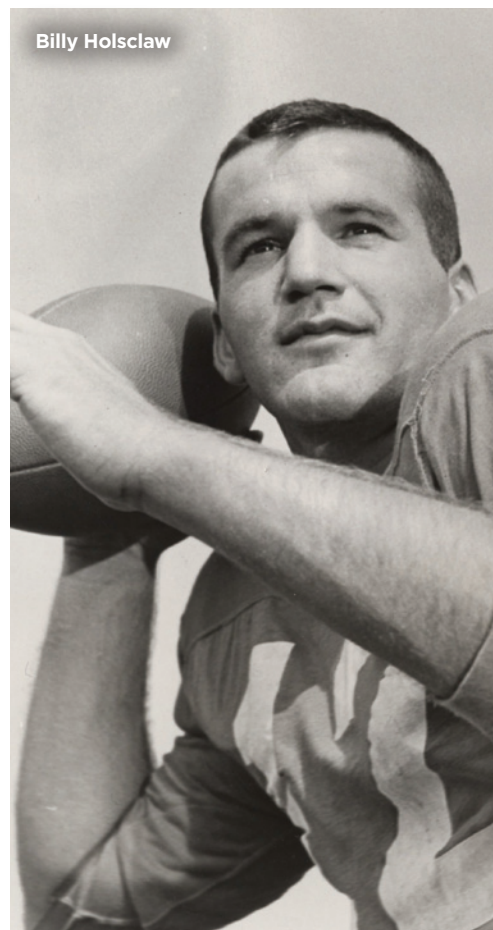
His responsibilities on Friday nights in the fall – and even on Saturdays and Sundays – prevented him from getting back to Blacksburg for many football games. But he kept in touch with his teammates over the years, and a group of them get together each year for a golf outing.

"A lot of us have stayed connected," Holsclaw said. "We'll meet up and play golf there in Blacksburg, and we do that just about every year. Guys like Barry Frazee, Bobby McCoy, Terry Strock and Dickie Beard, we all keep in touch. We have a lot of fun when we get together."

Holsclaw got married not long after graduating from Tech, and he and his wife have four children and six grandchildren. Their oldest daughter graduated from Tech, and the other three children also graduated from college.

These days, he and his wife live in Manassas. Of course, he'll always have a permanent residence in Blacksburg – in the Tech record book.

"I really did enjoy being at Virginia Tech," he said. "Just to be there was such an honor for me. You could tell back then that the place was getting ready to bust out and go big time. We were very successful under Coach Moseley, and there was such a close bond between that group. But you look at it now, and things have only gotten better." 



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BIG year for a BIG man

After four long years, Tech offensive tackle Winston Painter is living up to his potential on the field and off

by Jimmy Robertson

He stands 6-foot-6 and weighs a rather sturdy 310 pounds. He possesses unworldly athleticism, and to put that in perspective, he runs a faster 40-yard time than all of Virginia Tech's current tight ends, all of its defensive tackles, all of its inside linebackers and several of its defensive ends.

His abs are as solid as Hokie stone, his arms are as long as goal posts and he's got bodybuilder biceps.

Yet for all his physical gifts, Winston Painter received more attention the past four years for not being able to get on the football field than anything else. That is, until this past August, when he unintentionally created a hair-raising event among local media mongrels after deciding to snip the lengthy dreads from his head, thus ending a three-year love affair with his locks.

"I'm already big, bigger than most people, and the dreadlocks were just a huge intimidation factor," said Painter, who worked an internship in Baltimore last summer. "You go into an office with a suit on and dreads, and people are more scared of you than interested in you. I thought it was time for them [his dreadlocks] to go and time to make a change. I am a father, so I feel it's time to look the part and take every role seriously. It started with the hair, and I'm working on the lifestyle now."

Those statements essentially sum up the 23-year-old young man from Norfolk, Va. After all, the only thing bigger than his size may be his maturity. Of course, that tends to happen when you become a college graduate, a father, and finally, for the first time, a starter on the offensive line at Tech within a year's time.

After four years of answering questions as to why someone with his size and physical skills hadn't set foot on the field with more regularity, Painter has started every game at right tackle for the Hokies in 2012. Four years of waiting, wondering and wishing ended when he took the field for the first snap of the Georgia Tech game, and minus a few snaps in blowout wins over Austin Peay and Bowling Green, he hasn't come off the field since.

"I can't even describe the feeling," Painter said. "To go from high school, where you played every single snap, to not playing for three or four seasons, you'd think that there would be some rust and it would be rough to get back in the game.

"But when I finally hit the field for the Georgia Tech game, it felt like me again. All the hard work and preparation had come full circle."

Painter arrived at Tech as an immensely touted recruit out of Maury High School. Talk about attention, he sifted through offers from every major college in the nation. To put it in perspective, the dude received almost as much love as Kate Upton.

He later narrowed his choices down to Miami

and Tech. A close attachment to his family led him to choose Southwest Virginia over South Beach. Targeted coercion from former Maury teammates Kam Chancellor and Prince Parker also influenced him.

A five-star talent, he expected to get on the field quickly. Instead, he barely got to dress for games. After a redshirt year, he played just 92 snaps the next three seasons, or the equivalent of less than two whole games.

“It’s a series of things,” Painter said as to why he didn’t play earlier in this career. “I’ve changed positions quite a few times since I’ve been here, and at this level, you can’t just pick up the assignments in a matter of weeks or months. The learning curve at the different positions was tough, but once I got settled in at tackle, it got much easier for me to focus on one position.

“Then two years ago, in the spring, I dislocated my knee, so that set me back, too. It’s been a series of things I’ve had to deal with, but now that I’m settled at tackle, it’s worked out. I’ve actually had time to learn the position.”

He spent his redshirt year working at defensive tackle after talking defensive coordinator Bud Foster into giving him a chance. He became Sergio Render’s personal blocking dummy, and not quite instinctive enough, he found himself moved to offensive guard the following spring.

“Would I do it [try to play defensive tackle] again? I don’t know. Maybe, maybe not,” Painter said. “I’d probably be farther along in my development if I had just stayed on the offensive line, but the decision was made and you can’t change it now.”

He spent the next two seasons toiling at right guard, seeing little action, as he played behind Jaymes Brooks – who started every game for three years. The coaching staff then moved Painter to right tackle before last season, his junior season, and he backed up Blake DeChristopher, a four-year starter who won the Jacobs Blocking Trophy as the best offensive lineman in the ACC last season.

Ultimately, that’s why Painter hasn’t played much in his career, at least until this season. He’s always been behind terrific players whose experience and talent overrode his physical attributes and potential.

Yet to his credit, he never thought about transferring or bailing on a program that offered him so much promise. Unlike many his age, he stayed patient. Plus, he liked the coaches and his teammates, and he liked Blacksburg.

“People have asked me why I didn’t leave and go some place where I’d play sooner,” Painter said. “I’m not a quitter. I started this thing, and my parents told me that, ‘You’ve started this. Now, you need to finish it. There’s no need in quitting.

your time will come. Just keep working and keep persevering, and the good will happen.’ And it did.”

He certainly never quit working, particularly in Tech’s strength and conditioning program. This past winter, he recorded a front squat of 500 pounds and a bench press of 430. He ranked in the top 10 on the team in all the four major lifts. On top of that, he recorded a lineman-best 4.74 seconds in the 40.

During summer conditioning, the team often ran 110-yard sprints in a pre-determined time in the searing heat of June and July. Most of the time, Painter’s teammates were huffing and puffing afterward like freight trains. In contrast, Painter looked like he had taken a leisurely saunter around the Duck Pond.

All that has prompted good-natured jokes over the years from his teammates, who constantly ask him where he gets his steroids. He takes it in stride.

