

INSIDE

HOKIESPORTS

The Official Publication of Virginia Tech Athletics



REPEAT PERFORMANCE

Led by game MVP Tyrod Taylor, the Hokies rolled past BC to their second straight ACC championship and a spot in the Orange Bowl

INSIDE: Tasmin Fanning is running her way up the list among the best Tech athletes ever

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Orion Martin



UPCOMING ATHLETIC EVENTS



DECEMBER

29	WOMEN'S BASKETBALL HOKIE HARDWOOD CLASSIC	
	LIBERTY VS. NC A&T	5 P.M.
	HOKIES VS. LAFAYETTE	7 P.M.
30	WOMEN'S BASKETBALL HOKIE HARDWOOD CLASSIC	
	LAFAYETTE VS. LIBERTY/NC A&T	5 P.M.
	HOKIES VS. LIBERTY/NC A&T	7 P.M.

JANUARY

5	WOMEN'S BASKETBALL VS. PRESBYTERIAN	7 P.M.
8	WOMEN'S BASKETBALL VS. FLORIDA ST.	7 P.M.
	GIRL SCOUTS NIGHT – ACC HOME OPENER!!	

JANUARY

9 & 10	TRACK & FIELD VT INVITATIONAL	ALL DAY
10	MEN'S BASKETBALL VS. VIRGINIA	4 P.M.
	100TH YEAR ANNIVERSARY GLASSES GIVEAWAY (SPONSORED BY COCA-COLA)	
14	MEN'S BASKETBALL VS. RICHMOND (VT F/S NIGHT)	7 P.M.
16 & 17	TRACK & FIELD VT HOKIE INVITATIONAL	ALL DAY
16	WOMEN'S BASKETBALL VS. DUKE	6:30 P.M.
	PACK THE HOUSE!! HOKIEBIRD BOBBLEHEAD DOLL GIVEAWAY!	
17	MEN'S BASKETBALL VS. BOSTON COLLEGE	4 P.M.
18	WRESTLING VS. RUTGERS & VM!	3 P.M.
21	WOMEN'S BASKETBALL VS. VIRGINIA	7 P.M.
	ORANGE EFFECT GAME!! VT CROCS GIVEAWAY! SIMON SEZ AT HALFTIME!	

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ONLINE GIVING

Online giving has become as much a part of our society as a Tech victory on a fall Saturday. Each year, we see more and more Hokie Club members choosing to make their Hokie Club gift using our online giving page on hokieclub.com. This phenomenon has become such a standard that in fiscal year 2007-2008, Virginia Tech was ranked #1 by the Chronicle of Philanthropy in total money raised through online giving.

If you want to follow suit and are interested in making your Hokie Club donation online, the process is easy. Simply log onto hokieclub.com and look for the maroon CONTRIBUTE ONLINE tab located at the top center of the page just below the header. One click will take you to our secure online giving page and you are on your way to making your payment. And remember, make sure to use the comments field if you have any important information that we need to know about your gift.



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



I have the mindset that everything we do as volunteers has helped Virginia Tech get to where it is!

Wade Kennedy

Hokie Club Level:

Golden Hokie

Family members:

Jeanie, Class of '86 (wife), and three sons Curt (12), Andrew (10), Charlie (6)

Q: What year did you graduate?

A: 1986

Q: A Hokie is...

A: Someone who is a supporter of Virginia Tech!

Q: The Hokie Nation is real because...

A: It's everywhere. You see it, live it, breathe it!

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

A: As a senior in high school, I took a few college visits and fell in love with Virginia Tech and Blacksburg on a weekend in the fall of 1981. On the drive home, I remember thinking it would be great to go to school in Blacksburg!

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

A: I lived a sports memory of VT athletics for four years from 1982-1986 as a student while Dell Curry played basketball for Tech. It was great to watch the many upsets in person (didn't miss a home game in my four years), especially against Memphis and Louisville. There are great memories of Perry Young, Bobby Beecher, camping out overnight in the Cassell for tickets, the NIT game vs. Georgia Tech, etc.

Q: I'm a Hokie Club member because ...

A: My wife, Jeanie, and I wanted a way to give back to the school. Back in 1993 when we bought season tickets for the first time, I asked the Hokie Club how we could get involved and volunteer for the university. I became a Hokie Rep and it has been a pretty wild ride!

Q: What accomplishment by the Richmond Hokie Club makes you the proudest?

A: To be able to go back to Blacksburg and see our name attached to many of the facilities improvements of the past 15 years: the south end zone, the west side expansion, the 17th hole at the Pete Dye River Course, and the soon-to-be-built basketball practice facility. It's living proof of the hard work that the Richmond Hokie Club has been doing for the past 20 years!

Q: My all-time favorite Virginia Tech student-athlete is...

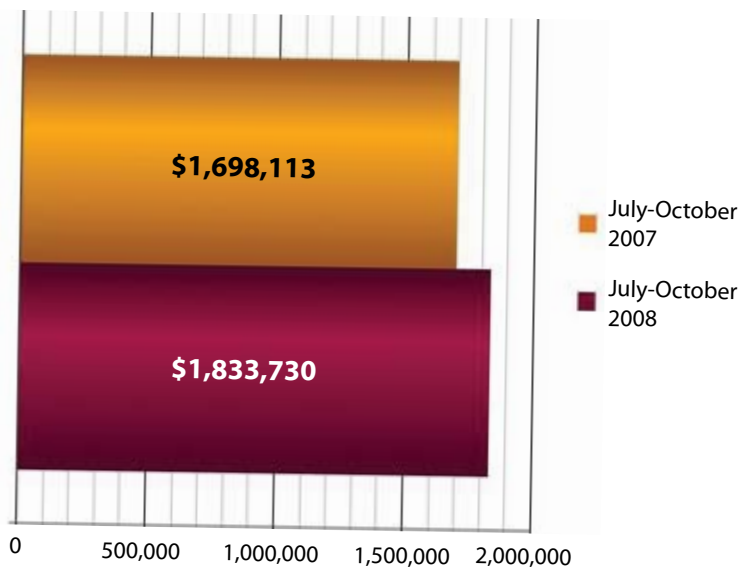
A: Jeanie Appich Kennedy, class of 1986, Field Hockey. She started as a freshman on a Virginia Tech team that was nationally ranked, lost to ODU, the eventual undefeated the National Champs 2-1 (she scored!). I hope our kids get her athletic ability!

FINANCIAL CORNER

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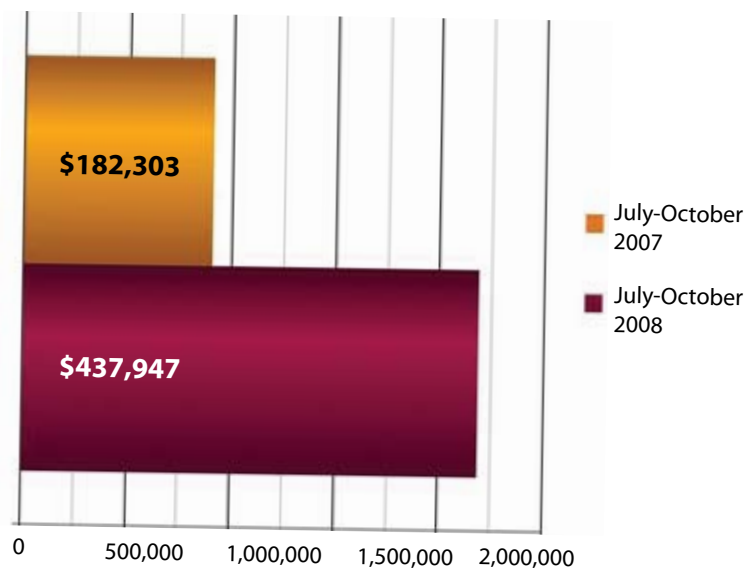
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Comparison between July-Oct. 2007 & July-Oct. 2008



Endowment:

Comparison between July-Oct. 2007 & July-Oct. 2008



"Thank you so much for your monetary donations and overall support here at Virginia Tech. I am truly grateful to have this college experience. After college, I know that I will be well prepared for the real world. A big thanks to the Hokie Club."

Amber Hall
Senior, Women's Basketball

Important Dates to Remember

- December 24, 2008** Hokie Club Office Closes at Noon
- December 25 & 26, 2008** Hokie Club Office Closed
- December 31, 2008** Benefits Deadline (*Must strictly adhere to this date for tax purposes)
- January 1 & 2, 2009** Hokie Club Office Closed

*Hokie Club Office is closed when university is closed.

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

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Hokieclub.com



Anniversary Month vs. Benefits Deadline

When a person joins the Hokie Club by making an annual donation (payment in full), he or she will be considered active for a 12-month period. The month you join becomes your "anniversary month." The anniversary month is used to track the person's giving and will be used as a reminder for membership renewal at the end of his/her 12-month period.

Not only does this system serve as a reminder for us to communicate with you, it also allows a more even flow of gift processing and operating income for the Hokie Club. The Hokie Club is billed each semester for tuition expenses for our student-athletes. In addition, we have the normal monthly operating costs including telephones, mailings, equipment leases, salaries, etc. By making your gift during your anniversary month, you can play another key role in support of the Hokies.

Completely separate from one's anniversary month is the benefits deadline. To effectively utilize the Hokie Club point priority system, the Hokie Club has designated December 31 of each year as the benefits deadline. Using the Hokie Club Point Priority System, the Hokie Club will rank all donors and use their rank as of that date for all benefits for the upcoming year, including benefits for football season tickets and parking, basketball season tickets and parking, bowl game tickets, etc. For example, the benefits deadline of December 31, 2008 will be used for all benefits for 2009.

Remember, every Hokie Club member who gives an annual donation (Hokie Club, Orange & Maroon Hokie, Bronze Hokie, Silver Hokie, Golden Hokie, Platinum Hokie and Diamond Hokie) has an anniversary month that coincides with their initial month of joining the Hokie Club. The moving of the benefits deadline to year end was not intended to change the donor's anniversary month and was not intended to move donor's giving to a calendar-year cycle.

AS A REMINDER:

- At the end of your 12-month membership period, you will receive reminder notices to renew your membership. If your membership is not renewed upon the completion of your 12-month membership period, you will lose ACTIVE member status, you may lose years of continuous membership points and you will not receive your copy of *Inside Hokie Sports*.
- 'Hokie Matic' and quarterly donor memberships are set up on a calendar-year basis.





Benefits Deadline: December 31, 2008

Attention Hokie Club members, don't let the new year begin by forgetting about the last day of 2008. December 31 is the benefits deadline for all Hokie Club members. The Hokie Club will use your Point Priority Rank on this day to assign all Hokie Club related benefits throughout 2009.

Because of the university's holiday schedule and the bowl game schedule, please make every effort to not wait until the last moment if you need to speak with the Hokie Club staff or visit with our office. Checks must be postmarked by December 31 and online contributions must be made at hokieclub.com before midnight, December 31.

14 Men's Hoops Longwood 2 PM Women's Hoops James Madison 4 PM	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24 1/2 day University closed	25  University closed	26 University closed	27
28	29  Women's Hoops Hardwood Classic 7 PM	30 Women's Hoops Hardwood Classic 7 PM	31 Benefits Deadline	1 University closed	2 University closed	3
4  Women's Hoops Presbyterian 7 PM	5	6	7	8 Women's Hoops Florida State * 7 PM	9	10  Men's Hoops Virginia * 4 PM
11	12	13	14  Men's Hoops Richmond 7 PM	15	16 Women's Hoops Duke * 6:30 PM	17 Men's Hoops Boston College * 4 PM





FROM THE
**EDITOR'S
DESK**

Jimmy Robertson

ACC championship obviously worth celebrating, but the biggest game of the season lies ahead for the Hokies

Following Tech's precise dismantling of BC in the ACC title game, league commissioner John Swofford stood tall in the Hokies' noisy locker room and gave the commonplace congratulatory speech to the winning team.

Then he delivered a pointed message to the group related to the approaching Orange Bowl game.

"Go to win," he said rather strongly.

Perhaps Swofford's reasoning was partially selfish. After all, the league's record in BCS games stands at 1-9, the worst among the six conferences in the BCS. So he wants to see the Hokies reduce the heat on his own hide.

But amidst all the celebration following the game, Tech head coach Frank Beamer wasted about less than 60 seconds before echoing Swofford's message. He brought up the bowl game and told his charges that he plans on some changes in the Hokies' bowl preparation.

"We've lost the last two [the Chick-fil-A Bowl and last year's Orange] and I thought we had a great chance to win the last two," Beamer said to the media shortly after the game. "The thing I've learned is that those things stay with you for a little while. The alumni don't forget those things quickly. We didn't either.

"It's very, very important that we not only represent the ACC well in this Orange Bowl, but also that we make the preparation we need to go and win this Orange Bowl."

This column isn't meant to diminish what this team accomplished. Quite the contrary, Tech won the ACC title despite having more than 40 percent of its roster as underclassmen, despite going through a rigorous road stretch in which it played one home game in a 53-day span, and despite season-ending injuries robbing the team of a couple of starters and several key integral parts.

This season was exhilarating and excruciating. It was formidable and fortunate. It was everything in between. And it certainly deserves to be celebrated. For a couple of weeks, too.

But the biggest game of the season for Tech is staring – maybe glaring – right at the Hokies.

Tech gets set to take on a Cincinnati team that won the Big East, the Hokies' old home. The Bearcats enter the game with a sporty 11-2 mark and looking to make a name for themselves after earning their first major bowl bid in school history.

Sound familiar? Kansas, maybe? Last year, the Jayhawks played in the Orange Bowl for the first time since 1969 and knocked off the Hokies. It marked Tech's second straight bowl loss and their fourth in the past five bowl games. Hence, changes are in order.

"We're probably going to practice a couple more times, and not have as much window in between practices," defensive coordinator Bud Foster said. "We're just going to do some things to just keep our timing going. We've given the kids in the past a break. We're going to probably practice a few more times on the weekend – go more

of a Friday, Saturday, Sunday instead of just maybe a Saturday"

Following the ACC title game win over BC, Tech's senior leaders seemed receptive to the idea.

"I guess we're going to practice a little harder than we have been. That doesn't sound too good to tell you the truth," center Ryan Shuman joked. "Nah, it's been a while since we've won one [a bowl game]. We need to go out there and put on a good show."


"I think the guys have been enjoying the bowl too much and the game's down the list [of priorities], maybe third or fourth on the list," defensive end Orion Martin said. "The game needs to be top priority and I think that's what we're trying to get back to.


"We need a big win in the bowl game. Whatever we need to do, we're willing to do."

"It's time for a change," cornerback Macho Harris said. "Definitely, if you're losing, it's time for a change."

Shuman, Martin, Harris and the rest of the seniors have two ACC championship titles under their belts. That obviously is something in which to take much pride.

But they could go down tied as the winningest class in Tech history with a victory (last year's class went 42-11; this year's is currently 41-12). They could lead the Hokies to 10 wins for the fifth straight year, something only Texas and Southern Cal can claim. They could close their careers with an Orange Bowl victory, the perfect ending.

Go to win. Sounds like the perfect motto for this team in the coming weeks, doesn't it? 

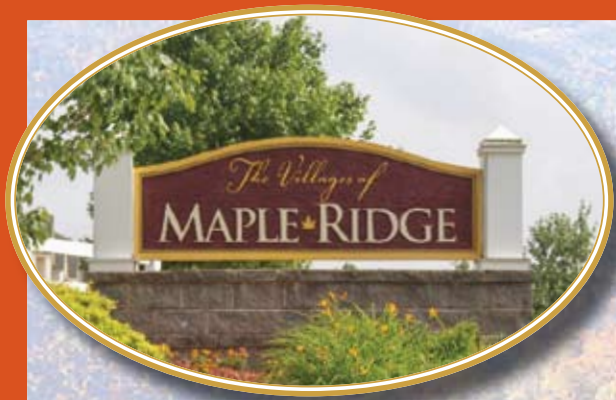


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THE HUDSON TEAM





Bill Roth

SOME CHAMPIONSHIP RUNS ARE UNLIKELY – and those ARE THE BEST

Sometimes, the most unlikely championships are the sweetest.

Virginia Tech has been down the road to the Sugar Bowl or Orange Bowl before, as we know. Great teams delivered conference titles, followed by BCS bowls and glitzy rings.

But this year is different, and in a way, sweeter than the others.

Virginia Tech's 2008 team had too many holes to fill to make a BCS game, didn't it?

The Hokies had too much attrition, too many injuries and too much inexperience to win it all again, no?

And even as late as November, during an ugly, sluggish win over Duke, the Hokies didn't really look the part.

Another ACC title? We just should've listened to Tech defensive end Jason Worilds way back in August.

Sitting on Tech's practice field, watching his teammates throw the ball around on a humid summer day, Worilds suggested the 2008 Hokies would 'shock the world' by winning the ACC. When reminded that many preseason magazines were picking Virginia Tech as one of the league's preseason favorites, Worilds smiled and offered a reasonable response.

"Well, they have to pick *someone*," he suggested.

"This is one of the closest groups of guys I've ever been around," he continued. "We lost a lot of players from last year, but there's something about this team. You'll see."

Four months later, we all know what Worilds was talking about.

Whatever that somewhat hard to describe yet very real intangible is – that thing that makes a difference between an average season and a winning season, between a mediocre team and a championship one and between losing and winning – this 2008 Tech team had it.

Being frank for a moment, Virginia Tech has



Jason Worilds

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"4/16/08, 3 AM"

Photo by Ivan Morozov
(\$300 Framed)

had more talented rosters in recent years. Heck, the Hokies sent 13 players from last year's team to NFL camps.

But has Tech had a better 'team' than its 2008 group? Has Tech had a closer group of guys who valued chemistry and camaraderie over playing time and statistics?

At the Hokies' second preseason scrimmage at Lane Stadium, John Ballein, Tech's associate AD for football operations and not a guy to volunteer faint praise, suggested this was "the best group of guys we've had here in 20 years."

What Worlids and Ballein saw in August doesn't show up in stat sheets. There is no column for heart or toughness or self-sacrifice, but in the end, that's why the Hokies brought home another ACC championship trophy.

When he separated his shoulder during the game at Miami, Worlids insisted doctors pop it back in place so he could return to the game, which he did.

When Kenny Lewis, Jr., and Davon Morgan suffered season-ending injuries, the two remained involved, attending practices and meetings. Lewis, in fact, became running backs coach Billy Hite's new assistant.

And when media members and talk-show callers trashed the team, it just motivated the coaches and players to work even harder.

The improvement was dramatic.

Wide receivers who couldn't even line up correctly in Chapel Hill (remember Tech taking consecutive time outs?) were making drive-extending, clutch, diving grabs in the championship game. Defensive ends who lost containment on option plays against East Carolina were hammering quarterbacks and fullbacks by season's end. And a tailback who rushed for only 27 timid yards on 17 carries at BC in October ended up smashing school and league records, as well as Eagle defenders, in the rematch in Tampa.

Head coach Frank Beamer promised his team would improve as this season progressed, and while it took a while longer than Beamer,

or any Hokie fan, would've liked, one third-down play in the second quarter in this year's ACC championship game showed how far this team has come.

Tailback Darren Evans picked up blitzing linebacker Mark Herzlich, the league's defensive player of the year, and knocked him off his feet. That play allowed quarterback Tyrod Taylor to deliver a key completion to Dyrell Roberts. The drive continued, and Hokies scored to take a 14-0 lead.

The play probably doesn't happen in Chestnut Hill in October. It might not have happened two weeks ago against Duke.

They believed they'd get better, and they believed they'd win.

"No one on the corner have swagger like us" – it's become the Hokies' late-season theme.

T.I., Jay-Z, Kanye West, Lil Wayne and M.I.A might be singing that song, but Virginia Tech's football team is living it.

From pregame warm-ups to the postgame locker room, 'Swag' has been the word for the Hokies since the song was released in September. It shows a confidence and a belief this team has in itself.

Maybe the media doubted. Maybe even some fans. But in the locker room? Too much swag to lose, baby.

On the surface, the story of Tech's 2008 season looks similar to the 2007 campaign – Tech struggles on offense for much of the season, finds its form late, avenges a regular-season loss to BC in the ACC championship game, sees its defense score a clinching touchdown in the fourth quarter, and sees the Hokies' QB is named MVP.

But 2008 was much different and that's why the reaction in the locker room was more emotional and tearful and together.

Last year's team might have had the bigger names, but this year's team is tighter and together and committed.

It's a real team, one that brought the Hokie Nation one of its sweetest titles ever.

Keys with FG – and season – to remember

A year ago, Dustin Keys didn't even get to dress for the ACC championship game. But as he has all season, he made the most of his opportunities.

Keys, a fifth-year senior from Stafford, Va., nailed a career-long 50-yard field goal in the third quarter that gave the Hokies a 17-7 lead. It marked the longest field goal in ACC championship game history.

Keys now has made 21 of his 26 field-goal attempts this season. He has one game left and needs just one field goal to tie the Tech single-season record set by Chris Kinzer in 1986 and tied in 1998 by Shayne Graham.


Though not young, Keys' improvement has resembled that of a lot of the Hokies' younger players. He just kept getting better and better.

Tech 'D' closes strongly

In a critical home game against Georgia Tech back in September, the Hokies managed to escape with a three-point victory even though Tech's young defense allowed 278 yards rushing and 387 yards of total offense.

The Hokies, however, did not come close to allowing those numbers the remainder of the schedule, as this Orion Martin-led group shut down opponents, particularly in the second half of the season.

BC finished with 308 yards of total offense, snapping Tech's string of six straight games of allowing 250 total yards or less. Still, it was a strong performance by Bud Foster's unit, which forced four turnovers and recorded five sacks.

Tech ranks in the top 20 in the four major defensive categories – total defense (7th, 277.08 ypg), scoring defense (13th, 17.5 ppg), rush defense (19th, 107 ypg) and pass defense (15th, 170.08 ypg). That's a pretty strong accomplishment for a group that saw Brandon Flowers, Xavier Adibi, Chris Ellis and others depart after last season. 



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News & Notes

By Jimmy Robertson

Harris named first-team All-ACC; seven others honored

Orion Martin has gone from walk-on to scholarship player to starter in his four-plus years at Tech.

He can add All-ACC player to that list.

Martin, a defensive end from Martinsville, Va., was one of eight Hokies to receive All-ACC recognition in voting conducted by the Atlantic Coast Sports Media Association, the media group for the ACC that selects the all-conference teams. The redshirt senior earned second-team honors following a season in which he ranks fifth on the team with 53 tackles. He leads the team with 7.5 sacks and ranks third in the ACC in that category. He is second on the squad with 13 tackles for a loss, a number that ranks tied for seventh in the ACC.

"I was excited," Martin said of his thoughts when he found out the news. "I was thankful. I've come a long way and to finally get your name up there with all those other guys – I was happy. All that hard work has paid off."

Tech cornerback Macho Harris earned first-team All-ACC honors – the only Hokie to be named to the first team. In addition to Martin, three other Hokies received a second-team nod, while three earned honorable mention honors.

Harris, a senior from Highland Springs, Va., made the first team for the second year in a row as a cornerback. He currently ranks tied for third in the ACC in interceptions with six, two of which he returned for touchdowns. He has 44 tackles (31 solo), including 2.5 for loss, two forced fumbles and a fumble recovery. His interception total and his 13 passes defended lead the team. Harris also returns punts and has played offense this year.

Jason Worilds, a defensive end from Cartaret, N.J., was a second-team selection, along with offensive

guard Sergio Render and tailback Darren Evans. Despite playing with a bum shoulder, Worilds has 62 tackles (37 solo) and eight sacks. He leads the team with 18.5 tackles for a loss and 21 hurries. Render, a junior from Newnan, Ga., started every game at right guard for Tech this season.

Evans, a redshirt freshman from Indianapolis, finished second in the voting for the ACC's rookie of the year behind N.C. State quarterback Russell Wilson. Evans broke Kevin Jones' freshman rushing record at Tech, eclipsing the 1,000-yard mark for the season with his performance in the ACC championship game.

The three who earned honorable mention honors were center Ryan Shuman, left guard Nick Marshman and kicker Dustin Keys. Shuman, a redshirt senior from Fork Union, Va., has started every game and was the highest grader on Tech's offensive line for the entire season. Marshman, a redshirt senior from Harrisonburg, Va., has started every game at left guard, and Keys, a redshirt senior from Stafford, Va., hit 21 of 26 field-goal attempts heading into the ACC title game, needing just two more to break the Tech single-season record for field goals in a season.

Georgia Tech's Paul Johnson was named the ACC's coach of the year, while Yellow Jackets' tailback Jonathan Dwyer was the league's offensive player of the year and BClinebacker Mark Herzlich was the ACC defensive player of the year.

Collins goes in NDBL draft

Former Virginia Tech standout Coleman Collins was the sixth player selected in the 2008 NBA Development League Draft on Nov. 7th. The Fort Wayne Mad Ants made Collins their first selection.

Collins played in Germany last season after completing his Hokie career in 2007. He played for the Toronto Raptors' summer league team in 2008 and was signed earlier this year by the Phoenix Suns before being released during training camp.

Collins currently ranks 32nd in career scoring at Virginia Tech with 1,144 points. He also ranks 10th in career blocked shots for the Hokies with 106.


The NBA Development League is the top minor league in professional basketball and each team is affiliated with NBA teams. The Fort Wayne Mad Ants are affiliated with the Detroit Pistons and Indiana Pacers. They began their 2008-09 season on Nov. 28 at home against the expansion Erie Bayhawks. As of Dec. 3rd, Collins had started every game and was averaging 12 points and 7.7 rebounds per game.

Tech grounds crew takes in another top honor

The Virginia Tech grounds crew won yet another honor recently when the turf on Worsham Field received the 2008 college football Field of the Year Award, as handed out by the Sports Turf Managers Association. A panel of seven judges independently scored each entry based on playability and appearance of the playing surfaces, innovative solutions employed, effective use of budget and the development and implementation of a comprehensive, sound agronomic program.

Jason Bowers, Tech's sports turf and athletic grounds manager, oversees the crew that keeps Worsham Field in top shape.

"The Field of the Year Award validates the intense dedication of our members," said Kim Heck, CEO of the Sports Turf Managers Association. "Each year, STMA awards no more than 13 Fields of the Year, so a very small percentage of our members are winners. Jason and his crew are very deserving of this prestigious award."

This marks the second major award won by Bowers and his crew in the past two years. A year ago, they received the 2007 Field of Excellence Award from Pioneer Athletics, a company that specializes in painting lines and logos on playing fields. 

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Darren Evans recorded his third 100-yard rushing game of the season, piling up 114 yards in Tech's 30-12 win over BC in the ACC title game.

ACC CHAMPIONSHIP GAME NOTES

Taylor named ACC title game MVP: Tech quarterback Tyrod Taylor was named the game's MVP after accounting for two of Tech's touchdowns, both of the rushing variety. He scored on runs of 5 and 4 yards, which marked his fifth and sixth rushing touchdowns of the season. He has rushed for at least two touchdowns in three games this season and now has 12 rushing touchdowns for his career.

Taylor needs just two rushing touchdowns to tie the Tech single-season record for rushing touchdowns by a QB. Michael Vick rushed for eight touchdowns in both 1999 and 2000.

Martin notches a first: Defensive end Orion Martin scored his first collegiate touchdown when he returned a fumble 17 yards for a score in the fourth quarter that gave the Hokies a 30-10 lead.

"It felt great," Martin said. "I was happy on top of getting the win. Words can't explain what I was feeling at the time. It all happened so fast. But I'm so thankful to be a part of this team."

Martin became the fourth defensive player to score a touchdown this season for the Hokies and the score marked the 79th by the defense in head coach Frank Beamer's tenure.

Evans breaks 1,000-yard plateau: Tech tailback Darren Evans broke the 1,000-yard plateau on his first carry of the game. His 114-yard performance puts him at 1,112 yards for the season.

The redshirt freshman from Indianapolis, Ind., became just the sixth freshman in ACC history to rush for 1,000 yards in a season. He also has the 10th-most rushing yards in a single season in Tech history.

"I couldn't ask for more [out of this season]," said Evans, who rushed for a Tech single-game record 253 yards in the Hokies' victory over Maryland.

Virgil with another pick: Tech cornerback Stephan Virgil intercepted BC quarterback Dominique Davis and returned it to the BC 10 in the third quarter, setting up a Tech touchdown that gave the Hokies a commanding 24-7 lead. The interception marked the fifth of the season for Virgil, a stat that ranks second on the team behind Macho Harris (six).

As a team, Tech has 15 interceptions on the season, with Virgil and Harris combining for 11 of those.

ANOTHER FRESHLY SQUEEZED CHAMPIONSHIP

THE HOKIES ARE HEADED BACK TO THE ORANGE BOWL AFTER KNOCKING OFF BC TO CLAIM THE ACC TITLE FOR THE SECOND STRAIGHT YEAR *By Jimmy Robertson*

For roughly 15 minutes or so, one of the locker rooms in Raymond James Stadium down in Tampa turned into a dance club.

Once the Hokies got through the formalities of receiving an invitation from the Orange Bowl officials following their victory over Boston College in the ACC championship game – and accepting that invitation, of course – the players called for head coach Frank Beamer to get things started.

And Tech's 62-year-old had no problems showing his ... well ... unique moves in front of a room bursting full of 18- to 22-year-old testosterone. Neither did the rest of Tech's veteran staff, as one by one, every coach busted out a move or two in front of the team and each one brought forth a raucous display of laughter. Jim Weaver, Tech's AD, Mike Gentry, Tech's longtime strength and conditioning coach, and Mike Goforth, the Hokies' top trainer, also got into the act.

Even team chaplain Johnny Shelton showed some moves.

It was truly a sight to behold.

Such are the gleeful things that happen when a team claims its second straight ACC title, as the Hokies did, winning by their largest margin of the season – 30-12 – over Boston College. It marked

Tech's third ACC title in five years, but none more special than this one.

"This is really good," said Beamer in the postgame media session, minutes removed from his impromptu jig and soaked with both sweat and Gatorade from the traditional bath he got at the end of the game. "I've said it before, but this is the youngest football team we've had in some time, with the toughest schedule, and we've had some key injuries. We've had some people give up on us.

"But this team hung together when it was tough. It goes back to leadership and we stayed together. To come back and win this ACC championship, it says a lot about the kids in this program and the coaching staff we have."

Having lost to BC three of the previous four meetings, including once in Chestnut Hill, Mass., earlier this season, Tech started break-dancing early on in this one. On the Hokies' second possession of the game, they sent a message, methodically driving 61 yards in 10 plays.

Starting quarterback Tyrod Taylor, fresh off an outstanding game against Virginia (he rushed for 137 yards and threw for 137), completed all three of his pass attempts on the drive (for 36 yards), and got in the end zone with a 5-yard run on third-and-4. Keys' extra point gave the Hokies a 7-0 lead with 6:27 left in the first quarter.

"It was a called pass," Taylor said of the touchdown. "But I knew if the defensive end came up the field, then I was going to take off and that's what I ended up doing. I've got to credit the blocking by the backfield and by our linemen."

Taylor and the Hokies grooved away again early in the second quarter. A 15-yard punt return by Macho Harris set the Hokies up with great field position at the Tech 49, and a 30-yard run by powerful Darren Evans got them inside the BC 10. On third-and-goal, Taylor avoided the BC rush and managed to scramble four yards into the end zone for his second rushing touchdown of the day. Keys' extra point gave Tech a 14-0 lead with 11:08 remaining in the first half.

The start marked a stark contrast to what transpired in the teams' earlier meeting. In that one, Tech struggled to move BC's hulking defensive tackles, B.J. Ragi and Ron Brace – a combined nearly 650 pounds of humanity – or to control BC's front seven, led by ACC defensive player of the year Mark Herzlich. As a result, Tech's tailbacks mustered just 40 yards in a 28-23 loss.

But the Hokies eclipsed that in a little over a quarter.

"We had a good game plan, just like the last time we played them," Tech center Ryan Shuman said. "But we just executed better this time and stayed on our blocks. We got a hat on our man and Darren made some nice runs. He broke some tackles. It all clicked."

BC did manage a thrust into the end zone

right before halftime. The Eagles marched 66 yards in three plays. A 51-yard screen pass from BC quarterback Dominique Davis to Montel Harris did most of the damage, getting the Eagles to the Tech 15, and two plays later, Davis completed a 16-yard touchdown pass to Rich Gunnell. Steve Aponavicius' extra point cut the Tech lead to 14-7 with 1:29 left in the half.

But the second half was a Hokie high.

Keys – a redshirt senior from Stafford, Va., who didn't even get to dress for the ACC title game a year ago – padded the Hokies' lead when he drilled a 50-yard field goal with 6:11 left in the third quarter. His career long capped another time-draining 11-play, 50-yard drive that ate five minutes off the clock and gave the Hokies a 17-7 lead.

Then, two possessions later, Tech cornerback Stephan Virgil intercepted a Davis pass and returned it 36 yards to the BC 10. On the next play, Evans barreled in from 10 yards out and Keys' extra point gave the Hokies a 24-7 lead with a little over a minute to go in the third quarter.

Unlike the coaching staff's dance moves, Evans himself isn't anything flashy. But the 210-pound mule of a back just grinds up chunks of yards. He finished with 114 yards on 31 carries, becoming just the second tailback this season (GT's Jonathan Dwyer) to rush for more than 100 yards against BC's defense – ranked seventh nationally against the run coming into the game.

And while Taylor earned the game's MVP award, it was Evans' workmanlike running that enabled the Hokies to earn nearly a 12-minute bulge in time of possession.

"There were some good holes and I took advantage of what they gave us," said Evans, who eclipsed the 1,000-yard plateau for the season. "Once you get into a rhythm, it's

easier to play the game that way.

"We played with a lot of intensity and so did they. That's a good defense. That's probably the best defense we've played against."

Perhaps, but the group he sees in practice every day is pretty salty, too.

BC added a field goal early in the fourth quarter following a turnover by Evans, but Tech's defense proved mighty stout in this one. With over nine minutes to go, Jason Worlids jarred the ball loose from Davis, and Orion Martin was the lucky recipient. Martin scooped up the loose ball and waltzed 17 yards to ecstasy, scoring his first collegiate touchdown to put the game away.