“I’ve just been blessed by God and done it through hard work,” Painter said. “I’ve always enjoyed working hard and pushing myself in the weight room ever since high school.

“A lot of times, I have guys who want to work out with me and get with me in the weight room. That’s not an issue. I’m always willing to let guys train with me because making another teammate strong or stronger is not only going to help him, but also the team. As a teammate, I need for him to be better, just like the team needs me to be better.”

A top-notch person, he continues to progress toward that same level as a player. He knows it will take more work, more sweat and more discipline – all things instilled into him by his parents in Norfolk.

Though not married, both of Painter’s parents (Painter lives with his mother, Inez) kept him from straying in the streets of Virginia’s second-largest, and maybe its roughest, city. His mother works as a schoolteacher at Lakeland High, while his father works at the Naval shipyard in Portsmouth, Va., so they understand discipline and work ethic.

Painter learned as a child that his margin for error wasn’t the same as other kids in the neighborhood. Years later, he has grown to be thankful for that.

“We didn’t have the white picket fence and the dog in the backyard. It [living in Norfolk] had its ups and downs, but I always had my parents coaching me up on life,” he said. “The majority of the time, when they said something was going to happen if I went to this area or that area, it usually happened. But being a kid, you’re curious. I didn’t

go looking for trouble, but it’s always there in Norfolk. It made me into who I am today. It built my character and built my toughness.”




He hopes to pass those traits on to his daughter, a 1-year-old named Jalia who lives with her mother in Petersburg, Va. He followed his parents’ lead and stays involved in his daughter’s life. She serves as his motivation, the prime reason why he graduated last spring with a degree in residential property management and why he cut his dreadlocks to enhance future job opportunities in the event his NFL dreams do not become reality.

“People’s perceptions hold more weight than what you say out of your mouth sometimes,” he said, again, discussing the cutting of his dreadlocks. “I figured I could cut that out of the picture. I want to leave the best possible impression I can, and usually, that works out.

“It’s a small price to pay for bigger things. I want to leave all possibilities and all doors open.”

In the near term, he wants to get better at his craft as this season winds down. That means keeping Logan Thomas upright and triggering a rushing attack that has been stagnant at times this season. It also means hopefully going to a bowl game.

Only this time, the big guy from Norfolk, the one with all the size and physical attributes and potential, wouldn’t be taking up space on the sidelines. On the contrary, he’d be starting and playing. All four quarters, too.

At the very least, he’s now changed people’s perceptions of him. Just ask the media. Now when those reporters interview him, they take a slightly different line of questioning. 

GETTING TO KNOW VINSTON PAINTER

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

VP: "I'm either on the road heading home [to see his daughter], or at home [in Blacksburg] playing Xbox. Every now and then, I'll go out and hang with my friends. We'll be at someone's house playing video games and just chilling."

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

VP: "Bill Gates [former CEO and founder of Microsoft]. He's got billions and billions that he can basically just sit back and collect. The company basically runs itself. He can just watch his bank account increase, and that sounds like an excellent life to live."

Q: Facebook or Twitter?

VP: "I have both, but I prefer Twitter. Facebook is cool when you're trying to meet people or catch up with old friends. But Twitter

is great entertainment. You can get a lot of laughs on Twitter. I always turn to Twitter for entertainment."

Q: Who's your favorite football player?

VP: "Ray Lewis [of the Baltimore Ravens]. That's not because people say I look like him. I like him because he's intense and plays with great passion. He's a great motivator and a great leader. I even watch some of his speeches on YouTube that are very inspirational. He's a guy who one day I'd like to mimic his intensity and be as great of a leader as he is."

Q: Ten years from now, what will you be doing?

VP: "I'd love to go to the NFL, but that's always a big question mark. You never know what'll happen with that. My degree is in residential property management, and that's a field where people climb the ladder quickly. In 10 years, I'll either be making great money in

the NFL with a new contract and living the life, or I'll be a property manager. In the future, I'd like to have my own business. Not necessarily retired, but have a successful business – maybe a restaurant or my own apartment complex. That would be a dream.

"But the best way to put it is Vinston Painter will still be Vinston Painter – trying to find ways to make things happen for himself and his family."



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Former Tech defensive back Brandon Flowers has shown the Kansas City Chiefs his talents in his five years there, including this interception against the Baltimore Ravens on Oct. 7. (Photo courtesy of Steve Sanders/Kansas City Chiefs)

Flowers on his way to becoming one of NFL's best defensive backs

by **Jimmy Robertson**

Obviously, the NFL differs from college football in many ways, but former Virginia Tech cornerback Brandon Flowers gave this interesting comparison:

"It's definitely more like a business," he said. "In college, your teammates are like your brothers. You see them at practice and then you see them in class and you hang out with them all the time. In the NFL, most of the guys are married and have kids, and you only see them at practice. You might never see them outside of practice. So it's more like a business."

So Flowers needs to get married and start having kids to better fit in among his teammates, right?

"Oh, no," he laughed. "I'm not rushing that."

Actually, Flowers has adjusted to life quite nicely in the NFL both on and off the field in his five years with the Kansas City Chiefs. The former Associated Press All-American went to the Chiefs in the second round of the 2008 NFL Draft, and started 13 of the 14 games he played in as a rookie,

recording 69 tackles and two interceptions.

In fact, both of those interceptions came against Brett Favre, the future Hall of Famer who was playing for the New York Jets at the time. Flowers returned the second interception 91 yards for a touchdown - easily one of the biggest moments of his life.

"When you're out there doing it, it goes by so fast that you really don't think about it being Brett Favre," Flowers said. "You just think about trying to make plays. But when I got home and started thinking about it, it just hit me. It's like, 'Wow, I intercepted Brett Favre twice and returned one for a touchdown.'

"I kept thinking that this is where I had wanted to be and what I had been working for. But you can't take anything for granted. In this league, if you're not getting it done, they'll [the coaches] replace you. So I just try to stay focused on improving and getting better."

Since his rookie campaign, Flowers has started every game he's played in for the Chiefs,

only missing a game here or there because of an injury. A year ago, he started every single game and recorded 59 tackles and four interceptions. He hasn't recorded fewer than 59 tackles in any of his first four seasons and has intercepted 15 passes in his relatively young career.

"I don't mean to sound cocky, but I'm not surprised," Flowers said of his success. "I've always had great coaching, even going back to playing Little League in South Florida and then playing for Coach [Chris] Bean at Atlantic High School in Delray Beach [Fla.]. Then when I got to Tech, Coach [Torrian] Gray [Tech's defensive backs coach] did a great job of coaching me and teaching me all the proper techniques. It's hard to get beat when you're playing with good technique.

"So I give him a lot of credit. He helped make my transition much easier than I thought it would be."

Flowers also credited former Chiefs teammates Brandon Carr and Patrick Surtain for helping him. Carr, one of the NFL's best cornerbacks,

teamed with Flowers at the cornerbacks spots in the Chiefs defense for four years before signing with the Dallas Cowboys this past offseason. Surtain played for the Chiefs for three seasons, including Flowers' first two seasons.

Surtain, in particular, is someone whom Flowers respects. He grew up watching the three-time Pro Bowler when Surtain played for the Miami Dolphins (1998-2004) and considered him a role model.

"I used to go to Dolphins games, and I'd watch him," Flowers said. "So to be lining up with him was just a surreal feeling."

"He knew what it was like to be in the league, and he showed me the ropes. He showed me what to do on and off the field, and he always told me to take things one play at a time and one game at a time. He told me never to get too stressed. A lot of guys have had it harder than me, but people like Patrick Surtain and Coach Gray have really showed me the way."

Even though he learned quite a bit from others, he still needed to get it done on the field, and Flowers deserves all the credit for doing that. He is on the cusp of becoming a Pro Bowler, and the Chiefs organization realizes that.

In September of 2011, Chiefs officials locked up Flowers for the long term, signing him to a five-year extension even though his contract had yet

to run out. Flowers signed the \$50 million deal, which included \$22 million guaranteed.

"It just shows that hard work pays off," Flowers said. "I'm glad they felt confident in me, and I'm glad they want me here. They gave it to me for a reason, and I've got to keep going and keep playing well."

The only thing lacking for Flowers is team success. The Chiefs have made the playoffs just once since Flowers arrived, and this season, the team had just one win at press time. In fact, they hadn't led in regulation this entire season, winning their only game in overtime against the New Orleans Saints.

Flowers hopes to see the team's fortunes change in the second half of the season.

"It's been very frustrating," he said. "I'm a very competitive person. I played there at Virginia Tech, so I'm not used to losses. But it's a whole different game at this level. We've got to adjust and get everyone on the same page, and then go out and get some W's."

Flowers does keep up with a few of his former Tech teammates, including guys like D.J. Parker and Duane Brown, and he hopes to return to Blacksburg for the spring game, a time when many former players come back. He hasn't been back to Blacksburg in the past two years.

He also keeps up with a few of Tech's current


players. He reaches out to both Luther Maddy and Mark Leal, two former Atlantic High School players themselves who played at the school several years after Flowers left.

"I like seeing those guys do well," Flowers said. "I know how difficult it is to come out of that area [South Florida] and do well. I know so many guys who were great athletes, but didn't have the grades, so I like to support those guys [Leal and Maddy], and I applaud them. I want them to know I'm watching them, and I wish them great success."

He'll keep up with the Hokies from his home in Kansas City. He loves the area because it reminds him of a place where he used to live – and it's not South Florida.

Kansas City, in certain respects, resembles Blacksburg, a place where Flowers enjoyed life for four years.

"I love it here," Flowers said of the city. "In Delray, things are so fast paced, but here, it's a lot more laid back. It's a lot like Blacksburg. The people here are so supportive of their football team. It's like when I was in college, when we were so appreciative of the fans and they were appreciative of us. It's that same way here."

"It's been the best fit for me. I'm really lucky that Kansas City picked me, and that things have fallen in place the way they have." 



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The Roanoke Valley Hokie Club has contributed financially to many projects over the years, including the bronze HokieBird that sits in the lobby of Cassell Coliseum.

The Roanoke Valley Hokie Club has become the first non-person and first local Hokie Club to contribute \$1 million to the Tech athletics program

by Jimmy Robertson

Virginia Tech fans pride themselves on being among the best, if not the best, fans in the country. They pack Lane Stadium for every home game, they show up en masse for away games and gobble up tickets to bowl games.

They also aren't afraid to invest in their beloved program, paying out of their wallets, and more impressively, with their sweat. In particular, a devoted faction of Hokie fans from Roanoke, Va., has stepped up to the proverbial collection plate.

Thanks to its recent \$50,000 contribution to the Virginia Tech Athletic Fund (a.k.a. the Hokie Club) to be used to help pay for the football locker room, the Roanoke Valley Hokie Club became the first non-person and the first Hokie Club to donate more than \$1 million to the Tech athletics program. The \$50,000 donation boosted the club's total giving to exactly \$1,004,784 over a

span of 25 years. The Hokie Club's records only go back to 1987.

"It's really pretty amazing what they've been able to accomplish," said Lu Merritt, the senior director of development for intercollegiate athletics. "You think about all the events they've put together and all the volunteer hours that go into that. It's not just about the money with these people. They have a lot of 'sweat equity' invested into making our programs better, and they deserved to be applauded for what they've done."

The Roanoke Valley Hokie Club's contributions have been designated for a wide array of projects related to Tech athletics. Its first contribution in 1987 was for \$3,000 and went to "athletic operations," and then the group spent the next eight years raising money – \$50,000 in all – for the Roanoke Valley Hokie

Club Endowment, which goes toward its first scholarship.

Since then, they've raised money for projects such as the construction of the Merryman Center (\$200,000), the south end zone expansion of Lane Stadium (\$125,000), the west side expansion of Lane Stadium (\$74,000), the new football locker room (\$60,000) and the bronze HokieBird that sits in the Cassell Coliseum entranceway (\$83,000), just to name a few. A year ago, the club donated \$95,000 to be used for the future construction of a new football field house.

"Obviously, it's a team effort," said Brian Wilson, the president of the Roanoke Valley Hokie Club. "We have several events each year, and we've got a good core of volunteers. We've got a group of about 10-15 people who head up things, and then the others fall in line."

The club's humble beginnings as a fundraising powerhouse actually began in the late 1980s when a group of people, led by then-club president Renny Lynch, decided to have "Bingo Night" every Sunday night in Salem. A group of 60-75 people volunteered to work the event and formed teams of 10, so that each team worked once a month. They also sold concessions at the event to raise money.

It turned out to be a great idea. Not only did the club raise a lot of money off bingo, but it also provided Tech fans with a social opportunity to talk about Hokie athletics.

"It was really a 'Hokie huddle' type of thing," Lynch said. "We just had a fantastic group of Hokies, and the camaraderie was great. We had a lot of fun, and we had a lot of success with it.

"We made a pledge there at some point in the 1980s to contribute \$100,000 to Tech. We thought it would take some time to reach that goal, but we were able to do it in less than a year."

Lynch guided the club throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s before becoming the president of Virginia Tech Athletic Fund, Inc. He handed off the club president's duties to Wilson in 2006.

The club discontinued "Bingo Night" years ago and moved on to other fundraisers. Today, under Wilson's leadership, the club puts on nine events over the course of the year, with its biggest draw being the football kickoff dinner in July. The dinner usually features Tech head coach Frank Beamer and a couple of players, and it gets fans excited about the upcoming season. This past July's dinner netted \$25,000.

The club also puts on a recruiting dinner in February that has become popular, and the club holds a series of lunches each Friday before a home game as well, with Tech AD Jim Weaver and other guests of the athletics program attending, including football coaches. Also, the club puts on a pre-bowl dinner. It sells tickets to all these events and gets sponsors as well.

"Our kickoff dinner is getting bigger and bigger each year," Wilson said. "We're getting more people involved, and I think it's only going to continue to get bigger. I think the ability to raise between \$20,000-\$30,000 each year off of that is there, and as the economy gets better, I think that's going to give us more pricing flexibility. We've kept our prices the same for a while because of the economy."

Indeed, that may actually be the most impressive thing about the Roanoke Valley Hokie Club's milestone. The economic downturn has lasted for the past five or six

years now, but the club has raised at least \$50,000 in each of those years.

That doesn't necessarily surprise Wilson, though.

"In one way, it does. But in one way, no, it doesn't," he said. "People are passionate about Virginia Tech athletics. They want to be a part of that, and I think our events really bring added value to our members. Those events bring them information about Virginia Tech athletics and make them feel a part of it. They're getting something tangible for what they're investing into it.

"I think I'm more surprised with our sponsorships. Those are a tougher sell in a down economy, but we've been able to keep all of our sponsors except for one, and we hope to continue to do that."

The events, though, serve another purpose instead of being simple fundraisers. They bring Tech fans together, creating camaraderie and a passion that manifests itself at Lane Stadium on Saturdays in the fall.


Obviously, the money from every fan and every local Hokie Club helps with the success of the program. And that passion counts just as much. In truth, it's immeasurable.

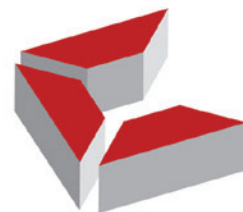
"We don't consider ourselves a fundraising arm," Wilson said. "Everyone who sends money to Blacksburg is a member [of a local Hokie Club]. We're set up to get loyal Hokies more information and get them involved. I think our events give them that added value."