Martin's touchdown marked a fitting end to a defensive performance that saw the Hokies hold BC to 45 yards rushing, force four turnovers and record three sacks.


And his score started the boogie down in earnest.

Once the staff finished, Harris decided to lead the players in little routine of their own. The senior forsook the NFL for a year just for this moment.

"I feel blessed and overwhelmed," Tech's long-locked corner said. "When I got down on my hands and knees [to pray about his NFL decision], I feel like God told me to be here. Everything would fall in place, so I knew that was my calling. I just feel blessed. Blessed and overwhelmed."

Harris was the last one out of Tech's locker room, perhaps savoring what just transpired – the game, the victory, and of course, the dancing.

It certainly wasn't stuff that would win on Dancing with the Stars. But one thing is for certain.

Tech will be doing the Hokie Pokey to Miami once again. And that is yet another sight to behold. 



Orion Martin scooped up this fumble and returned it for his first career touchdown to cap the Hokies' victory.

TECH FOOTBALL COACHES TACKLE THEIR JOBS WITH PASSION

By Jimmy Robertson



After a long week of preparing for an opponent, Frank Beamer likes nothing more than celebrating with his players and staff after a victory.

Ever wonder what exactly a football coach does during the week? Ever wonder what it's actually like to *be* a coach? To arrive at work each morning knowing that your every move will be parsed and analyzed – and in a lot of cases, criticized? To know that your paycheck, your livelihood, depends on the performances of 18- to 22-year-old young men? To sacrifice hours and hours of family time each week for the overwhelming joy that comes with that huge victory or the agonizing feeling that comes with a bitter defeat? To prepare for a critical game, knowing that a loss means the end of your championship hopes and dreams and everything you've worked so hard for all year?

Members of Tech's football coaching staff graciously allowed us to follow them around for the week leading up to the Duke game to get a feel for what goes into preparing for a big game – a loss meant the Hokies were out of the ACC championship picture – and to get a feel for the amount of time they put into a profession which they absolutely love.

In short, this week tells the story of the life of a football coach.

Sunday, Nov. 16th, 4:35 p.m. Defensive staff meeting room

The room looks like a meeting room, with a big table in the center and nice chairs surrounding it. Papers are scattered loosely over the top of it. Grease boards adorn three walls, and a library of videotapes comprises the other. A projector is mounted on the ceiling and points downward toward a white screen. There are no windows.

Defensive coordinator Bud Foster sits back in a leather chair, with the clicker in his right hand. He has been in the meeting room since roughly 1 p.m., watching cut-ups – Duke's offensive plays broken down by formations, downs and distances – of the Blue Devils' game against Clemson. He's not writing anything down, but rather, just trying to get a feel of the Blue Devils' offense.

"Just to warn you, we work hard, but we also like to have fun," Foster says, with a smile.

Normally, Sundays are a grind for Tech's entire staff. The offensive and defensive staffs usually come in around 9 a.m., and break down and grade the players' performances

from the video of the previous game. Then they meet with head coach Frank Beamer to watch the video of that game. After that, they meet to watch video of the upcoming opponent. They usually leave around 6:30-7 that night.

But the Hokies played Miami on a Thursday night, so the staff took care of the grading on Friday following the game. This allowed them to enjoy a rare Sunday morning off.

The rest of Foster's staff arrives in the meeting room – defensive line coach Charley Wiles, whips and rovers coach Jim Cavanaugh and defensive backs coach Torrian Gray. The purpose of Sunday evening's film session is to analyze Duke's goal-line and short-yardage offense.

The room becomes a sea of football terminology. The average fan needs some sort of Rosetta Stone for pigskin lingo to understand what they say.

They then look at a variety of plays, with Foster constantly rewinding to look at them again. Each coach possesses a pen and a notebook, drawing diagrams and making notations that pertain to their positions.

They quickly notice that Duke runs a lot

behind a certain offensive lineman inside the 3-yard line. In fact, the Blue Devils run behind him on just about every play. They will relay these types of tendencies to their players.

They also plan to place heavy emphasis on No. 15 in the passing game. Eron Riley leads all Duke receivers with 56 catches, almost 30 more than the next guy. Gray and Foster talk about a couple of different goal-line coverages, and quickly come to an agreement. You can tell they've done this before.

The staff watches eight games worth of goal-line plays before calling it an evening at roughly 6:40 p.m.

"We've run the same defense on the goal line for 15 years," Foster says. "And it's been pretty successful. We know what we're going to do."

Monday, Nov. 17th, 8:10 a.m. Offensive staff meeting room

The entire staff arrived at 6:30 a.m. for a 6:45 meeting with the players. They showed them some of the plays from the Miami game. Video serves as a huge learning tool in hopes of preventing future mistakes and helping players develop. This lasts for an hour, and then the coaches resume their film watching in the meeting room, which resembles the defensive staff's.

Like the defensive staff, the offensive staff went over goal-line and short-yardage stuff on Sunday evening. This particular session focuses primarily on Duke's pass defense.

"If you've got any suggestions, speak up now. Don't wait until Sunday [after the game]," offensive coordinator Bryan Stinespring jokes to the reporter in the room.

Stinespring, clicker in hand, coordinates the entire process. For 90 minutes, he, quarterbacks coach Mike O'Cain, running backs coach Billy Hite, receivers coach Kevin Sherman and offensive line coach Curt Newsome watch Duke's coverage against a particular formation, charting more than 60 plays. That's just for ONE formation!

Normally, they don't break down this many plays – after all, you can't break down every play in every game. But the Blue Devils show more coverages against this formation than any other. While looking at an end zone view of a particular play, Stinespring stops the video and points to Duke's two linebackers.

"These two are very good," he said, pointing to No. 34 and No. 31. "They're always on their feet and always around the football."

No. 34 is Michael Tauiiili, the ACC's leading tackler, and No. 31 is Vincent Rey, the team's second-leading tackler. Both are upperclassmen and present problems.

On several occasions, Zac Lowe, the

graduate assistant for the offensive staff, goes to one of the three grease boards in the meeting room and diagrams blitzes. The staff will go over these later in the week. By the end of the week, Lowe will have drawn more than 20 different blitzes on that board.

The staff talks about a couple of plays that would work against a certain coverage. But the way Duke plays one particular defense perplexes them a little. Several times, in a certain zone coverage, one of Duke's corners plays very soft, which makes no sense because there is a safety behind him to help in coverage. The coaches can't attribute it to a freshman mistake because both of Duke's corners are upperclassmen.

The coaches note the tendency and O'Cain will point this out to both Tyrod Taylor and Sean Glennon.

After 90 minutes, Stinespring turns off the machine and they talk about plays that they like out of this formation against Duke's defense. Sherman writes them down on another grease board, and they rule out a couple of others.

After 10 minutes or so, Stinespring turns on the video machine. Time to watch Duke's tendencies against another formation. This will continue until lunchtime.

Monday, Nov. 17th, 3:16 p.m. Team meeting room, Merryman Center

The staff spends the early part of the afternoon writing its script for practice and then meets with the entire team to go over the previous game. Beamer runs the proceed-

ings, telling the team what he expects in the final two games.

"The real winners, the people with character, they'll show up," he said. "That's what we'll see this week. Don't even think about practicing slow this week."

Certain players are recognized for their performances against Miami, and both Foster and Stinespring briefly go over the team's good plays. Some other business gets taken care of, and then they break into positional meetings for 30-45 minutes.

At this point, the players are given scouting reports of Duke. Lowe and defensive GA Jamel Smith handle this. The scouting report consists of formations, blitzes and plays, and are usually more than 30 pages long.

At 4:22, the special teams meetings begin, with Wiles first going over the team's kick block performance against Miami. Then, Beamer goes over the punting team and what to expect from Duke's punt block team, putting Cody Grimm, the punter's personal protector, to the test.

"Who do you have, Cody?" Beamer says on multiple occasions.

Hite goes over the kickoff return team's performance against Miami, which wasn't that great. Tech struggled on two occasions to get Miami's far outside guy blocked and that led to poor field position.

"We can't let one come free like that," Hite says.

Beamer, who spent most of his Sunday afternoon watching film and breaking down Duke's special teams, then met with the kick-off and "Pride and Joy" [punt block/return]



Tech's staff maps out a practice schedule for each position during a staff meeting before one of the Hokies' two-hour practices.

teams. His Pride and Joy team causes him great lament, as Tech nearly blocked two punts against Miami, just missing on both.

"Pick [Dustin Pickle], if you could have stretched this guy a little further," says Beamer, pointing to a Miami player whom Pickle was trying to occupy. "I think Jason [Worilds] would have blocked it."

Beamer then looks at Duke's punting formation. He notes that Duke's punter is a little erratic, but most of his attention goes toward one of Duke's linemen. He is a step slow, and you get the sense that Beamer wants to exploit that.

The special teams meetings conclude at 5:10. Thirty minutes later, the entire team heads outside to practice in the cold, with snow flurries bouncing around.

After practice, the coaches eat dinner, and then it's back to the meeting rooms, where they break down the film of the day's practice. This usually lasts until 9 or so – and marks the end of a 15-hour day.

Tuesday, Nov. 18th, 8:02 a.m.
Defensive staff meeting room

Foster and the rest of the staff settle in to look at Duke's passing offense – the previous morning, they analyzed Duke's rushing attack.

They look at numerous formations, things like the 'bunch' formation in which three

Blue Devils line up close together and then run different passing routes, and the 'I twins' formation in which Duke lines up in a power-I set (tailback and fullback), with the receivers split to one side.

All the coaches are drawing diagrams and/or scribbling down notes. They plan on showing these plays to the players, but will not practice against all of them.

"You can't practice against every play," Cavanaugh says. "So what we do is break out their [Duke's] top plays out of each formation and practice against those."

At 9:45, Foster cuts off the videotape, raises the screen and goes to the grease board. He draws numerous formations on the board and then he and the staff discuss what defense they want to run against that particular formation.

"I think Virg [Stephan Virgil] should be good with that," Gray says, as he and Foster discuss a particular coverage against a Duke formation. "I wouldn't say that if I didn't feel confident."

Virgil, Tech's starting corner, figures to see a lot of action against Riley, Duke's leading receiver. They notice on film that Riley drops a lot of passes – "He doesn't always catch the ball with his hands," Foster notes. – but the Blue Devils go to him a lot.

They continue the discussion. Probably more than people would think, Foster seeks

the input of his coaches. For one particular Duke formation, they talk about several different options.

"One thing I don't want to do is get into a lot of checks," Foster says. "Let's keep it simple."

It's a refrain the staff says a lot.

Finally, Foster goes to another grease board. He writes down Duke's formations, and then underneath, he writes the defenses they want to run against those formations. He also writes down a few blitzes he may use against those formations, but not many. He feels confident that the Hokies won't have to blitz the Blue Devils too much.

At 10:55, he and the defensive staff fill out on a sheet what they want to do at practice later in the afternoon. At 11, the entire staff gathers in another meeting room to meet with Beamer, a meeting that mostly centers on the practice schedule for the day.

Tuesday, Nov. 18th, 3:15 p.m.
Quarterbacks meeting room

Mike O'Cain wastes little time once his quarterbacks enter the room. He goes immediately to one of the grease boards and draws up a pass play.

"We're adding a new wrinkle," O'Cain says. "We want to attack this particular zone defense with this [wrinkle]. They don't play a lot

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Offensive line coach Curt Newsome puts his offensive linemen through their paces during a very cold practice the Thursday night before the Duke game.



of this [another zone defense, which we're not stating]. Out of more than 50 snaps, I've seen it maybe a couple of times."

He goes over Duke's schemes and formations, and what the Hokies want to accomplish against those. It's enough to completely boggle the mind, but both Glennon and Taylor appear to understand exactly what O'Cain wants.

"Be conscious of when Macho [Harris] is

in the game," O'Cain says. "We may want to take a shot then."

Duke plays some man-to-man coverage, and the Hokies would like nothing better than to get Harris matched up with a corner in hopes of hitting on a big play. But O'Cain also warns his quarterbacks to be careful. Duke's cornerbacks tend to show press coverage and then bail on it at the last minute.

"It's hard for a receiver to run by him

when he's [the Duke cornerback] bailing," O'Cain says.

The quarterbacks have no questions and the meeting adjourns after roughly an hour.

**Tuesday, Nov. 18th, 8:04 p.m.
Offensive staff meeting room**

Most folks think that the coaching staff's day ends when practice ends.

Not so.

After a brief dinner, the offensive and defensive staffs hold more meetings. They get ready to break down the video from the team's practice.

During this meeting, Stinespring and his bunch don't look at the drills. They look at the plays they ran against Tech's defense and the ones they ran against the scout team – the group that emulates the defenses that Duke runs.

Tech's offense hits on a couple of big pass plays, including one on a straight fly pattern. By and large, Tech's offense practiced very well. On a surprising note, Patrick Terry, a seldom-used redshirt freshman, practiced well – he caught a bomb – and a couple of members of the staff commented that it was Terry's best practice at Tech.

At 9:10 p.m., Stinespring turns the video off.

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“OK, what do we like here?” he says.

O’Cain rattles off several plays. Newsome and Hite chime in about plays and protections, including those in the event that Duke blitzes. For the most part, the staff agrees with O’Cain’s suggestions.

O’Cain also likes a particular reverse, one that he says has worked against a particular defense in the past. Stinespring and Sherman, though, are hesitant.

“We ran that in a game a couple of years ago,” Stinespring said. “We kicked it [the ball] around and lost about 15 yards.”

They all agree to consider it.

At 9:30, Stinespring turns the staff loose. They’ve been at it since 8 a.m. But he doesn’t leave. Instead, he starts writing down plays on his big play card – a color-coded, well-organized piece of paper broken neatly into sections of downs and distances, base running plays, base play-action plays, goal-line plays, base passing plays and various other categories.

He had already filled in the running, play-action and goal-line plays the previous evening. On this evening, he fills in base passing plays.

Then he gets on his phone. He has four recruits he wants to call before he calls it an evening. By the time he gets home, he will have put in another 14 hours.

Wednesday, Nov. 19th, 8:07 a.m.
Defensive staff meeting room

Cavanaugh puts it eloquently.

“Wednesdays are a bear,” he said.

Of course, Mondays and Tuesdays weren’t walks in the park either.

On this morning, the staff looks mostly at Duke’s one-back and ‘empty’ sets [five wideouts, no running backs]. They also analyze what the Blue Devils like to do on third down.

The staff notices a couple of tendencies. For instance, Duke runs a lot of a certain play on third-and-short.

“They like this play,” Foster says after one particular play.

The grueling three-hour sessions include all sorts of analysis on Duke’s bubble screens, the Blue Devils’ sprint-outs and their ‘quick’ game out of certain formations.

The session does include a light moment. While watching film of last year’s game with Duke, they see Tech’s Cordarrow Thompson jumping offsidess – something the big defensive tackle has a tendency to do.

“He did that yesterday,” Foster says, referring to practice.

“No, I don’t think he did,” Wiles says. “Not yesterday.”

“Yes, he did, too,” Foster says.

“I’ll bet you a dollar,” Wiles says.

“Alright, you’re on,” Foster says.

“He jumped on the first or second play [of one of the periods],” Cavanaugh says.

“Alright, I’ll go check it on film,” Wiles says, beginning to realize he may be wrong.

“If you were confident, you’d bet five dollars,” Foster jokes.

“That’s right,” Wiles says, laughing.

For the record, Thompson did jump.

The staff watches film until 11 when the entire staff gathers for a staff meeting with Beamer.

Wednesday, Nov. 19th, 7:48 p.m.
Offensive staff meeting room

Beamer joins the offensive staff to go over Wednesday’s practice. As most know, Beamer lets his coaches do the coaching, but he offers his input at the 11 a.m. meetings and during practices, and on alternate nights each week, he’ll spend time with either the offensive or defensive staff. Tonight, he joins the offensive staff. He usually meets with the

defensive staff on Tuesday nights, though he missed the previous night to be on the Hokie Hotline radio show.

In typical Beamer fashion, though, he brings up special teams first, asking Hite whom he plans on using as a kickoff returner since Dyrrell Roberts has an injured shoulder. Hite tells him that he plans on moving Jahre Cheeseman back there.

“I think we need to use Macho,” Beamer says.

That would be a first for this year, but the Hokies’ primary two kickoff returners are shelved for the season with injuries (Kenny Lewis and Davon Morgan) and now Roberts is hurt. Beamer obviously wants a playmaker back there – and everyone enthusiastically agrees with the decision to go with Harris.

“He can just stay out there and join us on offense,” Stinespring jokes.

They go over the video of the day’s practice and Beamer offers some suggestions here and there. But again, for the most part, he places his faith in his staff.

Once practice is evaluated, the staff discusses Duke’s blitzes. Newsome names off several blitzes that he wants his linemen to see one more time, so O’Cain writes them down, with the intent of scripting them into the next day’s practices.

Blurry-eyed after a third straight day of watching film, meeting with players, practicing, and breaking down practice video, both staffs call it a night around 9:30 – except for Stinespring and Foster.

Wednesday, Nov. 19th, 10:04 p.m.
Bud Foster’s office

Foster and his group have finished evaluating practice and now Foster holes up in his office. It’s his Wednesday ritual of firming up his game plan.