The club plans on continuing its current path, which means, of course, raising more money and creating opportunities for Tech fans to gather. The field house project figures to run in the neighborhood of \$20-30 million. Plus, the cost of a scholarship continues to rise, so there are needs to be met – and the club wants to be a part of meeting them.

"Brian's been a fantastic president, and we've got a sound Board of Directors and good officers and good events," Lynch said. "Everything is going fine. We've just got to keep rolling along and keep our 'huddle' enthused. We've been fortunate, and we've got to keep it up."

The Roanoke Valley Hokie Club may be the first to reach the \$1 million milestone, but certainly not the last. Other clubs are approaching the milestone, too, which is great to see.

After all, Frank Beamer has often said we're all in this together. He didn't just mean players and coaches. As he, and other Tech coaches, too, astutely know, Hokie Nation plays a large role as well. 



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Tech baseball coach Pete Hughes and his players recently raised money for childhood cancer research and shaved their heads to bring awareness to the issue.

The Virginia Tech baseball team raised more than \$35,000 to support childhood cancer research

Two years ago, the Virginia Tech baseball squad presented a donation to the St. Baldrick's Foundation, which supports childhood cancer research, in the amount of \$500.

On Oct. 9, the amount of the donation was going to exceed \$35,000.

The baseball program held its annual "Shave for the Brave" event, as more than 60 players, coaches, staff members and friends and family members of the Hokies showed up at the team's hitting facility to have their heads shaved for charity. The players and coaches together raised more than \$35,000 (final numbers hadn't been tallied) – \$10,000 more than the team's target goal.

The money will be donated to Melina Brown, who is raising money for childhood cancer research on behalf of "46 Mommas Shave for the Brave," a group that raises money for St. Baldrick's research programs. Brown's 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 12, he is cancer free, but every day, 46 mothers in the United States are told their child has cancer.

"It was such a great event," Tech head baseball coach Pete Hughes said of the Hokies' "Shave for the Brave" event. "The last couple of years, I think we have done a great job raising awareness for childhood cancer, but sometimes you have to put your money where your mouth is, and we did an unbelievable job of getting to the next level of fundraising and that was all on our guys. They took ownership in this thing."


The players used social media and the Internet as a way to get the word out about their cause. Most of the players have accounts on both Twitter and Facebook, two social media sites, and used those accounts to send out reminders to their followers to go to the St. Baldrick's website and donate.

Thanks to the power of social media, the end result turned out better than anyone could have dreamed.

"It [social media] was the quickest way to

reach out to all the Hokie alumni who are out there and who support us," Tech outfielder Andrew Rash said. "The first night that guys started putting this on Twitter, we were getting money left and right. I think, after the first night, I had, like, \$700 in a matter of three hours."

"And then, I think the reason you see such a big jump this year is because the people who are donating are being able to donate to a website, so they see their money going right there, and they can see the total rise toward our goal."

The "Shave for the Brave" event was the baseball program's eighth event of its "19 Ways" initiative. Each academic year, the program finds 19 ways to make a difference within the community. The 19 Ways initiative was the inspiration of Hughes, whose mother, the late Alice Hughes, constantly gave her time and resources to help others. Her favorite number was "19," and Hughes wears that number in honor of her. 



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DEFENDERS GET IT DONE

by Marc Mullen



Virginia Tech senior defenders Kelsey Mitchell, Amanda Gerhard (22) and Julia Goldsworthy (18) are relative unknowns, but are big reasons why the Hokies advanced to the NCAA Championships yet again

The Virginia Tech women's soccer team easily secured its fifth straight trip to the NCAA Championship thanks in part to its first ever unblemished non-conference slate, rolling to nine consecutive wins to start the season.

However, the Hokies' run of four straight ACC Tournament appearances ended, as the Hokies finished in a tie for eighth place in the standings and lost out on a tiebreaker to Boston College because of a 2-1 heartbreaking loss to the Eagles in September. Despite that fact, the 2012 Tech soccer team could point to its posting a 3-0 victory in its final game of the regular season at No. 7 Wake Forest as another reason it advanced into the national tournament. With their backs up against the wall, the Hokies pulled off the upset and posted their school-record 12th shutout of the year.

"This should be an expectation. We should be getting into the NCAA tournament every year," said Kelsey Mitchell, one of three senior starting defenders for the Hokies. "We have the potential. We have the players. We have the talent, and we have the heart. We have everything.

"We just have to take care of the little things during the season to make it to the postseason, like the BC game this year, when we didn't finish off and that prevented us from being in the ACC Tournament. But making the NCAAs should be an expectation. It's not something that you're going to be given by any means."

Mitchell, the right center back for Tech, is joined by redshirt senior Amanda Gerhard, who plays right outside back, and senior Julia Goldsworthy, who is the left outside back. Over the past two years, the threesome has provided a great wall in front of Tech's goalkeepers while rolling up some impressive numbers.

Sure, the backline defenders aren't your headliners – your goal scorers – and aren't credited with anything in their stat line when it comes to the team posting a shutout, which goes to the starting goalie. These players are more like the offensive linemen on a football team, virtually unnoticed until a mistake is made.

"To be a good defender, you have to be pretty tough," Gerhard said. "You have to be willing to go into tackles and go into tackles hard because

we are the last line before our goalkeeper. If we get beat, then there's not that much the goalkeeper can do.

"You also need the mindset that you have to try for the first ball, the second ball, the third ball. Mentally, you have to be smart, really intelligent in order to shift and cover and know defensively when and where you want to push the ball."

A good mentality was echoed by Mitchell, who is less likely to push forward on offense, as outside backs Gerhard and Goldsworthy are encouraged to do in head coach Chugger Adair's game philosophy.

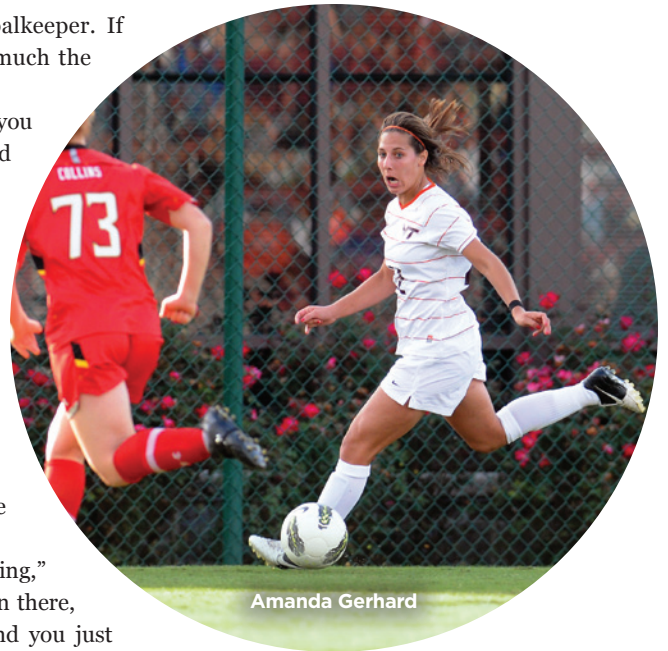
"Mentality is the biggest thing," Mitchell said. "You just have to go in there, when you are going one-on-one, and you just have to have the mentality that no one is going to get by you," Mitchell said. "That's the biggest part of defending. You have to be very strong. You can't be pushed off the ball in any sense, and you have to be able to read the game because you are the one that can see the entire field, the backline. I just think that you have to be very good with communication and directing people, and leadership, obviously."