“I take all the info and then kind of zero in

Flurries were flying during a Monday practice as the Hokies began preparations for the Blue Devils.





Receivers coach Kevin Sherman (left) shows his young receivers how he wants them to attack some of Duke's coverages during a Thursday position meeting.

Thursday, Nov. 20th, 3:15 p.m.
Wide receivers meeting room

The game plan is finished and Sherman, the receivers coach, heads into his meeting room for an afternoon meeting with his six receivers. This is the position on the spot, so to speak, given their inexperience.

Sherman queues up the video from the previous day's practice. The meeting becomes a question-and-answer session, with Sherman peppering his young charges with questions.

Midway through, he asks Roberts if he'll be able to play Saturday. "Yes" was immediately the response.

Sherman goes over the 'blitz' period with the receivers – what they need to do when certain Blue Devils go on a blitz. Receivers often make 'sight' adjustments. In other words, if a certain defender blitzes, then the receivers run a different route than what the play calls.

Toward the end of the session, he makes a point to his players.

"We've got to win on these comebacks and out-routes," he says. "We've got to get first downs.

"Let's go have a good, sharp practice."

He and the receivers – and the rest of the team – eventually head outside to practice in the freezing cold. It marks the third time during the week they've practiced outside, but the forecast for Saturday is for cold temperatures, so it serves them well.

They practice for nearly two hours. Fortunately for the coaches, there are no meetings scheduled on Thursday evenings. This evening is family night – a night when the coaches go home and spend time with their families.

But some of the coaches don't take the evening off. Several, including Cavanaugh and Gray, head to their cars and hit the road. There is recruiting to be done.

Friday, Nov. 21st, 4:15 p.m.
Rector Field House

The staff comes in later on Friday mornings. The game plans are finished. Only a walkthrough remains.

This morning, the staff arrives in a giddy mood. Georgia Tech's destruction of Miami the previous evening puts the Hokies back in control of their destiny. Win out and they head to Tampa for the ACC title game.

Beamer elects to hold the walkthrough indoors at Rector Field House because of the bitter cold temperatures outside and also because of the wind. He blows his whistle precisely at 4:15 and the walkthrough starts.

Roughly 10 minutes later, at the end of

just a little bit more," he says.

He also takes a closer look at a coverage he and Gray spent time discussing during the morning film session. Gray wanted to try something that he thought would lead to an interception. Foster was lukewarm on the idea because the defense hadn't really worked on the technique for that coverage.

"We tried it in practice and it has some possibilities," Foster says. "I'm always open to suggestions. I'm not so hard-headed that I won't listen."

Interestingly, not much has been made to this point of Duke quarterback Thaddeus Lewis' injury. Lewis injured an ankle in the Clemson game and was questionable for the Tech game, but Tech's staff prepared no differently.

"I don't think they're going to do anything differently," Foster says. "From what I've seen, they've got a set offense they're going to run. They're trying to set a foundation. They've got a plan and they're not going to change it for us."

Foster, like Stinespring, has a statistical printout of Duke's tendencies – these printouts show what formations the Blue Devils like to run on certain downs and distances – and a big card neatly organized in which he writes down coverages, blitzes, etc. He says he'll spend the next couple of hours watching film and filling in his card. You get the feeling he loves this time of week.

Wednesday, Nov. 19th, 10:31 p.m.
Offensive staff meeting room

Stinespring, like Foster, uses Wednesday nights to finalize his game plan. He'll fill

out his card, and then he and his offensive staff mates will meet Thursday morning to go over everything one last time.

Both the offensive and defensive staff usually make any tweaks to the game plan on Thursday morning. They rarely add anything new because, at this point in the week, there isn't enough time to practice anything new and become effective at it. So both staffs use Thursday practices as a way to go over everything they've been working on all week one last time.

Stinespring feels confident in his game plan, but he also has some concerns about the upcoming game.

"I really think we've got to be good on first down," he says. "You've heard us say third down is the 'money' down, but I think for this game, first down is the money down. They've [Duke] been good on first down. We can't get into second- or third-and-long."

Stinespring gazes at the statistical printouts that break down Duke's tendencies. These printouts show what defenses the Blue Devils like to run on certain downs and distances. Stinespring puts together his game plan accordingly.

"I think we've got to run some things early in the game to see what looks they give us," he said. "I don't want it to get late in the game and then want to call a play we haven't run and not know what look we're going to get."

He picks up his pencil and analyzes his play list and the statistical printouts. He and Foster both end up doing this until after midnight to mark the end of a 16-hour day.

the warm-up session, Beamer calls the team together around him.

"I'm telling ya, we're lucky," he says. "We have this thing [path to the division title and ACC title game] right here in our hands."

Beamer then goes over each special teams unit to fine tune what they're doing. The offense and the defense then meet separately for a few minutes. After 30 minutes in Rector, the team heads back to the Merryman Center.

In the Merryman Center, the offense and defense meet separately as units. Stinespring queues up the video and shows his offense some of Duke's defenses, what he expects them to run and how he wants to attack.

At 5:23, he cuts off the video and stands before the unit. As a coach, it's not just about coaching and teaching, and X's and O's. It's also about motivating.

Stinespring delivers a passionate speech that appears to resonate with the players. It wasn't long, but it was effective.

An hour or so later, the Hokies pile on buses and head to Roanoke, where they will spend the night at an undisclosed hotel.

**Saturday, Nov. 22nd, 5:30 p.m.,
minutes before kickoff
Tech locker room**

The assistants met with the players on Saturday morning at the hotel

one last time. Some of them came back to Blacksburg after those meetings to meet with visiting recruits.

They've already put the players through warm-ups, so everyone gathers in the locker room one last time.

The coaches appear tense, though the players do not. There is a quiet hum in the locker room as they get ready.

Beamer gathers them around. For the coaches, it's time to see if all the watching of video, analyzing, meeting, discussing and practicing pays off.

Beamer yells, 'One, two, three.'

"You can count on me!" the team yells and then departs the locker room.

Two minutes later, the sounds of *Enter Sandman* start pulsating.

**Saturday, Nov. 22nd, halftime
Meeting room in Lane Stadium**

Tech goes into halftime leading just 7-3 following a first half in which they turned the ball over five times. The coaches huddle in a small room off to the side of the bigger meeting room, while the players sit and drink Gatorade.

Finally, the coaches appear, and Stinespring, visibly upset, quickly makes his point to his offense.

"We've got to stop turning the ball over!!" he says loudly.

Tech's staff already has changed quarterbacks because of Taylor's four turnovers. Each coach meets with his

players. Greg Boone takes a marker from Stinespring and tells him how the defensive end is playing him. Newsome discusses some slight changes concerning protections.

On the other side of the ball, Duke is playing a couple of formations it hadn't shown at all this season. Foster makes a couple of slight adjustments, but nothing major. Tech's defense is dominating the line of scrimmage.

Everyone is intense. The ACC title is essentially on the line.

Beamer tells the team it's time to bring it home. They head out of the locker room for the second half.

**Saturday, Nov. 22nd, post game
Schott Media Center, Lane Stadium**

The Hokies win the game 14-3, thanks in large part to Harris' big interceptions (including one he returned for a touchdown), the defense's great play, and Glennon's steady hand.

Smiles abound as the players walk into the media center, and Beamer walks up to the podium and gets ready to address the media. He fixes his hair and opens a bottle of Dasani water.


"All I know is we're one win away from going to play for the ACC championship," he says. "I'd be really proud of this football team if we beat Virginia and get to that game."

The Duke game didn't go exactly as the coaching staff had planned. The offense stumbled a bit and the staff didn't get to take as many shots down the field as they originally planned. That may get back to the way Duke played defensively. Beamer didn't really go after Duke's punter in an attempt to get a block to swing things – and maybe he saw something that gave him pause or the Blue Devils changed some things there. Duke certainly ran some different stuff on offense, forcing Foster to adjust accordingly.

It's called coaching.

They headed home after the game to celebrate and spend time with their families. It will be a short celebration.

In less than 12 hours, they'll start the process again. They'll grade the film of the Duke game and start watching film of the Cavaliers. They'll spend 14-16 hours a day for the upcoming four days analyzing, dissecting and scouting. After all, the biggest game of the season awaits.

Such is the life of a coach. 



Defensive coordinator Bud Foster applauds his group's efforts after they allowed only three points and 136 yards in an 11-point victory.

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FIVE MORE INDUCTED INTO THE VIRGINIA TECH SPORTS HALL OF FAME

By Jimmy Robertson



Dr. James I. Robertson

Dr. James I. Robertson is a well-respected history professor, an authority on the Civil War, and in all, a rather shrewd gentleman. He also displays a keen fondness for telling jokes during his public speaking engagements, and in particular, the Virginia Tech Sports Hall of Fame banquet.

When he received his letter informing him that he was going to be inducted into the Hall of Fame, he thought the joke was on him.

"I did, I thought Jim Weaver [Tech's AD] had mistakenly sent it," Robertson said. "I just assumed it was a wrong address, so I called Jim and told him to tell his secretary that she had sent it [the letter] to the wrong address. He assured me that it was supposed to go to me. I was shocked."

Robertson was one of five individuals inducted into the Hall of Fame in a banquet held Nov. 21 on the Tech campus, joining former track standout Katie Ollendick, former soccer star Eric McClellan, former baseball pitcher Jim Beard and former football player Eugene Chung. The new inductees bring the total number enshrined to 141.

Robertson receives national attention as a Civil War historian, but he also has a long history of helping the Virginia Tech athletics department. He served as Tech's Faculty Chairman of Athletics and President of the Virginia Tech Athletic Association from 1979-1991. He also chaired the search committees that selected Dutch Baughman and Dave Braine as athletic directors, and Frank

Beamer as head football coach.

"We interviewed some big names for the [head football] job," Robertson said. "But we wanted someone who would stick around and provide some stability. We wanted someone solid who would grow with us and we would grow with him. We stayed with him during some tough years early and it's paid off."

During his tenure as Tech's faculty representative, Robertson also served two terms as President of the Metro Conference and was a longtime member of the conference's Executive Committee. In 1989, he received the Metro Joint Committee Award for "invaluable contributions" to the league.

After Tech was placed on NCAA probation for rules violations during the mid-1980s, Robertson chaired the Blueprint Committee on Virginia Tech athletics that established new guidelines for Hokie varsity sports. Those guidelines still remain in place.

"I remember flying to Austin, Texas, and meeting before the NCAA committee on infractions – and knowing we were guilty," Robertson said. "That was the worst day of my life."

"But when you hit rock bottom, you can only come up. That's what we did."

Robertson, who was also an ACC football official for 16 years and worked nine bowl games, retired from athletics in 1991. He continues to teach his Civil War Era class at Tech, the largest of its kind in the nation.

Here's a look at the rest of the inductees:

ERIC McCLELLAN

Growing up and playing soccer in Rockville, Md., McClellan knew very little about Virginia Tech. But he played with his club team in the Capital Cup, and it was there where he caught the eye of a Tech graduate assistant named John Dumbleton, who worked under head coach Jerry Cheynet.

Dumbleton persuaded McClellan to come down for a visit, and McClellan and his dad made the trip. That marked the beginning of a tremendous four-year run for one of the best soccer players in Tech's history.

McClellan ultimately finished his career as Tech's all-time leader in goals and points scored. As a sophomore, he led the Hokies to the Metro Invitational Tournament title, scoring four goals in the tournament and three in the championship game win over Cincinnati. Then, he earned All-Metro Conference honors his final two seasons at Tech.

"I have a lot of memories of those days," McClellan said. "But the biggest thing was just having the whole experience with the team and to be able to bond with those guys on those long bus trips. That's probably the thing that stands out the most."

McClellan helped lead the Hokies to 10 wins each of his four seasons. He finished his career with 44 goals and 109 points.

He graduated with a degree in business and later came back to Tech to earn his master's in finance. He played soccer professionally from 1992 until retiring in 2000. McClellan, his wife, Lisa, and three children currently live in Willsonville, Ore., where he works for TransCore, a transportation logistics information technology corporation. He has served as the varsity soccer coach at Tualatin High School for the past seven years.

He still manages to keep up with the Hokies. In fact, in late August, Tech's soccer team played out in Portland and received a tour of the Nike facilities from McClellan, who also got to take in one of Tech's two matches out there.



"Obviously, when I played, we didn't have ACC talent, not like they do now," McClellan said. "We were more of a blue-collar team, with just a bunch of guys who loved to play. We grinded it out. But we were very successful for the type of talent we had."

KATIE OLLENDICK

Ollendick took a rather unique path toward greatness at Tech. She enrolled at UVa first.

"I wasn't really being recruited and I was out there marketing myself," she said. "I thought, 'Well it's a good school and they were giving me a full scholarship and it wasn't too far away from home. All those things were appealing."

"But I just didn't find my niche there. So I transferred and came back to Tech. It all worked out well. I had to sit out a year, but by my fifth year at Tech, I was older, stronger and better. It was a good move for me."

And a great move for Tech.

During the 1996-97 season, Ollendick won conference indoor and outdoor titles in the high jump. She was named the A-10 Indoor Track & Field Performer of the Year, and went on to compete in the high jump at the 1997 NCAA Indoor Championships.

As a senior, she became the Hokies' first female track & field athlete to earn indoor and outdoor All-America honors in the same season. She placed 12th overall, and eighth among American-born athletes, to earn All-America honors in the high jump at the 1998 indoor championships. During the spring, she placed eighth in the heptathlon to gain outdoor All-America honors.

"I remember my coaches fooling around with me and telling me that I hadn't made All-American," she said when she earned that status for the first time. "Then they told me the truth and that was exciting. I had been hoping for that and had worked for it."

Ollendick set Tech and Atlantic 10 indoor and outdoor records in

the high jump, established new marks in both the heptathlon and pentathlon and was a member of the Hokies' A-10 record-setting 4x400-meter relay team. Her Tech high jump records still stand.

She matched her excellence in athletics with equally impressive academic accomplishments. She maintained a perfect 4.00 grade-point average on the way to a double major in psychology and exercise science. Ollendick's efforts earned her first-team GTE Academic All-America recognition in 1997 and '98. Following the 1998 outdoor track & field season, she was named the GTE Academic Athlete of the Year for the spring and was one of four student-athletes to receive a postgraduate scholarship from the A-10.

Ollendick went on to earn a master's in physical therapy from the University of North Carolina following her graduation from Tech. She currently works as a Pediatric Physical Therapist at Duke University Medical Center and is in the Doctor of Physical Therapy program at UNC. In her spare time, she competes in triathlons.



JIM BEARD

Beard never went on a date during his time at Tech. He never had the time.

As a non-scholarship athlete, Beard worked at Owens Dining Hall to make enough money to pay his tuition and some of his other expenses. He served in the Corps, and of course, he took classes. He also played a little baseball – and fairly well, too.

"Yes, I got up at 5 and went to bed about 11 at night," Beard said.

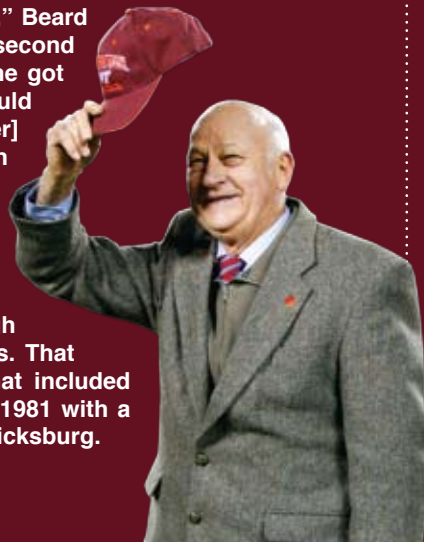
Beard's pitching exploits earned him induction into the Hall. He won four games as a sophomore and three as a junior. That year, the Fredericksburg, Va., native struck out 16 batters and allowed just four hits and one earned run during a one-run loss to George Washington University that saw the Hokies commit five errors.

As seniors – players couldn't play as freshmen back in those days – Beard and his classmates, including Leo Burke and Howie Wright, led the Tech baseball program to its first NCAA bid. Tech swept two games in a best two-of-three series with ACC champ Clemson in the NCAA playoffs. In the decisive game against the Tigers, a record crowd of 2,500 fans looked on in Blacksburg as Beard held Clemson to six hits and one ninth-inning run in a 7-1 victory. The Hokies lost the district championship series against Rollins College, but their accomplishment still ranks among the best in school baseball history.

Beard finished the season with a 7-3 record, a 3.54 earned run average and 68 strikeouts in 83.2 innings pitched. His wins, strikeouts and innings pitched were all school records that stood well into the 1970s when the Hokies played twice as many games.

"There are so many things that I remember," Beard said. "Red Laird [Tech's coach] was like a second father to me. He helped me out so much – he got me semi-pro jobs in the summer, so that I could make a little money. Ed Motley [Tech's trainer] kept me pitching. Pitching in Blacksburg, with the weather, wasn't easy. And Luke Linden [the equipment manager] would give me an extra sweatshirt or two to sleep in to keep me warm."

Once Beard graduated, he fulfilled a three-year commitment to the Air Force even though he had tryouts with four Major League teams. That commitment turned into a 27-year career that included three tours of duty in Vietnam. He retired in 1981 with a rank of colonel and now runs a farm in Fredericksburg.



EUGENE CHUNG

Chung, who played his high school football at Oakton High School in northern Virginia, moved into the starting lineup at Virginia Tech as a redshirt freshman in 1988. A year later, Chung started every game. He played 638 offensive snaps that season and was voted the Hokies' most outstanding offensive lineman.

Despite missing a game with a bruised leg, Chung played 643 of 791 plays in 1990, allowing just one quarterback sack. He was voted the team's best offensive lineman for the second straight year and was selected first-team All-South Independent.

Chung was one of the top linemen in the nation his senior season, earning first-team All-America honors from The Football Writers Association of America. He started all 11 games and allowed just one sack. He was picked 13th in the first round of the NFL Draft by the New England Patriots, becoming the first Virginia Tech offensive player and second Tech football player overall to be selected in the first round of the draft. Chung was also the first Korean-American player to be taken in the first round.

Chung played five seasons in the NFL. He is currently working in the real estate development business in Jacksonville, Fla. For the past four years, Chung has also been working with the Jacksonville Jaguars Personnel Department and serving as president of the National Football League Retired Players Union for north Florida.



Compliance corner focuses on initial eligibility

By Jimmy Robertson

Working in the compliance office at any major university requires that one possess a deep knowledge of the NCAA's intricate web of rules and processes, and then be willing to remain abreast of all the topics on a daily basis.

After all, change is constant with the NCAA, and Tech's compliance team monitors the changes continuously. One of the biggest changes that came about a couple of years ago centers on initial eligibility – something that affects all high school prospects in every sport.

For high school prospects who enrolled at Division I schools in August, NCAA officials started requiring that these prospects graduate from high school with 16 core courses – up from 14. The NCAA is now requiring an additional math credit (now three credits at or above Algebra I instead of two) and an additional credit in either English, math, natural or physical science, social science, foreign language, philosophy or religion.

"The NCAA wants to ensure a prospect's preparedness for college," said Bert Locklin, Tech's assistant director of compliance and the main person who oversees initial eligibility for Tech. "Without question, this change makes it more difficult for a high school prospect to qualify. Our coaches are aware of this change, so we've all taken it upon ourselves to educate the prospects, the high school coaches and the guidance counselors at high schools about this change. Our goal is to make sure a high school prospect is enrolled in the proper

classes early enough so that he or she can meet this requirement."

Tech's compliance staff put together a one-page flyer that highlights the steps needed for high school prospects to become eligible. First, they must register with the NCAA Eligibility Center (formerly known as the NCAA Clearinghouse) and pay a \$60 registration fee (\$85 for international students). Then, they need to send their transcripts to the Eligibility Center by the end of their junior year – official transcripts from ALL high schools attended, too. Finally, they need to take the SAT or the ACT (aptitude tests) and those scores can only be sent to the Eligibility Center by the appropriate testing agency.

"One good thing is that prospects can check on their status [as a qualifier] at any time through the NCAA's web site once they register," Locklin said. "We strongly encourage high school prospects to get their paperwork done early and to check their status regularly. We also want them to make sure they send their most up-to-date transcripts after graduation. The NCAA gets flooded with paperwork, so it's best to get everything in early."

Prospects also need to keep in mind the NCAA's sliding scale related to grade-point average in the core courses and SAT and ACT scores because this relates directly toward eligibility. The higher a prospect's grade-point average, then the lower his SAT or ACT score can be to qualify.


For example, if a prospect graduates with a 3.55 or better in the 16 core courses, he or she would only

need to score 400 on the SAT or 37 on the ACT. In contrast, if a prospect graduates with a 2.2, he or she would need to score 940 on the SAT or 79 on the ACT.

"There are two keys here," Locklin said. "First, the NCAA calculates the grade-point average for the core courses only – not on every class a prospect takes in high school. Second, the NCAA only takes into account the prospect's best verbal and math portions of the SAT. The SAT has a writing section, but the NCAA does not take that score into consideration."

Initial eligibility is a complicated process for everyone involved – prospects, parents, high school coaches, guidance counselors, college coaches and compliance officers. The key is for everyone to get involved early in the game.

"Absolutely," Locklin said. "If you're a high school coach and you have a freshman or sophomore whom you think could be a Division I athlete, or if you're a parent and think that same thing, then please take the initiative to check with your high school guidance counselor on those core courses. If you have questions, please contact someone in compliance or a coach or someone at the NCAA (the NCAA has a toll free number – 877-622-2321).

"The last thing you want to do if you're a prospect is to wait and check on this your senior year. Then you may not have enough core courses – and after that, your options are limited." 

NCAA DIVISION I

Partial Sliding Scale (Core GPA / test index)

Core GPA	SAT	ACT
3.550 & up	400	37
3.500	420	39
3.450	440	41
3.400	460	42
3.350	480	43
3.300	500	44
3.250	520	46
3.200	540	47
3.150	560	48
3.100	580	49
3.050	600	50
3.000	620	52
2.950	640	53
2.900	660	54
2.850	680	56
2.800	700	57
2.750	720	59
2.700	730	60
2.650	760	62
2.600	780	64
2.550	800	66
2.500	820	68
2.450	840-850	70
2.400	860	71
2.350	880	73
2.300	900	75
2.250	920	77
2.200	940	79
2.150	960	80
2.100	970	82
2.050	990	84
2.000	1010	86



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Behind the Lens

Hokie sports through the eyes of Virginia Tech's photographer

By Jimmy Robertson

Nearly every photo you see in a Virginia Tech game program, on hokiesports.com or in this very magazine comes from Virginia Tech photography coordinator Dave Knachel. Now a 27-year veteran of capturing the excitement of Hokie sports, Knachel has been behind a camera at Tech sporting events since he first stepped on campus in 1981 as a student. He learned the ropes with the school's student publications before working as a freelance photographer for the precursor to this magazine, the *Hokie Huddler*. Following a decade of working for local newspapers and moonlighting for Tech, he was hired full-time by the athletics department in 1996 to take pictures of each of Tech's 21 sports, provide photos to the media and design in-house publications. Here are a few thoughts from the man who documents everything in Hokie imagery:

The digital age has changed everything.

"We used to shoot film, and the day after the game involved mixing chemicals, developing film, looking through negatives, deciding which ones to print and then making enlargements. It took money and time. But now, everything is digital so there are no limits and we can shoot a lot more photos. Everything can be done on the computer right after the game is over.

"Before the switch to digital in the fall of 2000, I would take, at most, 360 shots for a big football game. But now, I'll take maybe 1,200. With film, at the end of the day after the game, we maybe had a dozen pictures that were available to be used. Now, we save about 200 shots per game and we do Web galleries with over 100 pictures."

So has the Internet.

"The Internet has definitely increased the amount of work that we do, but I think that's a good thing because no matter what sport you play or are interested in, we're going to have some images of the events up there for you to see.

"My job, as it is now, didn't exist before I did it. There was no full-time photographer job, so it's all just sort of evolved over time. As the needs for images of Tech sports became greater, the position became necessary, and since then, we've grown what we do with photography immensely. Some of the numbers are astounding to me. Last year on the Web site, we added 8,500 images for Tech's 21 sports

combined. Previously, we might have 100 pictures after a football season, and for some of the other sports, hardly any at all."

Different sports present different challenges.

"I'd say football is the most fun to shoot because it's a bigger event with more going on around it. I have as much fun during a game watching what the fans are doing and coming up with unique pictures that way as I do shooting the game.

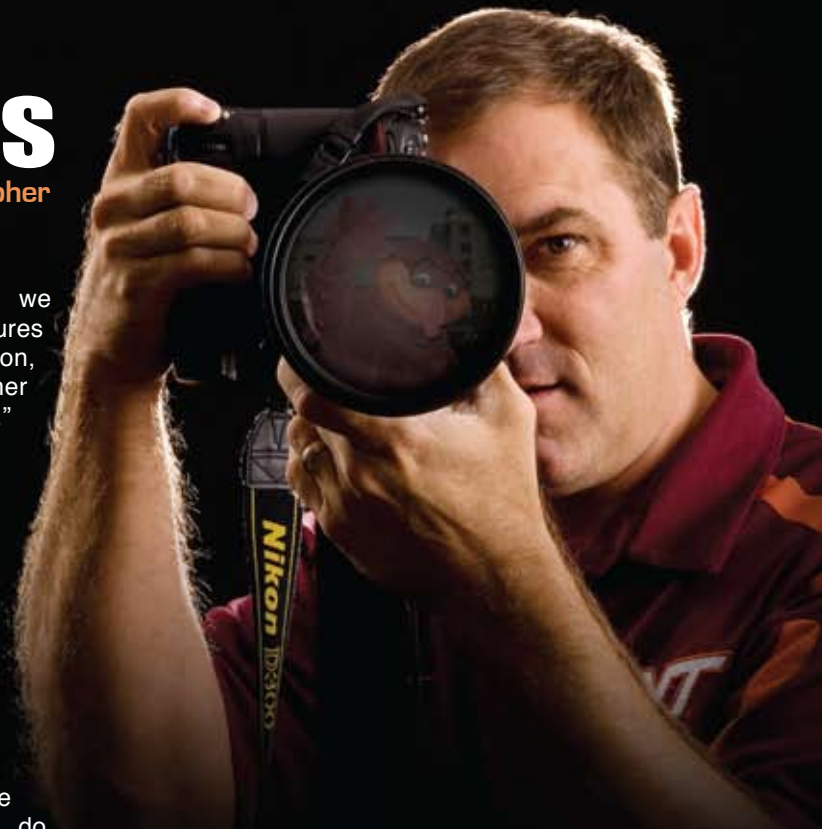
"On the other hand, volleyball might be the hardest sport to get great pictures of. You can get decent pictures, but it happens so fast. In football, you can see what's taking place and refocus as the play happens, but in volleyball, you've got to guess where the ball is going or simply get lucky!"

Photographers need to be in the game just like the players.

"Just like the teams I cover, sometimes I have good days and sometimes I have bad days. But the harder you work at it, the more success you're going to have. A sports photographer is always thinking about what the athletes are going to do and what is going to be the best possible picture. On every play, you sort of choose what your priority is and what you're going to focus on, so if that happens, you're in the right spot and you have the right lens on. But sometimes the play can be on the other side of the field and you've got nothing. You can put yourself out of position by trying to outthink the game and by guessing the wrong play. No matter how long you do it, you're always going to wish that you made better decisions and different choices. You're never going to be in the right place all the time."


You know a great photo when you see one.

"There have been so many great moments that they sort of blend together, but one photo that stands out is the one I took of Michael Vick on everybody's shoulders when we finished the 1999



regular season undefeated. That one was used on the first two-page spread in the *Sports Illustrated* special edition that was done on the team that year. That photo was neat, because a lot of times, people don't agree on what is or isn't a great picture. But I loved that one and so did a lot of other people."

Think I have a cool job? I feel the same way.

"I love shooting Tech sports. I feel very fortunate to have a job where, at least some percentage of the time, I'm at the same event that I would be at even if I wasn't doing it as a job. There are a lot of great people who work here and a lot of great fans that root for the Hokies. I feel good about going the extra mile to provide things for Tech fans because I know they go the extra mile when it comes to supporting Tech athletics." 

BY THE NUMBERS

The approximate annual photography output of the Athletics Communications Office

50,000 frames captured at more than 100 events

8,500 images uploaded on the Web at hokiesports.com

4,500 pictures (of which more than 3,000 are original images) in our 2,250 pages of printed publications

3,000 photographs made available for sale through HokiePhotos.com

1,000 requests filled for images from media and other outside agencies

LAST-SECOND LOSSES LEAVE HOKIES HEARTBROKEN

By Jimmy Robertson

Following the Hokies' game with Wisconsin, an exhausted A.D. Vassallo slumped in one of the leather couches in the men's basketball lounge area with an exasperated expression on his face.

"At least he hit a shot from the free-throw line," Vassallo said. "That kind of hurts me a little less. At least it wasn't from halfcourt."

For the second time this season, Vassallo and the Hokies felt incredulous at the end of a game, as for the second time, they fell victim to a last-second shot.

The "he" to whom Vassallo is referring is Wisconsin's Trevon Hughes, who drove the distance of the court and dropped in a soft, free-throw line jumper with less than a second remaining to lift the Badgers past the Hokies 74-72 at Cassell Coliseum in the first game of the ACC-Big Ten Challenge.

The defeat came just 10 days after the Hokies fell in similar fashion to Xavier in the Puerto Rico Tip-off in San Juan. In that one, Tech took a 62-60 lead with less than three seconds remaining in overtime, but Xavier in-bounded the basketball quickly and Dante Jackson banked in a halfcourt heave at the buzzer to lift the Musketeers to a 63-62 victory.

The loss to Wisconsin, though, was particularly tortuous considering the furious comeback the Hokies made behind the torrid shooting of Vassallo. The senior from Toa Baja, Puerto Rico, cut Wisconsin's lead to 70-69 by hitting a 3-pointer with 17.9 seconds to go. Jason Bohannon's two free throws with 11.6 seconds remaining gave the Badgers a 72-69 lead, but Vassallo struck again, hitting a 3-pointer with seven ticks left to tie the game at 72 - the Hokies' first tie since the 13:24 mark of the first half.

He scored 24 of his career-high 30 points in the second half. His previous career high of 29 came against Wake Forest in January of 2006. Against the Badgers, he hit 12-of-17 from the floor, including 6-of-9 from beyond the 3-point arc. He also grabbed five rebounds and dished out four assists.

The loss marked the Hokies' third of the young season, and perhaps more to the point, marked a second missed opportunity for Tech to notch a prime non-conference win over a team ranked in the top 50 of the Ratings Percentage Index - one of the standards used by the NCAA Tournament selection committee. Wisconsin entered the game at No. 20 in the RPI.

After the game, though, Tech coach Seth Greenberg urged some patience and perspective when asked about this very topic.

"It's Dec. 1st," Greenberg said. "Everyone is going to lose games. No one is going to go undefeated - well, maybe one team (UNC). It's a disappointing loss. No one gets eliminated on Dec. 1st and no one gets in the [NCAA] Tournament on Dec. 1st.

"We're going to play probably 14 games against

A.D. Vassallo

top-50 teams in our league. We're going to have plenty of chances. We've lost two games on the last play of the game. Does that mean we're a bad team? I don't think so. I think we're a good team that lost two games on the last play. We're not a great team. If we were a great team, we would have come up with those two stops. We're not a great team yet, but we have a chance to be a great team."

"I hope they [Tech players] understand there are 20 some games left," Vassallo said, echoing his coach. "We've only played seven games so far. Even though it hurts, we've got a lot of games left. We've got to make sure we start winning games. We've got to keep working. We've got to keep on grinding and go from there."

The Hokies do have a couple of 'name' non-conference games remaining on their slate, including Georgia, last year's SEC tournament champions, and St. John's. Then, it's on to the ACC schedule.

With that in mind, there's little time for the Hokies to think about what could have been. In fact, there's no time for that. It's time to move on, according to Vassallo.

"If I could think about it the whole night and then get the game back and win, I'd do it," Vassallo said. "But there's nothing I can do about it. I can go home and play video games and try to forget about it and look for the next game. That's all we can do."

"We got better this week," Greenberg said. "We played five sophomores and one freshman. We've got another sophomore sitting out. We've got two seniors and a junior. We're still a young team. We've got a lot of growth to go. I see us continuing to get better."

Davila opening some eyes

Before the season, Greenberg said freshman Victor Davila possessed a ton of potential, and the Canovanas, Puerto Rico, native is proving that to be true.

In games against Elon and Wisconsin, Davila came off the bench to score 16 and 13 points, respectively. Against Elon, he hit 7-of-9 from the floor and grabbed four rebounds, while against the Badgers, he nailed 5-of-7 from the floor and grabbed three rebounds.

"The coaches told me before the game to just go out and play my game," Davila said after the Elon win. "I'm more confident now than I was before [earlier in the season]. Now I feel like I'm more into the flow of the game."

"We've got to get him the ball," Greenberg said. "The guy can score. He understands how to score. But he's got to rebound. He's got to be a lot tougher rebounding the ball and defending the post. But he can score."

Allen named to all-tourney team in Puerto Rico

Tech played in the Puerto Rico Tip-off in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and finished a disappointing 1-2 in three games, beating Fairfield and falling to both Xavier and Seton Hall. The loss to Xavier came about when the Musketeers' Jackson hit a halfcourt shot at the buzzer in overtime to lift Xavier to a 63-62 victory.

But Allen played outstanding down there, earning a spot on the all-tournament team. He scored in double figures in all three games, averaging 19 points and 12 rebounds per game. He tied a career high when he grabbed 17 rebounds in the Hokies' loss to Seton Hall. He hit 55 percent of his shots from the floor in this tournament.

Other notes from the tournament:

- Vassallo, playing in his native country, averaged 16.6 points and 7.7 rebounds per game. But he scored just four points on 2-of-13 shooting from the floor in the loss to Xavier. He did, however, grab 10 boards in that game and dished out eight assists.

Interestingly, his four-point performance snapped his string of double-digit scoring performances at 13. Vassallo had scored in double figures in 36 of his previous 38 games heading into the Xavier game.


- Malcolm Delaney scored 25 points in the loss to Seton Hall in San Juan, shattering his previous career high of 20 set last season in the Hokies' 92-53 loss to North Carolina. He averaged 16.7 points and 4.7 assists per game in Puerto Rico.