Last season, then senior Brittany Michels led the Hokies on the backline, a player so talented on the defensive side that she played in a Tech record 90 career games and started 62 consecutive – a streak that started early in her sophomore year. She, along with the threesome, then juniors, helped the Hokies register a then-school record 11 shutouts (previous high was nine) and advance to the NCAAs Sweet 16. Gerhard also credited Michels with helping her transition into a defender after playing forward for her entire pre-collegiate career.

"I would say this season was definitely a challenge in the beginning because Brittany had such a huge impact on our team," Gerhard said. "She helped me out so much. I probably would have had a more difficult time playing on the backline last season for the first time without her there.

"And I ended up making a bigger impact on the backline than I did on the frontline. I actually really enjoy playing on the backline, playing with Kelsey and Julia and Brittany, before, and now Jordan [Coburn]. They helped me a lot with the transition, and so it was actually a pretty smooth transition for me, and I just really enjoyed playing back there."

The loss of Michels and the search for her replacement was one of the primary objectives



Amanda Gerhard

for the Hokies in the preseason. Adair juggled a lot of players around, trying to find the right combination, but the left center back position was eventually filled by a freshman, Coburn.

"Tech brought in a very defensive freshman class, so we did have a lot of options, knowing that Brittany Michels' loss was a huge role that needed to be filled," Goldsworthy said. "We thought about a couple of different options, but once we saw that Jordan was left-footed – it's something that we've never really had before – it made it easy to put her as a left center back.

"She's hard in tackles, a good ball winner, and we all compensate for different things. I might not be the best recovery defender, so she always seems to be there, and I trust her to be behind me. She's a lot more mature than a lot of the other freshmen on the field, so I feel that she embraced the role really well.

"And it was very hard on her because she had some big shoes to fill, and it's a difficult position to step into, but she's done her job very well this entire time."

The seniors, along with midfielder Anne Lumpkin, entered the NCAAs as the class with the most wins ever over a four-year period with 53. In 2012, the defense, again, posted 12 shutouts, registered the most consecutive shutouts in a row with six, and have a chance at posting the fewest goals allowed in a single season (17 allowed, least is 20) and the lowest goals allowed average in a single season (0.87 now, least 1.06).

Not only did they welcome a freshman on their backline, but the Hokies also welcomed a freshman in goal. It cannot be forgotten that goalkeeper Dayle Colpitts missed the first five games of the season while playing for Team



Julia Goldsworthy

Canada in the U-20 World Cup in Japan, maybe putting even more stress on the senior defenders to try and ease freshman Caroline Kelly into the starting goalkeeper's role.

"Yeah, there was a lot of pressure that went into that for Caroline," Mitchell said. "Her being a freshman goalkeeper, honestly, if watching her, people didn't know what year she was, you wouldn't have thought she was a freshman. She has a lot of confidence, she was loud and directing

and she wasn't just going to stand back there and expect us to take charge of everything.

"Something that helped with that was immediately we told her, we're are going to listen to you. You can see everything. You just tell us what to do because you trust us and we trust you.' There was a little bit of pressure at the beginning because we didn't know how she would be. It's nerve racking coming in and starting in goal in your first college game, but she did good."

Having such an experienced backline in front of her certainly helped alleviate any pressure. Just how experienced are the three seniors? Well, Mitchell has set a school record with 87 starts in 87 career games played, second all-time. Not bad for a player who also played forward for most of her pre-college career and only switched to the backline for one game at the request of her coach.

"The one game that Kelly Cagle [former Tech coach] came to watch me play, she told my coach to put me at outside back because that's where she was looking to have a freshman come in and play," Mitchell said. "So I played there and the good thing about going from outside forward to outside back is not only do I have to defend, but I also want to attack, too. So I got up the field a lot

in that game, and that's exactly what an outside defender needs to do.

"I had no idea what the ACC competition was like coming in, and thinking about it now, I don't think I would have done well up top. I'm not a very dynamic player. Forwards have to be very creative and dynamic and technically very good. I'm more of just a hard worker, tackle and read the game plan rather than being a very creative player."

Goldsworthy and Gerhard have also seen extended time on the field, playing 84 (fifth all-time) and 83 (sixth) games, respectively, in their Hokie careers.

"I was even surprised getting time my freshman year," Goldsworthy said. "I honestly did think that I was going to have to come in and prove myself. Being a freshman, you usually just don't get thrown on the field.

"I think the fact that Kelsey, Amanda and I have been here together for so long and we just had a back four that worked, and you know when things are working you, don't want to switch it. The camaraderie and the way that we connect with each other back there, it's so hard and that's why we don't get subbed a lot because it's so hard to just throw someone in there on the fly and keep the same rhythm."



Kelsey Mitchell


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Secure in knowing that your backline is controlled by three seniors is quite comforting during the season, but what happens next year? The three seniors are certainly not worried about the transition. No, not because they won't be in Blacksburg, but because they have seen the progress of their backups and have no doubt they will be able to step into their roles next year.

"When we were seeing success in the beginning of the year, if we would get up on some teams, Chugger would want to get those other girls some experience," Goldsworthy said. "Dani King has gotten a lot of experience behind me and even Amanda, when she was battling injuries.

"So, Dani, Taylor [Antolino] and Morgan [Conklin], and others have embraced the role as backups. At practice, they do all the same things as the starters, so we actually do have depth at our position. I think that was Chugger's intention with bringing these girls in, to get them playing time and experience and get them ready for their new role next year. And hopefully, Jordan will be the experienced defender that will be able to instill her knowledge into the starters next year."

Unless they lift up that NCAA Championship trophy on Dec. 2, the Hokies will finish the 2012 season with a loss. However, that will be just the sixth loss of the year for the team, setting a new

low for losses in a season, bettering the 2007 squad that lost seven.

Those fourth-year backline defenders certainly had a lot to do with the success of the team in their time in Blacksburg. The question is: did you notice them?

FINAL THOUGHTS FROM THE SENIORS

Amanda Gerhard: "Going into the 'senior game', I wasn't very emotional or anything like that. I was there. It was kind of surreal. I've been here for five years, and I thought 'Oh, I'll be ready to be done after this season.' But then it hit me all at once. I realized how much of an impact this team has had on my life.

"It's made me a better person, and it's been a big part of my life. I did get a little bit emotional, a little bit upset because these girls are my best friends and my teammates. The game was a rough game, but I was happy to be there with my friends, my family and my teammates."


Julia Goldsworthy: "It's been an absolute great experience, nothing of what I imagined. I really didn't have any expectations for myself. I didn't think that I was going to come in here and play and/or start and/or be a 90-minute player on the backline.

"I've built great relationships with my

teammates, who are my best friends, and my coaches. I've never respected a coaching staff so much in my life, and the fact that they have trusted me and they've put a lot of pressure and responsibility on me made me better.

"I think that's it's made me a better person and a better leader by adjusting to adversity, dealing with the ups and downs of a season. You're not perfect all the time, and I know that firsthand. I think it's been a great experience. I never thought I'd be playing in the ACC, so it was an unbelievable soccer experience – any girl's dream soccer experience."

Kelsey Mitchell: "Being on the team, it's such ... it's like your family. You come to practice every day, and sometimes you hate it and sometimes you love it. I've learned so much from the players and the coaches and playing. You ask yourself, 'Do you have it in you?' And I've found out I can compete and I can keep up and work as hard as I possibly can when I need to.

"The overall experience of playing soccer and being in school is just unbelievable, and I've just learned so much about myself. I have confidence and always keep a positive attitude and bounce back when I need to because we aren't going to win every game. So it's [the soccer experience at Tech] just taught me a lot." 

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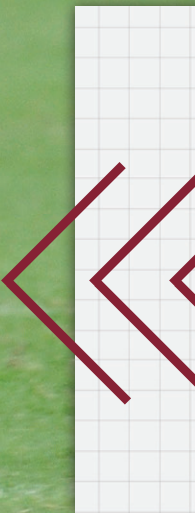
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CLEMENS' GOAL SCORING GIVES TECH SOCCER TEAM A KICK



David Clemens' experience playing older competition as a kid in New York helped him become the Hokies' top offensive threat this season

by Marc Mullen

He was a goal-scoring machine for the Hokies this season.

OK, well, maybe not a "machine," but Virginia Tech men's soccer player David Clemens certainly provided the scoring option so desperately needed by Tech head coach Mike Brizendine since the program's magical run to the NCAA 's College Cup more than five years ago.

Heading into an ACC tournament match vs. Maryland, Clemens had amassed nine goals and helped the Hokies to seven victories – both team highs since 2007. He also stood fifth in the ACC in goals, and no matter how you slice it, that's a pretty significant accomplishment for the junior, who was coming off an injury from last year that limited him to just 10 games played.

"I broke my [right] foot last fall, just hitting a shot, too," Clemens said of his injury. "I guess it was already damaged, and I played on it. It was also devastating because it was just after I couldn't redshirt. I had already played too many games [by NCAA regulations], so I tried to come back a little too quick and reinjured it. That injury was just a nightmare because I couldn't redshirt. It was also very difficult mentally going through that.

"In the spring, I was just trying to get back into the flow of things and get back adjusted to playing. I think I've been able to settle in and find my own game a bit more and have progressed to the ACC with my comfort and speed of the game. I still think I could have done a little bit more

this season to help the team. Hopefully, I can take it to another level next year."

Taking it to another level would be remarkable for Clemens, who accomplished several noteworthy things this year. No Hokie has scored more than seven goals in one year since Patrick Nyarko tallied 16 as a junior in 2006 when he led the ACC, and no Hokie has finished in the top eight in goals scored since Nyarko as well.

He finished as the team's leader in goals for the second straight season – yes, despite playing just 10 games last year, he tied for the team lead with two, while he scored four as a freshman. The team went 4-1-1 when he scored a goal in 2012.

Lastly, he registered his first collegiate hat trick, with the feat coming against VMI in late September, one of just three players in the ACC with a hat trick this season. And this wasn't your "blowout" kind that the previous two Hokies notched – Robert Albertio at Howard in 2010 in a 7-2 victory (ironically, Clemens had two goals in the match and assisted on Albertio's first goal) and Nyarko, also against VMI, in a 7-1 win in 2006.

Clemens accounted for all of Tech's tallies against the Keydets, scoring two in the opening half in the 31st and 42nd minutes. However, VMI cut the Tech lead in half at 2-1 before Clemens iced the game with his third goal with four minutes left to seal the victory.

"I had never done that [a hat trick] in college

soccer before, so it was really awesome. It took me back to my high school days when I had done it there," Clemens said. "But I'd rather score a late game-winning goal than have a hat trick because it's all about the team really and the success of this team. This year, we've really come a long ways from my freshman year, so I'd rather score the game-winning goal and get a win in that column."

Two components came together to get Clemens to where he is today. The first is his athletic ability, which he attributes to his father, Khris, who is described, according to the Siena College website, as "possibly the greatest second baseman in the history of Siena baseball."

Khris is still among the school's all-time leaders in stolen bases and runs scored, and played a summer in the prestigious Cape Cod League in 1982.

"Yeah, my dad played baseball in college. He's actually in the Hall of Fame for baseball at Siena College," Clemens said. "So when I was a kid, I played baseball. I was a right-handed pitcher, and I also played basketball and soccer. Then, as you get older, you have to commit more time to one or another, and I've always loved soccer the most, so I just stuck with that.

"I was probably like 12 years old when I started really focusing on soccer. I actually really didn't even like baseball all that much to be honest."

With his choice to pursue soccer, Clemens credited both his parents for his development,

GETTING TO KNOW DAVID CLEMENS

What's one interesting thing about you?

I have two tattoos, and I'm getting a third, a half sleeve soon. I really like them. I think it's a cool way to express yourself. I have one on my ribs. It's the name of my best friend, Robbie Hoch's dad, Larry, who just passed away from cancer. So we both got one for him.

The other one is for St. Christopher, and my half sleeve is going to be a bunch of art that the artist and I just came up with.

What's your favorite thing about playing soccer at Tech?

I just love how we get to play soccer every day, and we get the best facilities and treatment whenever you're hurt. Playing every day for me is the best part of being a student-athlete.

And the worst?

The school load. It's tough having to wake up early for practice and then having to go to classes, and you're dead tired and you

have to go to bed by like 10:30 every night. That's not the average life of other college students.

What do you enjoy doing in your free time?

I like to golf a lot. So some of us go golfing quite a bit on the Tech course, at least as much as possible. And a lot us play video games, FIFA mostly. We spend a lot of time doing that. FIFA13 just came out. I've got to go with Manchester United. That's my team. That's my squad in real life, too.

with his father providing much of the coaching and his mother, Nancy, providing a unique experience.

"My dad actually picked up soccer after college and really got into it," Clemens said. "He was my coach growing up. He was my coach for almost eight years, and he was a big part in my development.

"My mom works at a place called Afrim's Sports. It's a huge indoor soccer complex. It's got four 5-vs.-5 fields and a weight room, and mini fields. It's pretty much the ultimate soccer place, and I've pretty much grown up there. That's kind of how I developed playing soccer as well."

Indoor facilities are key in keeping kids advancing in any outdoor sport over the cold, winter months in Ballston Lake, N.Y., which is a 10-minute drive north of the New York state capital city of Albany. The area averages around 60 inches of snow a year.

But that wasn't the only factor that helped Clemens mature as a soccer player. It was literally the men around him who shaped and molded his talent.

"I was playing in the men's league with my dad's team when I was like 12," he said. "There are a lot of international players there because it's run by a guy from Albania, Afrim Nezaj. We're like family with him, and my mom's like

the head of that place. So he was always letting me play with the older guys.

"There was also an indoor professional team, a USL team called the New York Shockers, so I was growing up with all those guys all the time, and they always brought me in and let me play with them. I think that's really what was important in my development as a kid.

"There were all these Albanian guys and Jamaican guys, just international guys from everywhere. I still work with them in the summers. I helped build a turf field on one of the outside fields. It was just me and six of the guys, who are like 30 now, but they just dominate those men's leagues, and we're still pretty good friends."

Playing with those international guys at such a young age proved valuable for Clemens, who began to play against international players roughly his own age as he began competing with the New York state team. In 2005, he went to the United Kingdom to compete in soccer tournaments, and later on, with the regional Olympic Development Program team, he went to South Africa.


"That New York state team was real good. If you go back and look at those players, some of them are playing professionally already, and they are my age," Clemens said. "The rest are all

Division I guys, and that was a good team when we were younger. We went to Arsenal Festival [an international soccer tournament] and played teams from Iraq, Portugal, England, Germany, everywhere. And that was a great experience.

"I also went to South Africa, and we played a bunch of U-19 professional teams like the Kaizer Chiefs and Orlando Pirates, which are real big professional teams down there. So that was a good experience, too, because we were all like 17 and they were all 19, so it was a great challenge and honor to play them."

Whether it's in his backyard, at Tech, or in other countries, Clemens has always been playing against older, more experienced competition. Next year, his final season of collegiate soccer, the shoe will be on the other foot and maybe he can channel his high school exploits one more time.

As a senior at Shenendehowa, he led his team to the league title, the sectional crown and the state final four, all while tallying 23 goals and eight assists. He was named the area's co-Offensive Player of the Year and was voted an All-American.

Given those numbers, he certainly could be considered a scoring machine. Hopefully, he'll continue to find the net with even more regularity for the Hokies next season. 