Newell's passing touches Greenberg

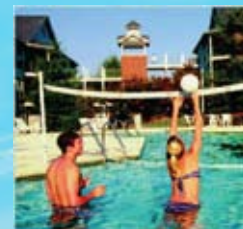
Pete Newell, a Hall of Fame basketball coach who is more widely known for his annual Big Man Camp in which he tutored many famous players on post skills, passed away on Nov. 17th at the age of 93, and Newell's passing wasn't lost on Greenberg, who had a close relationship with Newell dating back to his days at Long Beach State.

"Coach Newell is the best," Greenberg said. "When I was at Long Beach State, our deal was, if I had a manager pick him up, he'd come and watch practice as long as I brought the Mexican food and the margaritas. He was the best. He'd sit there, and after we'd go to dinner, he'd tear apart everything we did."

"I'd drive him home after - I didn't drink the margaritas; he did. We had the Mexican food - he loved nachos - and he'd sit there and take notes after practice. It was great."

Newell coached Cal to the national championship in 1959 and also led the Olympic team to the gold medal in 1960 with a roster that included Oscar Robertson, Jerry Lucas and Jerry West. 

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HOKIES SIGN FOUR PLAYERS FOR 2009-10 HOOPS SEASON

By Jimmy Robertson

Tech men's basketball coach Seth Greenberg already possesses a talented, young team, but the Hokies' head man added an injection of youth and talent when he and his staff signed four prospects to letters-of-intent during the early-signing period in early November. The group included Manny Atkins, a 6-foot-7, 200-pound small forward from Stone Mountain, Ga.; Ben Boggs, a 6-4, 185-pound guard from Roanoke, Va.; Erick Green, a 6-2, 180-pound guard from Winchester, Va.; and Cadarian Raines, a 6-8, 210-pound power forward from Petersburg, Va.

The signing of Atkins goes a long way toward filling the vacancy to be left by A.D. Vassallo. Atkins averaged 20.5 points, 10.4 rebounds and three assists per game his junior season at Tucker High School. He averaged 13.4 points per game his sophomore season in leading Tucker to the state championship. He is ranked as the No. 26 wing forward nationally by Scout.com and as the 89th-ranked senior by *Prepstars*. He is a member of the National Honor Society and carries a 3.8 grade-point average.

"Manny Atkins has the total package," Greenberg said. "He is a terrific student-athlete and has tremendous leadership skills. He has a toughness about him and a tremendous work ethic. He has the potential to develop into a similar player as A.D."

Boggs averaged 19 points, eight rebounds and three assists per game as a junior at

Hidden Valley High. He averaged 16 points, eight rebounds and four assists as a sophomore. ESPN ranked him the No. 26 shooting guard prospect in the nation.

"Ben Boggs is a fierce competitor and a winning player," Greenberg said. "He has a toughness about him that sets him apart. He's a hard-driving guard who has the ability to make shots. He is an outstanding defender and a winner in every aspect.

"I get a kick out of people that question Ben's quickness. I've yet to see a player keep him out of the lane. He has a tremendous first step and changes speeds and uses his body very well."

Green averaged 18.5 points, three points and 2.9 assists per game his junior season at Millbrook High School – leading his team to the Group AA championship. He earned Region II player of the year honors his junior season. Green averaged 14.1 points, 2.5 assists and 2.1 steals per game as a sophomore. He'll play for Paul VI High in Fairfax, Va., this season.

"Erick Green is a pure point guard. He understands how to run a team, distribute the basketball and make other players better," Greenberg said. "He understands pace and tempo and has a great feel for the game. His length makes him, potentially, a great defender."

Raines plays at Petersburg High, where he averaged 14.3 points, 10.4 rebounds and 5.8 blocked shots per game as a junior. He earned co-Central District player of the year honors his junior season and first-team all-region honors. Scout.com ranked him the No. 17 center prospect and the No. 62 overall prospect nationally.


"Cadarian Raines has the chance to be a world-class rebounder," Greenberg said. "He pursues every single shot like it's a pass off the backboard. He has a nose for the basket-



Seth Greenberg and his staff signed four players who not only added talent to the roster, but also took care of some needs.

ball and has a relentless passion to rebound. He is extremely athletic and can run the floor and he is a better offensive player than we anticipated. He has a chance to be a special frontcourt player."

With this class, Greenberg signed one player for every position.

"I think we filled our needs in this class," Greenberg said. "Obviously, losing A.D. Vassallo, we needed a big wing player and Atkins fills that void. With Cheick's [Cheick Diakite] departure, we needed a frontcourt rebounder and Cadarian Raines really has a chance to be special at that position. Ben Boggs is just a very good basketball player. There isn't an aspect of the game he doesn't excel at. Erick Green is a pure, set-up point guard who can defend the basketball." 

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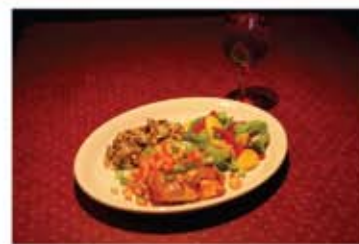
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(NOT) HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

SUPPORTIVE PARENTS MAKE THINGS EASIER FOR THE HOKIES WHEN ON THE ROAD

By Matt Kovatch

Not many people saw it aside from the few teammates huddled around her at the end of the table, but she was crying. The St. Joseph's women's basketball team had just sat down in the McGugin Center, Vanderbilt University's athletics facility in downtown Nashville, Tenn., and the girl at the end of the table was visibly upset.

She tried to hide it by bowing her head and covering her face with her hands, but her legs were bouncing a mile a minute under the table. One of her teammates leaned over to console her, but that just made it worse and opened the floodgates. Now the young lady was in tears, feverishly wiping her eyes in an effort to contain herself.

Why was she crying? No one besides her or the women around her may know for sure, but it's rather easy to venture a guess once you know the circumstances. You see, it was about 5:30 p.m. on Thanksgiving Day, November 27th. People all over the country were sitting down with loved ones in the comfort of their own homes to enjoy one of most anticipated meals of the year, but not that poor girl from St. Joe's. Not her teammates either, nor the young women who play basketball for Virginia Tech, Davidson or Vanderbilt.

Those four teams were in Nashville over the holiday to participate in the Vanderbilt Thanksgiving Tournament on the 28th and 29th, an event that was won by the host Commodores when they knocked off the Hokies in the title game. But the games – the whole reason why the players were missing Thanksgiving in the first place – were insignificant at that moment. That's because this meal was supposed to be special, but without those whom you are used to sharing it with, it's just not the same.

Vanderbilt was gracious enough to organize the get-together for all the teams so they didn't have to spend the holiday in some banquet room at a hotel, and a full spread of Thanksgiving fare was provided. There was turkey, ham, stuffing, bread pudding, mashed potatoes, rolls, pies, cheesecakes, a salad bar, an ice cream bar, green bean casserole, macaroni and cheese, sweet potatoes, and even seafood pasta. You name it, and it was there for you stuff yourself with to your heart's content.

But it sure didn't feel like Thanksgiving. The Hokies didn't know what to expect, so they arrived at the McGugin Center in their Sunday best. However, it would be a lie to say that a few faces didn't drop when they saw where they would be eating their Thanksgiving feast. It was a school cafeteria, the kind where you pick up a tray and make your way through the line to choose what you want to eat. Normally reserved for Vanderbilt student-athletes to grab a bite to eat after practice or on their way to class, it was now the dinner setting for a bunch of young women who were away from their families on Thanksgiving. There were no tablecloths or silverware or napkins on the tables – it looked just as it had the day before and just how it would the day after. It wasn't the most welcoming of atmospheres, and Vanderbilt head coach Melanie Balcomb knew it.

She wasted no time getting up in front of the group to apologize for the lack of family-like and comforting ambience. She welcomed the players to Nashville and said that, while it may be tough to be away from loved ones, everyone else in the room was in the same boat, so for the next hour or so, it was important to enjoy yourself and help yourself to as much food as you wanted. She pointed out the cooks and the staff who had given up time with their families to try and make a nice atmosphere for the girls, and she quickly boasted about how good the food was that they were about to eat.

It was a nice gesture, but the



With her parents in attendance, senior Amber Hall had one of the best games of her career by scoring 14 points and blocking three shots against St. Joe's in Nashville on Nov. 28.

words weren't enough for that player from St. Joe's. She still missed her family, and what makes it worse is that it's very possible that her family was right there in Nashville to see her.

That was the case with Tech senior Amber Hall. She wasn't crying, but her father, Al, and her mother, Pinky, had just driven eight hours from Tallahassee, Fla., to spend a few days with their daughter. The only problem was that no parents of players were allowed to eat at the dinner – it was strictly for the teams, the coaches and the support staff.

"Amber fully anticipated that we'd be able to eat with her because we always have in the past," Pinky said in the lobby of the team hotel prior to Tech's game against Vanderbilt. "Usually when we meet the team on trips, it's like, 'Sure, come along and you can just sit over there.'"

But that's not how it was in this instance. The Halls were able to find a Thanksgiving dinner at a nearby hotel and ended up spending time with Amber afterward, but they found it a little odd that parents were not welcome on this occasion.

"If you think about all of the different holidays, Thanksgiving is the one that centers the most on family associations and connections," Pinky said. "Where we come from, Thanksgiving is really big because of that. We've always had big affairs in the past, and when each of our parents passed on, we took a lot of it upon ourselves to have everyone's family come to our house. Amber is definitely used to a big, happy Thanksgiving with a lot of food and games to enjoy.

"I think she liked [the team dinner], but she didn't realize until right before it that parents couldn't come. Some of the other players who know us and see us around – they know we always come along, so they, too, were a little disappointed."

Whatever the reasoning was for the decision to limit the dinner to team personnel is unknown, but there were definitely some bummed families that day. That's not to take a shot at the fine folks from Vanderbilt – they may have simply overlooked the possibility of so many families traveling to see their daughters – and besides, the dinner was well-received by all in attendance and the food was quite delicious. But it just goes to show how important the holidays are for many people, and Thanksgiving dinner or not, the Halls are still going to make the effort to be with Amber whenever they can.

"Since Amber has been away at college, we've tried to do all of the holidays," Al said. "We think it's very important. All too often, people tend to think that young adults are independent and that they don't need parental support, but I beg to differ. I think that there are kids who need that, especially if they come from a close-knit family where those things are meaningful."

When on a trip, the Halls always find the time in between the Hokies' scheduled activities to hang out with Amber, but when they can't, they meet up with some of the other families who also make the trip to support the team. On this trip, family members of junior Lindsay Biggs, sophomore Elizabeth Basham and freshman Brittany Lewis were in attendance. In fact, the Halls ran into the Biggs on Thanksgiving night.

"We families always look forward to seeing each other at these things – we're like a little support group for each other," Pinky said.

"When Pinky and I come to a game, we don't simply represent Amber. For those kids whose parents can't be there, we also serve as surrogate parents for them to show that there is hope that there is somebody from home who is there supporting them." -Al Hall, Amber Hall's father

"You feel really good when you see those other parents, too. We've bonded with these other people, and you expect to see them."

While there are a handful of parents who get to see the Hokies every so often, it's important to understand that all parents don't have the same luxury to do so. It doesn't take long to recognize that Al Hall is a smart and thoughtful man, and his logic behind the importance of supporting the team while it's away from home is spot on.

"It's easy for a family to lose a bond with a kid with the whole process [of being a collegiate student-athlete], so we are eternally grateful that we [Al and Pinky] are in a position where we can afford to take a trip and be away from work for almost a week," Al said. "But you just feel for all the other parents who can't do that.

"When Pinky and I come to a game, we don't simply represent Amber. For those kids whose parents can't be there, we also serve as surrogate parents for them to show that there is hope that there is somebody from home who is there supporting them.

"This team has gone through an awful lot in the past couple of years. There was the shooting [on April 16th, 2007], one of the players' boyfriends was killed in a car wreck, one of the players' fathers passed away, and others have lost grandparents or fam-

ily members. So sometimes, the presence of parents in post-crisis situations can serve as consolation and reaffirmation that someone is there to care for."

"We're supportive of all the girls, and I think that's one of the rewards that we get out of traveling to these games," Pinky agreed. "We have relationships with these players – not just Amber. We talk to them and give them encouragement and support, and that's an aspect of athletics that I think is so important because they have a lot to deal with."

While the Halls certainly understand and stress the importance of supporting a child in need, that doesn't mean they wouldn't like to see things change a little bit. It's time-honored to tradition to take in some football on TV or to head out to a basketball game to get out of the house when you're home for the holidays. But what about the players who play in those games? Or the individuals who

sacrifice their time to put on the events that so many get to enjoy? Like the Hokies' experience every November and December, those people spend a lot of time on buses and

in hotel rooms with nothing but a phone to connect them to their loved ones.

"Somewhere along the line, somebody might step back and think about this, but playing sports is a very demanding aspect of a student's life," Al said. "They don't really get a chance like traditional students to have a few days to sit back and relax. Each year, they'll have to leave on Christmas Day or the day after to get back to campus. They don't have the luxury of being away. It's a little invasive, really, so it's something for people to think about for the betterment of the student as a whole. You can get so caught up in the competition that you can lose sight of the big picture."

So why play in these tournaments? Well, with no classes in session, it's an easy way to get some games in against some great opponents in some great locales with no reason to worry about hurrying back for school. And depending on the sport and who is playing, it also makes for good ticket sales and for some good television. Having played in college herself, Pinky understands that.

"Once you become a player, you develop the mindset that you'll be playing for the next four years and that it's a fact of life," Pinky said. "But Amber already talks about being able to celebrate the holidays next year when she's done with her undergrad.

Maybe [the NCAA] could have some type of rotation where if a team plays over Thanksgiving one year, then they don't the next year or they don't at Christmas time."


Until that happens, if it even were to happen, parents like the Halls and those students who play the game will have to continue to spend the holidays in an unconventional way. Visits are few and far between for some families, and for many student-athletes who attend a school far from home – like Hall and the approximately 650 miles that separate Blacksburg from Tallahassee – those visits are short. Even if a team does get a weekend off at the last minute, it's nearly impossible to find an affordable flight or make the lengthy drive without much notice.

Opportunities must be appreciated when they come along, and that's why the Thanksgiving dinner in the Vanderbilt cafeteria ended up not being such a bad thing. It wasn't Grandma's house or your mom's cooking or the company that most were used to, but it also wasn't the hotel room that the teams were holed up in for most of the holiday weekend. For

past holiday trips, the team had been to restaurants with nice menus and attractive table settings. But Angela Crosby, one of the Hokies' assistant coaches and one of the most down-home Southerners you'll ever meet, said it best.

"The girls don't care about all that fancy stuff – they just want to *feel* like it's Thanksgiving."

And she was right. The food didn't have to be amazing, but it at least had to resemble what the players were used to and what they were missing. So kudos to Vanderbilt for making that happen.

And that poor girl from St. Joe's with the tears in her eyes? She was all smiles after passing through the buffet line and eyeing up that mac and cheese. Sometimes all it takes is a little comfort food. 

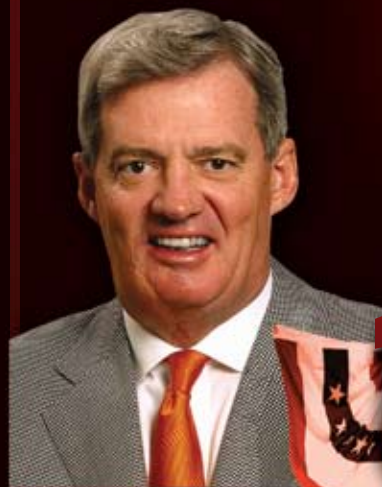
The Hokies started the season with a 5-2 record thanks to a number of players stepping up and recording career highs, including junior Lindsay Biggs, who led the team in scoring through seven games with 14.4 points per game.



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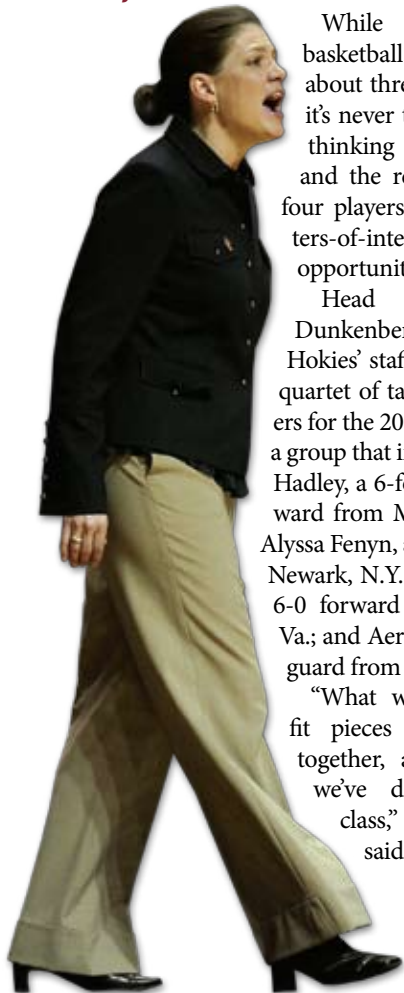
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FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT FOR WOMEN'S HOOPS AS FOUR STANDOUTS COMMIT TO TECH

By Matt Kovatch



While the women's basketball season still has about three months to go, it's never too soon to begin thinking about next year, and the recent signing of four players to national letters-of-intent gives a great opportunity to do so.

Head coach Beth Dunkenberger and the Hokies' staff will welcome a quartet of talented newcomers for the 2009-10 campaign, a group that includes Porshcia Hadley, a 6-foot-3 center/forward from Montezuma, Ga.; Alyssa Fenyn, a 6-0 guard from Newark, N.Y., Abby Redick, a 6-0 forward from Roanoke, Va.; and Aerial Wilson, a 5-8 guard from Cocoa, Fla.

"What we try to do is fit pieces of the puzzle together, and that's what we've done with this class," Dunkenberger said. "We needed a

good mix. We needed some guards who could come in and be playmakers and we needed some help in the paint, so that's what we got. I think they will mesh together to be an excellent class."

Hadley is rated as the No. 52 prospect in the nation by *Blue Star Basketball*. She averaged 22 points and 18 rebounds per game last season at Macon County High School, where she is a three-time Georgia Class AA first-team selection. She is a *Street & Smith's Sporting News* honorable mention All-American and has been an *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* all-state selection for the past three years.

"Porshcia's numbers are incredible," Dunkenberger said. "I don't care what league you're playing in or who you're playing against - if you're pulling down that many rebounds, that is something special. She is long and lean and she has a knack for getting to the ball off the boards."

Fenyn is rated as the No. 103 prospect nationally by *Blue Star Basketball*, and she averaged 20 points and 10 rebounds per game last season at Newark High School. She is a two-time all-state first-team selection and she led her team to the 2008 state semifinals. Fenyn has been a varsity starter since the eighth grade and holds the school record for scoring after breaking the 1,000-point plateau in just her sophomore season. She is a two-time *Street & Smith's Sporting News* honorable mention All-American and is a 2008-09 McDonald's All-American nominee.


"Alyssa is a blonde-haired version of [current Hokie] Brittany Cook," Dunkenberger raved. "They play very similarly. She's a little bit of a better ball-handler than Brittany, and she has

great 3-point range. She has unlimited potential and should be a special player for us."

Redick is a local product from Hidden Valley High School and is the sister of former Duke star J.J. Redick. She is missing her senior season after suffering a knee injury, but she averaged 11 points and seven rebounds per game as a junior. A career 1,000-point scorer, she also led the two-time Virginia High School League Group AA champion Titans with 3.6 assists per game. Redick was a 2007 Associated Press first-team all-state selection and was a second-team selection following her junior season. She has been named to *The Roanoke Times* All-Timesland team on two occasions and was a member of the 2007 AAU national championship team.

"Abby is one of the smartest players I've seen," Dunkenberger said. "She understands every aspect of the game and she's a coach's dream because she'll do all the little things that make good teams become great. I think it takes a strong personality to play locally because there is a lot of pressure, but I think Abby can handle that."

Finally, Wilson averaged 28 points per contest last season at Rockledge High School, where she finished the year as the second-leading scorer in the state. Wilson was named to the All-Central Florida second team after guiding her squad to a 24-4 record and she has twice been named to the All-Cape Coast team. She scored 33 points with nine steals, six rebounds and five assists in the semifinals of the Florida state tournament and has tallied 1,368 points entering her senior season.

"Aerial is a combo guard who could play the point if we needed her to, but she's more of a wing scorer," Dunkenberger said. "She can score in transition, she has a dribble pull-back jumper and she has 3-point range. She's very explosive and is an ACC-level athlete." 

Head women's basketball coach Beth Dunkenberger may have put together her best recruiting class at Tech with the signing of Porshcia Hadley, Alyssa Fenyn, Abby Redick and Aerial Wilson.

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TAPP BACK IN THE STARTING LINEUP AND PLAYING WELL IN SEATTLE

By Jimmy Robertson

Darryl Tapp has quickly learned about the business that is the NFL.

Coming off a season in which he started 16 games and played reasonably well, recording seven sacks and an interception, the former Tech defensive end and current Seattle Seahawk found himself in a reserve role at the start of this season, as the Seahawks handed the starting job to rookie Lawrence Jackson, a first-round pick from Southern Cal.

But that didn't cause any worries for one of the more popular Hokies to play under Frank Beamer. In typical Tapp fashion, he never complained and simply kept working.

Tapp got his first start of the season in week seven – and he's started ever since.

"That's just the way I am," Tapp said. "I knew I had to do something to validate them inserting me back in the starting lineup. So you push even harder. That's what I did.

"They [the Seahawks coaching staff] wanted to try a rookie. At this level, you quickly learn that it's a business. Things hadn't been going great for us as a team, so they inserted me back in the lineup. I'm just trying to make the most of it."

Tapp is playing in his third season with Seattle after the team took him in the second round of the 2006 draft. During his rookie year, he played in all 16 games, recording 33 tackles (22 solo) and three sacks. He also intercepted a pass.

Last season appeared to be his breakout campaign. He started all 16 games, recording 49 tackles (41 solo) and seven sacks. And again, he intercepted a pass.

But the Seahawks' personnel people draft-

ed Jackson in the first round and are paying him big money. They wanted a quick return on their investment, so they started Jackson even though Tapp played very well last season, and Tapp then quickly realized he was only as good as his last game.

"It's been a growing experience," he said. "I had my job stripped from me. But I've earned it back.

"The competition in this league is sky high. It's the best of the best. It's fun, but it's also challenging. You can't relax."

Tapp, a former two-time All-ACC selection, enjoyed the Seahawks' playoff run a year ago. Seattle made it to the NFC divisional game, where it lost to the Chicago Bears 27-24. He hoped to experience that again, but the Seahawks have struggled to a 2-11 mark so far this season.

"We've had so many injuries to our wide receivers," he said. "I think all of them have been hurt at some point, and then, that migrated over to the rest of the team. That's played a part in it [the Seahawks' struggles].

"Sometimes when that happens, guys want to do more than they need to do. They try to force things instead of just doing their job. That's happened a lot to us, too. It's been tough for us this year."

Tapp signed a four-year contract shortly after he got drafted. That means he has one more season remaining in Seattle after this one before his contract expires. He comes from a tight-knit family – he and his two older brothers are very close – and he would love to see more of them, but they live in the Tidewater area.

Still, that's not to mean that he wants to go anywhere.

"I love it here," he said of Seattle. "The city is nice and the scenery is nice. The only negative is that it's so far away from

home. But I usually have at least one member of my family go to every game.

"I like the organization here, too. They really care about their players. Coach [Mike] Holmgren is great and Jim Mora [Seattle's defensive backs coach and coach-in-waiting] is great. He brings a lot of intensity. Everything is going good.


"We even have a Hokie Club out here. I haven't been able to get up with them yet, but I know we have one."

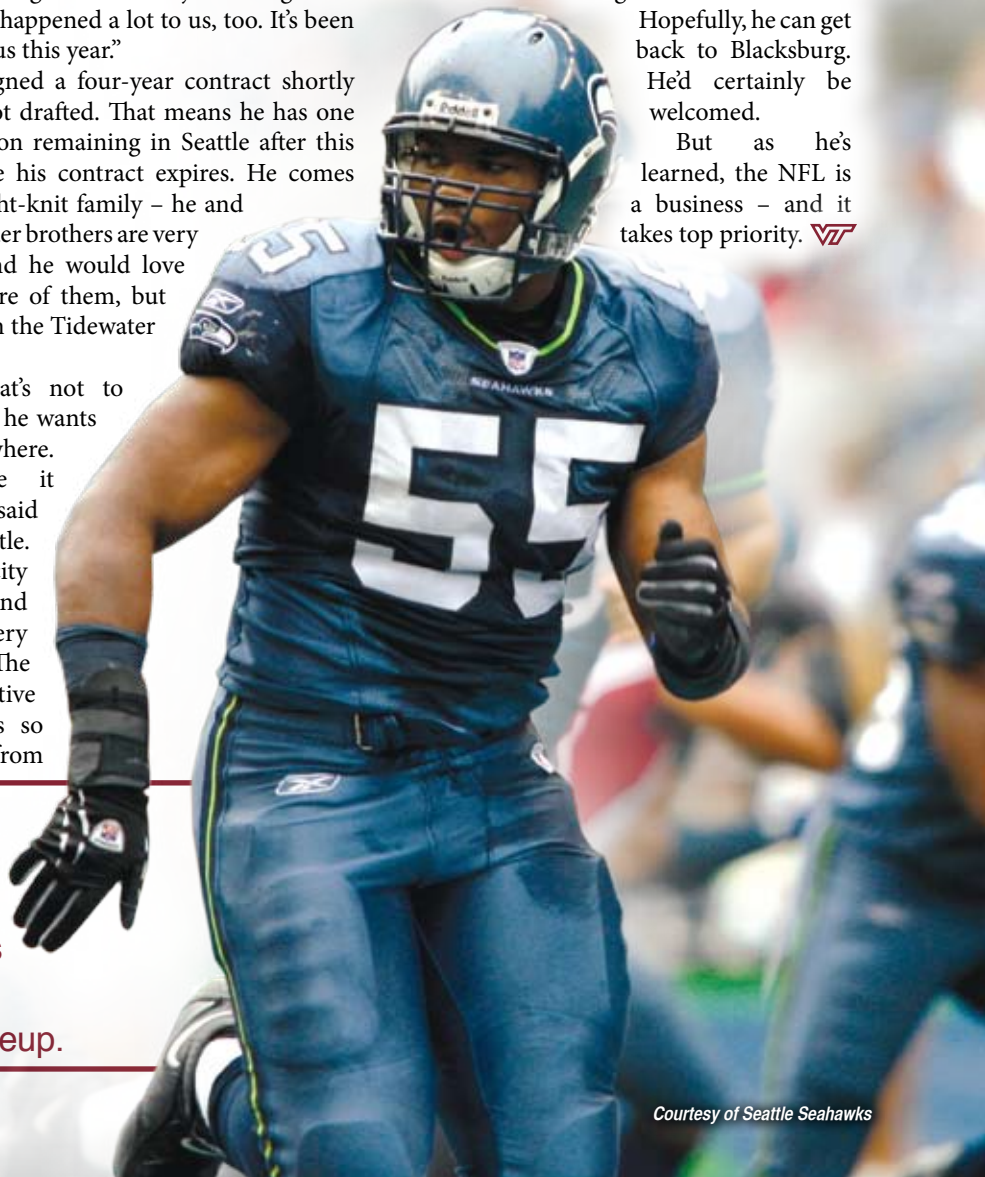
As expected, Tapp keeps up with some of his former teammates and with what's happening at Tech. He and James Anderson, a former high school teammate now with the Carolina Panthers, remain close.

"I talk a lot with those guys before and after games," Tapp said. "I've run into DeAngelo [Hall], [Aaron] Rouse, [Chris] Ellis, and we play Josh Morgan and those guys twice.

"I'd love to get back to Tech more often and see some of the folks there. But there's not really an offseason. You get a month or two off, maybe, and then you have to be back here for OTA's [organized team activities]. Maybe since we're not going to be in the playoffs, I can get back there."

Hopefully, he can get back to Blacksburg. He'd certainly be welcomed.

But as he's learned, the NFL is a business – and it takes top priority. 



Courtesy of Seattle Seahawks

HOKIES IN THE PROS

(As of Dec. 8th)



ARIZONA CARDINALS

25 Eric Green -

The former Tech cornerback has started nine games for the Cardinals thus far this season, playing in 11 and missing one game because of an injured knee. He has 30 tackles (25 solo) and an interception, the second of his career.



BALTIMORE RAVENS

Justin Harper -

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



BUFFALO BILLS

93 Chris Ellis - Ellis,

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

first five games, but the Bills activated him for the sixth game (he did not play), and for the season, he has played in six games. He has three tackles – all solo.



CAROLINA PANTHERS

50 James Anderson

- Anderson serves as

a back-up at the weakside linebacker spot for the Panthers, but hasn't played a lot this season. He was not activated for the first six games this season, and has only played in four games so far. He has one solo tackle on the season.

87 Jeff King - King serves as the starter at tight end for the Panthers and has started 11 of 12 games this season. He has 19 catches for 169 yards, an average of 8.9 yards per catch, and has one touchdown. He caught his first touchdown reception of the season in the Panthers' 31-22 win over the Lions.



CHICAGO BEARS

27 Kevin Jones -

Jones signed with the Bears in the offseason and has played in eight games as a back-up thus far (he wasn't activated for

two games). He has rushed for 109 yards on 34 carries and caught two passes for five yards.



CINCINNATI BENGALS

17 Shayne Graham -

Graham, a former Tech kicker, has started 11 games with the Bengals this season, missing two games because of a groin injury. He has made 16 of his 18 field-goal attempts, with a long of 45 yards, and all of his 10 extra-point attempts.



CLEVELAND BROWNS

27 Nick Sorensen -

Sorensen, now in his eighth NFL season, participates mostly on special teams for the Browns, while also serving as a back-up at the safety spots. He has played in all 13 games thus far, and has 21 tackles (17 solo) and a half of a sack.



DENVER BRONCOS

60 John Engelberger -

Engelberger, a former defensive lineman at Tech, started the first six games this season at defensive end before missing a game with an

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injured knee. Now a reserve, he has played in 11 of 12 games and has 25 tackles (19 solo) and a sack on the season.

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

19 Eddie Royal - Royal started the first five games for Denver before missing the sixth game with an injured ankle. He returned to the starting lineup for the next game and has started every game since then. He has caught 69 passes for 799 yards and five touchdowns. He's also returned 12 punts for an average of 11.8 yards per return and rushed 10 times for 38 yards. And he's returned 20 kickoffs for an average of 26.3 yards per return, including a long of 95 yards.



GREEN BAY PACKERS

37 Aaron Rouse - Rouse, a third-round pick in 2007, has started four games and played in 11 of the Packers' 13 games this season, missing a recent game with an ankle injury. He has 44 tackles (32 solo) and two interceptions so

far this season, one of which he returned 99 yards for a touchdown.



HOUSTON TEXANS

11 André Davis - Davis, now in his seventh NFL season, serves as the third receiver for the Texans and has played in nine of the Texans' 13 games this season - he missed four games because of an injured finger. He has caught 10 passes for 155 yards and returned 32 kickoffs for 719 yards, an average of 22.5 yards per return.

76 Duane Brown - Brown went to the Texans in the first round of this past April's NFL Draft and has started every game at left tackle for the team. He continues to fair pretty well - he's only committed four penalties thus far.

52 Xavier Adibi - The Texans drafted the former Tech linebacker in April, and after a slow start to the season, he has worked his way into the starting lineup, having started four games thus far and played in six overall. He has 33 tackles (26 solo) on the year - 15 of those coming in a game against Indianapolis.



JACKSONVILLE JAGUARS

20 Pierson Prioleau - Prioleau signed with the Jaguars in the offseason to be a back-up at both safety spots and to play on special teams. He has played in every game thus far for the Jaguars, starting one of those, and has 19 tackles (18 solo) on the season.

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



KANSAS CITY CHIEFS

24 Brandon Flowers - Flowers, a rookie, started the first five games for Kansas City and 10 of the 11 he has played. The 2008 second-round pick came up big in the Chiefs' loss to the Jets when he picked off two Brett Favre passes and returned one 91 yards for a touchdown. He has 48 tackles (42 solo) on the season and the two interceptions.

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MIAMI DOLPHINS

18 Ernest Wilford - Wilford, Tech's all-time leading receiver, signed a big deal

with the Dolphins in the offseason, but has gotten off to a slow start. He has caught just three passes for 25 yards and has played in just five of Miami's games.

76 Brandon Frye - Frye started the season with the Houston Texans, but has landed with the Miami Dolphins, who signed him in early November. The former Tech offensive tackle has played in four games with the Dolphins – the first game action of his young NFL career.



NEW ORLEANS SAINTS

68 Matt Lehr - Lehr's contract was terminated in early

September, but the Saints re-signed him shortly thereafter. The former Tech offensive lineman and nine-year veteran has started three games and played in 10 so far this season.



NEW YORK JETS

17 David Clowney - Clowney, now in his

second season, was activated for the first time this season when the Jets activated him for their game against Kansas City. He did not see any time in that game and he hasn't been activated for any other game since that one.



OAKLAND RAIDERS

64 Jake Grove - The former

Tech center is now playing in his fifth season with Oakland and started the first nine games of the season. But he suffered an injured calf and hasn't been able to play since. A year ago, he played in just seven games, missing the majority of the season because of a knee injury.



SAN FRANCISCO 49ERS

84 Josh Morgan -

Morgan, a 2008 sixth-round pick, had a breakout game against the Giants when he caught five passes for 86 yards, including a 30-yarder that went for a touchdown – his first in the NFL. That performance earned him the starting nod against Seattle in the 49ers' next game. But Morgan has played in just one game since then because of an injured groin. He has caught 15 passes for 214 yards and two touchdowns, and he also

plays on special teams. He has four tackles on special teams, including three solo ones.



SEATTLE SEAHAWKS

55 Darryl Tapp - After

starting all of last season, the former Tech defensive end finally broke into the starting lineup this season after playing as a reserve in the first five games. He has started every game since (seven total) and has 44 tackles (36 solo) and three sacks so far this season.