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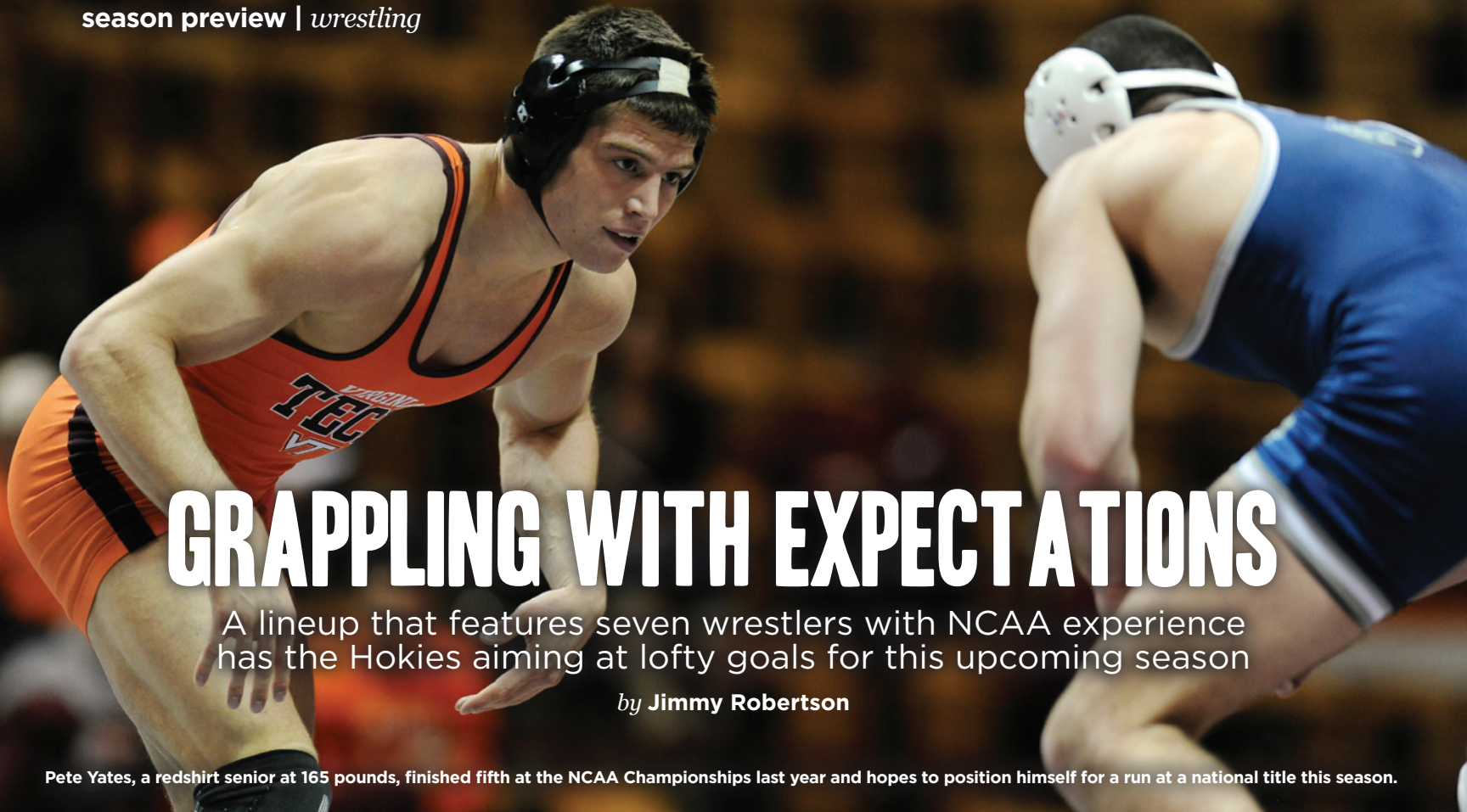
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POSITIONING THEMSELVES FOR BIG SEASON



The Virginia Tech wrestling program held its first practice of the season outdoors on the campus' Drillfield in an attempt to get the student body and faculty excited about what the wrestlers and coaches think could be a huge year.





GRAPPLING WITH EXPECTATIONS

A lineup that features seven wrestlers with NCAA experience has the Hokies aiming at lofty goals for this upcoming season

by Jimmy Robertson

Pete Yates, a redshirt senior at 165 pounds, finished fifth at the NCAA Championships last year and hopes to position himself for a run at a national title this season.

To give an indication of the expectations of the Virginia Tech wrestling team this season, one only needs to consider this:

Devin Carter is going into this season as a backup.

That's right. Last year's All-American, who finished fifth at the NCAA Championships at 133 pounds and who went 36-5 on the season, will be a backup at 141 pounds.

"He's a great backup," Tech wrestling coach Kevin Dresser joked.

Actually, Dresser plans to redshirt Carter this season to allow him to develop more and will use him only in the event of an emergency. But a loaded lineup gives Dresser that flexibility, as the Hokies go into 2012-13 looking to improve on their finish at the NCAA Championships from a year ago, when they tied for 11th.

The Hokies get three guys back who missed most, or all, of last season with injuries and another talented wrestler who redshirted a year ago. In all, Tech's lineup features seven former NCAA qualifiers at some point in their respective careers in the 10 weight classes, thus fueling the high expectations.

"On paper, it's pretty exciting just because of knowing the whole history of the past six years and what we inherited and what we started with to where we're at now," Dresser said. "However, there is no such thing as automatic in Division

I athletics when you're at the top 20 level. Even though we look pretty good on paper, nothing is automatic, and that's what we have to keep preaching to these guys and getting them to understand."

In 2006, Dresser was tasked with replacing former head coach Tom Brands, who departed for Iowa after two years and took five prominent wrestlers with him. Each year, though, Dresser made progress in rebuilding the program, culminating in last year's program-best finish at the NCAA Championships.

Six Tech wrestlers qualified for the NCAA Championships a year ago. Carter and Pete Yates earned All-America honors, and the Hokies came within a half of a point from placing in the top 10.

A deep lineup has Dresser optimistic that his group can reach that standard this season.

"I think we've arrived as a national presence," Dresser said. "We've proven we can get it done. Now, as a team and a program, we need to set a goal to be a top-10 team and top-10 program year in and year out. That's our goal. We placed 11th last year – we missed 10th by half a point – so we need to prove that we're a top-10 team year in and year out. That's a lot easier said than done."

Now, here is more of an in-depth look at the Hokies by weight class:

• **125 pounds** - Jarrod Garnett redshirted

last season, but the three-time NCAA qualifier (and two-time ACC champion) returns this season to make a bid for his fourth NCAA berth. He is a proven winner, with 96 career wins during his time at Tech – eighth-most in school history. Dresser goes into this season with high expectations for Garnett and justifiably so, given the young man's talent.

"Jarrod Garnett is a guy who needs to get it done for his sake," Dresser said. "He's really, really focused. A redshirt year last year was the very best thing for him. He's won a couple of ACC titles, and he's a three-time NCAA qualifier. It's time for him to get it done. He's putting pressure on himself in a good way, and he's really excited about the season. I think he learned a lot from watching last year."

Matt Peters, a redshirt junior, will be Garnett's backup.

• **133 pounds** - Erik Spjut, a redshirt junior, moves up to 133 pounds after wrestling last year at 125. Spjut went 28-15 last season and qualified for the NCAA Championships, which was a tremendous accomplishment considering it took great discipline for him to keep his weight down to wrestle at 125. So he should fit in better at 133.

"He made a heckuva sacrifice last year," Dresser said. "He's got one of the best work ethics on the team, but Erik needs to figure out how to get it done when he competes. This will be a

big year for him. He's struggled offensively, and he needs to figure out a way to score points. It doesn't matter if it's football or wrestling, you've got to get some touchdowns, and we've got to get some touchdowns at 133."

Jordan O'Donnell, a sophomore, backs up Spjut at 133.

• **141 pounds** - Zach Neibert returns to this spot after a season in which he finished third at the ACC Championships, but qualified for the NCAA Championships and made it to the quarterfinals before losing to N.C. State's Darius Little, who beat him three times last season. Still, Neibert, a redshirt junior, went 22-12 and Dresser expects more of the same this season.

"He's the best gamer on the team," Dresser said. "He likes the limelight. Zach had a growth spurt, and he is really having to be disciplined with his weight this year. What he does before practice and after practice each day is really going to dictate a lot of his success. He's going to have to have a lot of discipline. Training is going to be his buzzword. He's got to make sure he feels good out there. If he doesn't feel good, it's going to be hard to win, no matter how much of a gamer you are."

Carter would be the guy at this weight class in the event of a Neibert injury. Redshirting gives Carter the opportunity to get stronger and develop his game. Most wrestlers redshirt at

some point in their careers, and now is the best time for Carter to take his redshirt year.

"His goal is to be a national champion – two times – and we need to put him in the best position to do that," Dresser said. "But Devin also knows that there is a possible scenario in which he might wrestle this year. A lot has to happen, but our plan is to redshirt him."

• **149 pounds** - Outside of Carter and Yates, Nick Brascetta was the Hokies' most consistent performer, and he returns at 149. A year ago, he was the ACC champion at this weight class, earning the league's rookie of the year honor, and qualified for the NCAA Championships. He upset ninth-seeded David Habat of Edinboro in the first round before losing his next two matches. He finished his season with a 10-5 record after missing a portion of the season with an ankle injury.

"He's one of the most skilled guys on the team," Dresser said. "He has to learn how to generate more offense. If he could do that, he could be an All-American this year for us."

Dresser plans on having Lex Ozias as the backup at 149, but he first wants to use the redshirt freshman at 157, as Jesse Dong works his way back from injury. Chad Strube, a sophomore, also will work at 149 pounds.

• **157 pounds** - The aforementioned Dong

went 7-0 last season before injuring his shoulder in practice, and the surgery ruined his season. Dong applied for a medical hardship waiver from the NCAA and received it, thus enabling him to come back for this season. Now, like Garnett, the redshirt senior will be shooting for his third ACC championship and fourth NCAA Championship berth. Dong went 20-3 during his junior season.

"He's one of the top five guys in the nation right now, just like Jarrod," Dresser said. "He's one of the leaders on our team and one of the hardest-working guys in our room. He's got to take it day to day and continue to get better. If he does, he'll be right in the thick of it at the NCAA tournament.

"He's about 90 percent healthy. We're going to be a little cautious with him. We're not going to wrestle him a lot early. We'll see how he progresses."

Matt Stephens, a sophomore, and Sal Mastriani, a freshman, go in as the backups at 157.

• **165 pounds** - Yates, who earned All-America honors a year ago at the NCAA Championships by finishing fifth in this weight class, returns for his senior season. Yates, who is a three-time NCAA qualifier, went 28-7 a year ago and has 97 wins in his career – seventh-most in school history. He goes into this season with

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national championship aspirations, though that probably will require beating Penn State's David Taylor, who won the national title last year and is 70-1 the past two seasons.

"Pete is battle tested now," Dresser said. "To get fifth in the nation [last year], he had one heckuva tough road, and he did it. Pete's excited about this year. He's one of the quiet leaders on our team, and probably the most skilled guy on our team. He's the most fun to watch. He can score from every position."

Sophomore Issah Meade will be the backup to Yates at 165.

• **174 pounds** - The uncertainty in Tech's lineup lies within this weight class. A year ago, junior Chris Moon finished second at the ACC Championships and qualified for the NCAA Championships, but Dresser plans on redshirting Moon and then moving him to 165 pounds, where he appears to be a better fit.

Thus, the battle will be between Austin Gabel and John Dickson. Gabel, a redshirt freshman, went 15-6 while competing in unattached events a year ago, while Dickson, a senior, went 14-17 overall and 1-4 in the ACC.

"We've also got a true freshman in Huston Evans who could be the guy, and then possibly Chris Moon, if none of the other guys gets the job done," Dresser said. "I feel like we've got four guys, but not 'one' guy. Chris is the best guy, but I don't feel he's a 174-pounder. He qualified for the NCAA tournament last year at the wrong weight just because he's such a good wrestler."

• **184 pounds** - Nick Vetterlein returns after a season in which he wrestled at 197 pounds. The redshirt junior went 24-11 overall and 4-1 in ACC matches, but he struggled at the higher weight class at the ACC Championships, losing as a third seed to sixth-seeded Brian Self of Duke and then falling to fifth-seeded KaRonne Jones 11-8 in the

consolations. Thus, he did not qualify for the NCAA Championships.

The move down to 184 pounds, though, figures to be a good one for Vetterlein, and by extension, the Hokies.

"He's got tons of ability," Dresser said. "He could really be a pleasant surprise for us. He was really good early last year and then faded on us. I don't think he was used to the grind or the pressure, but that experience last year should bode well for him."

Sam Law, a redshirt sophomore, goes into the season as the backup at 184.

• **197 pounds** - Two guys are battling for the starting nod at this class, with Derrick Borlie, a transfer from Wisconsin, slightly leading Bobby Lavelle, a sophomore. Borlie went 21-8 as a freshman at Wisconsin and would have been eligible for Tech last January. But he suffered a torn ACL, thus putting him out for all of last season. Lavelle redshirted last year after going 11-10 as a true freshman.

"We'll treat him like Jesse Dong - we'll watch him closely and pick and choose when we wrestle him in November," Dresser said of Borlie. "Bobby Lavelle has also done a good job for us. He moved down from heavyweight, and he's in his third year. He could be a factor. Then, the final guy is Darren Hankins, who is a hard-working guy."

Hankins is a sophomore who went 4-9 a year ago.

• **Heavyweight** - David Marone returns as the Hokies' heavyweight after being granted a sixth year by the NCAA. Marone missed two seasons because of injury - a shoulder injury ruined his 2009-10 season and then he tore his ACL last year - and that enabled him to get the sixth year.

A year ago, Marone was 5-0 before tearing his

ACL. The two-time NCAA qualifier went 20-10 in 2010-11, qualifying for the NCAA Championships after finishing second at the ACC Championships.


"David has been looking good," Dresser said. "We're going to pick and choose how we wrestle him early on. His knee doesn't bother him, but he's not quite in shape. We can make up some ground there, though. I think he's going to have a good season for us."

Dresser plans on redshirting senior Chris Penny, who went 12-8 overall and 5-0 in the ACC last year. He was the runner-up at the ACC championships at heavyweight. So Ty Walz, a true freshman, will be the backup behind Marone.

This lineup will be tested early on, as the Hokies take on Big 10 foes such as Ohio State and Wisconsin, future ACC member Pittsburgh, and Edinboro of the Eastern Wrestling League. In addition, the Hokies will compete at the NWCA National Duals held in Corvallis, Ore., in mid-February.

Tech can compete with the best in the country, but the key will be remaining healthy. A year ago, the Hokies lost Dong, Borlie and Marone to injuries, and that hurt the team's finish at both the ACC Championships and the NCAA Championships.

"We could have been top five last year, if we were healthy," Dresser said. "We didn't qualify [for the NCAA Championships] at heavyweight or at 157, so that was a huge turn of events."

"So we're going to make sure our guys are healthy going into January. I really feel like this team is going to hit its stride in January. We'll just compete the whole month of November and get our guys healthy. If we stay healthy, we'll hit our stride in January. We have some big goals, and we want to be ready to attain them." 



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