ST. LOUIS RAMS

69 Anthony Davis - The former Tech offensive tackle started the season

with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and played in four games. But the Bucs released him on Oct. 25th. He went unemployed for nearly a month until the Rams signed him on Nov. 18th. He hasn't been activated for any of the Rams' games yet.



TENNESSEE TITANS

22 Vincent Fuller - The


former Tech defensive back continues to flourish in Tennessee for the one-loss Titans, having seen action in every game (one start). He has 41 tackles, including 31 solo stops, and he has recovered a fumble and forced a fumble.

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



WASHINGTON REDSKINS

23 DeAngelo Hall - Hall was abruptly released by the Oakland Raiders on Nov.

5th, but signed a one-year, \$429,000 deal with the Washington Redskins just two days later. He doesn't start, but has played in every game since signing with the Redskins and made an impact, picking off two passes. He now has five interceptions for the season to go along with 57 tackles (48 solo). 



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TASMIN FANNING'S IMPRESSIVE MONTH PLACES HER AMONG ELITE COMPANY

By Matt Kovatch

Tasmin Fanning is one of the greatest athletes in Virginia Tech history.

If that sounds like a bold statement, then you're probably not sure whom she is. And even if you are, then you're not giving the Tech runner her due credit. What the senior from Charlottesville, Va., has done over the past month and a half has been nothing short of remarkable, and it's catapulted her up the list of the best to ever don the orange and maroon.

It's a long and distinguished list, and who belongs at the top may never be accurately determined because it's impossible to compare eras and sports and accomplishments. If the decision is based upon a long and Hall-of-Fame-worthy professional career, then Bruce Smith may be at the top of the list. If it's based upon name recognition and putting Blacksburg on the national map, then it's got to be Michael Vick. And if it's on individual dominance and being considered one of the best the sport has ever seen, it might be Angela Tinker.

But if you look at All-America awards, the one thing every collegiate student-athlete has the chance to earn, then Fanning gets closer and closer to the top of that list. There have been many All-Americans in Tech's athletics history, but only 10 individuals have earned the honor more than twice. Only five have earned it more than three times, and Fanning is one of those five. And with four All-America nods, she still has two seasons – indoor and

outdoor track – to go before she's finished.

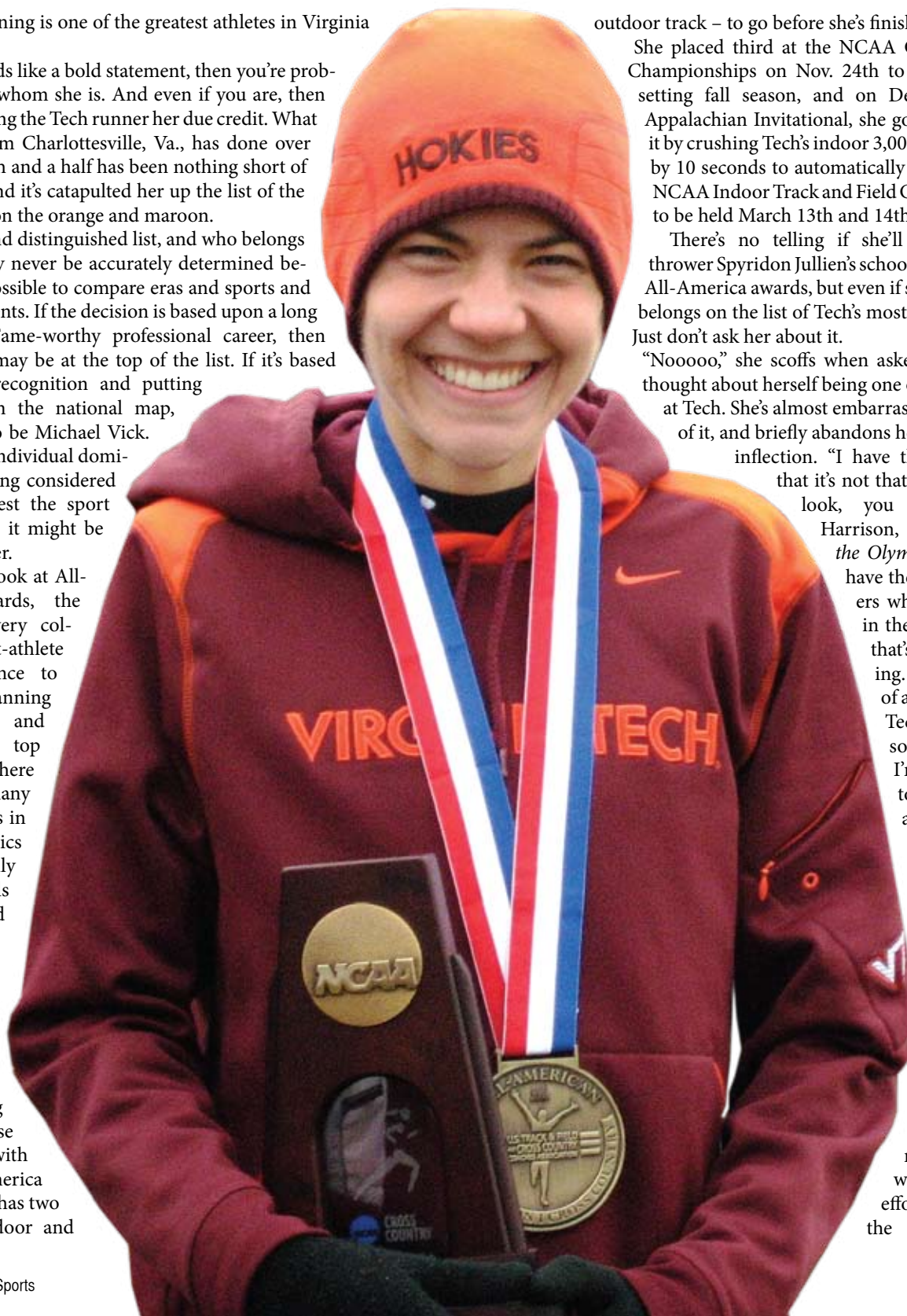
She placed third at the NCAA Cross Country Championships on Nov. 24th to cap a record-setting fall season, and on Dec. 5th at the Appalachian Invitational, she got right back at it by crushing Tech's indoor 3,000-meter record by 10 seconds to automatically qualify for the NCAA Indoor Track and Field Championships to be held March 13th and 14th.

There's no telling if she'll catch former thrower Spyridon Jullien's school-leading seven All-America awards, but even if she doesn't, she belongs on the list of Tech's most accomplished. Just don't ask her about it.

"Nooooo," she scoffs when asked if she's ever thought about herself being one of the best ever at Tech. She's almost embarrassed by the idea of it, and briefly abandons her whisper-like inflection. "I have the perspective

that it's not that great because, look, you have Queen Harrison, *who went to the Olympics!* And you have the football players who go and play in the pro leagues – that's pretty amazing. We have a ton of athletes here [at Tech] who have so much success. I'm just trying to fit in with all of that and stay up to par with everyone else."

It's not hard to believe her modesty if you've ever met her – her soft-spoken and unassuming nature resembles the way she glides effortlessly over the cross-country



terrain – but maybe that’s why she’s been so successful. To her, no race is bigger than the last one or the next one, so much so that she has trouble choosing her most exciting accomplishment. She gives the nod to when she qualified for the U.S. Olympic Trials last summer in Oregon and met President-elect Barack Obama, but it’s her level-headedness that keeps her succeeding time and time again.

“I definitely think that has contributed to the successes I’ve had,” Fanning said. “I believe that having a consistency within your training is key. Keeping a level head is very important because it’s a very careful balance. You can go too far and be too regimented, saying, ‘OK, I need to do this, this and this.’ I’ve tried that. Or you can say, ‘I will focus for my workouts and I will do what I can to make sure that I don’t get hurt, but I also need that mental break where I can just hang out, enjoy myself and be a college student.’ It’s so easy to get sucked into the intensity of it all.”

regionals and nationals left. There are more important things. I knew there was nothing I could do better at that point.”

Fanning made up for the close call two weeks later in Clemmons, N.C., by winning the NCAA Southeast Regional by almost seven seconds, becoming the first Tech runner to win a regional meet. The victory ensured her of a third consecutive trip to the national championship, but once again, it wasn’t a big deal.

“It was kind of exciting, but ultimately, I wish the entire team had done as well I felt we could have done,” Fanning said. “That way, we could’ve gone to nationals together instead of just me as an individual.”

The Hokies did go to nationals as a team in 2006 when Fanning was a sophomore – she finished 77th – but she qualified individually as a junior and surprised herself by placing 12th and collecting her second All-America award (the first came as part of the distance medley relay team at the NCAA indoor track

“We have a ton of athletes here [at Tech] who have so much success. I’m just trying to fit in with all of that and stay up to par with everyone else.”

- Tasmin Fanning

Other runners have said the same thing, so it’s apparent that one needs to be mentally strong to succeed at the sport. When Fanning lost the Atlantic Coast Conference championship on Nov. 1st by six-tenths of a second, she wasn’t even upset. She led with the finish line in sight before stepping in a dip in the field and breaking her stride, which allowed Florida State’s Susan Kuijken to pass her for the win.

“It was a little frustrating in that respect, but to have an exciting finish like that, I was just glad that I was able to participate in that,” Fanning said. “Yeah, it would’ve been great to win the ACC (her second-place finish was the best by a Hokie since Tech joined the league), but at that point, there were still

nationals as a sophomore, and the third came in the 5,000 meters at the NCAA outdoor meet as a junior). She’d run the course in Terre Haute, Ind., twice before her final go around on Nov. 24th, and it proved advantageous as her third-place showing proved to be the best by any Hokie – male or female – in school history.

And to think it may have never happened if not for a few out-of-control board games as a child.

Born in Seattle, Fanning, her mother, Elizabeth, and her sister, Jessica (who also runs for Tech), moved to San Francisco for Tasmin’s early years before settling in Virginia. When Jessica, who is a year older than Tasmin, got to high school, Elizabeth



Tasmin Fanning receives some hardware with some of the other top finishers at the NCAA Cross Country Championships in Terre Haute, Ind.

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made her choose a sport to participate in.

"Jessica and I used to get really into board games and that wouldn't go very well," Tasmin remembered. "I think my mom decided, 'OK, these girls are a little competitive.' So she wanted to give us an outlet, but she also wanted us to find a group of people that we could hang out and relate to."

"Plus, being on a team, you develop all sorts of different qualities that are good to have in the real world, so I think she was looking toward that as well."

Jessica chose cross country and because Tasmin enjoyed running the mile in gym class during junior high, she followed suit a year later. The rest is history.

Not only did Elizabeth's decision help Tasmin to discover her amazing talent and send her on to her successful collegiate career, but it also helped Tasmin in what may have been her most difficult time.


Elizabeth was diagnosed with cancer during Tasmin's freshman year at Tech – her first year away from home. And while Tasmin's steady and even-keeled mentality has been her most valuable asset toward succeeding as a runner, it was the running that kept her so even-keeled during her mom's health scare.

"It was hard because there was nothing I could do," Tasmin remembered. "But my running really served as an outlet. Just getting

your sleep, training consistently and staying focused is really important, and that probably did help me get through things. With the whole situation with my mom, I didn't know what was going on and I couldn't help out. It was completely unpredictable, but I did have control over what I could do with myself. It was good that there was a routine that I could stick to."

Elizabeth is fine now – "She got her two-year scan back and she's clear for now," Tasmin said. – and Tasmin has improved by leaps and bounds ever since. What began as a simple way to get involved as a freshman in high school has turned into a four-year career that has her name mentioned among the all-time Hokie greats. The humble cross country star still has to pinch herself.

"Throughout high school, I would just kind of run and see what happened," she said. "Coming to college was great – I thought it would be a really good opportunity to see how much further I could go. But sometimes I do surprise myself and I realize, 'Oh! That's pretty cool that I'm here and that I did this!' But ultimately, I just kind of go with the flow, see what comes my way and hope for the best."

It's a simple philosophy, but Fanning no longer has to hope for the best. She's already among the best. 

Tasmin Fanning's third-place showing at the NCAA Cross Country Championships on Nov. 24 was the best finish by any Hokie, male or female, in Virginia Tech history.



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Fall Harvest



A look at Tech's crop of freshly signed recruits

By Matt Kovatch

Many people are aware of the NCAA's early signing period in November because that is when the best high school basketball players in the country formally commit to the school of their choice by signing a national letter-of-intent. But it's not just basketball – November 12th was just as exciting for many other sports at Virginia Tech, as that was the first day in which highly sought-after recruits were able to confirm their desire to become Hokies. Here is a brief rundown of some of the student-athletes expected to join Tech teams for the 2009-10 school year.

BASEBALL

Head coach Pete Hughes and the baseball staff will be adding six players – five rookies and one transfer – for the 2010 campaign.

Outfielder/first baseman Tyler Horan (Boston College H.S., Middleboro, Mass.) was a Catholic Conference all-star last season as a junior for a team that won the 2008 Division I state championship. He was also named to the *Patriot Ledger* All-Scholastic Team after hitting .376 with 16 stolen bases, 29 RBI and 33 runs scored, while adding seven doubles, three triples and two home runs.

Pitcher Joe Mantipty (Tunstall H.S., Danville, Va.) has been dominant on the mound for the past three years, helping his team to the Piedmont District regular-season and tournament titles each season. The 6-foot-5 lefty was named the Piedmont District player of the year after a junior sea-

son in which he went 9-0, with a 1.02 ERA and 91 strikeouts. Mantipty went 9-1, with a 0.65 ERA and 115 strikeouts as a junior, and he has been named to the Piedmont District, Region IV and All-Metro first teams after each of the past two seasons.

Catcher Chad Morgan (Paul VI H.S., Springfield, Va.) is a three-year letterman who helped his team to the Washington Catholic Athletic Conference championship in 2007 and to the state playoffs in 2008. As a junior last season, he batted .418 with 28 RBI and two home runs, while drawing a school-record 26 walks.

Pitcher/first baseman Patrick Scoggin (Douglas S. Freeman H.S., Richmond, Va.) was named a Colonial District honorable mention pitcher his junior season. He went 2-2 in 27.1 innings, with 39 strikeouts, a 4.10 ERA and a .242 opponents' batting average, while hitting .333 from the plate himself. He had even more success as a sophomore, fanning 62 batters in 34.2 innings, while compiling a 2.60 ERA and a .201 opponents' batting average.

Brent Zimmerman (Nova H.S., Cooper City, Fla.) is a right-handed shortstop/pitcher who was named to the 2008 Florida all-state team for Nova High, a school that has made the state 5A playoffs each year during his tenure and compiled a 75-14 record. At the plate in 2008, the team MVP batted .438 with 37 hits, 32 RBI, three home runs and 33 runs scored, while going 5-2 in 52 innings on the mound with 67 strikeouts and just eight walks.

"Tyler's got unlimited power potential and he may be the most physically impressive kid that I've ever recruited," Hughes said. "Joe might be the one of the most accomplished high school pitchers in the state of Virginia, and I feel that Chad is the best high school catcher in the Commonwealth – he is definitely a cornerstone recruit for us. Patrick is an unbelievable competitor, while Brent has ACC-level defensive skills and is a legitimate two-way player."

Finally, shortstop Tim Smalling (University of Arkansas) will arrive at Tech this coming spring but must sit out the 2009 season due to NCAA transfer rules. He brings great experience to Blacksburg, as he started 101 games over the past two seasons for the Razorbacks. He batted .288 as a freshman with two home runs, eight doubles and 23 RBI. Smalling's average dropped to .250 as a sophomore, but he increased his other numbers to the tune of nine homers, 14 doubles and 33 RBI. Smalling is a native of Raleigh, N.C., where he was a two-time

first-team all-state selection at Broughton High.

GOLF

Head coach Jay Hardwick and his staff added a pair of golfers who will begin playing for the Hokies in the fall of 2009.

Mikey Moyers (William Monroe H.S., Ruckersville, Va.) won his second consecutive Virginia Group AA high school championship earlier this fall in dominating fashion. He set the all-time Group AA 36-hole scoring record at the tournament with rounds of 65 and 62 for a total of 127 at Old Trail Golf Club in Crozet, Va. His margin of victory (18 shots) and score in relation to par (15-under-par) were also records for the state high school tournament, and his final round of 62 is the lowest round in the modern history of the event.

He was also the 2007 Virginia State Golf Association co-junior player of the year and the 2007 and 2008 VSGA Junior Match Play champion.

Joining Moyers in 2009 will be Jacob Everts (McCallie H.S., Ooltewah, Tenn.), an American Junior Golf Association honorable mention All-American. He finished second in the 2008 AJGA Stanford Financial Junior Championship and the 2008 AJGA Knoxville Junior Championship and was a 2008 first-team all-region performer.

"Mikey's record-setting victory at the state high school championship was truly remarkable and illustrates his ability to compete at the highest level," Hardwick said. "We expect him to contribute to our team's success right away, while Jacob is a very consistent player who will transition smoothly from junior golf to competing in the ACC."

SOFTBALL

Head coach Scot Thomas and the softball staff will be adding five players to the Hokie roster in time for the 2010 season.

Courtney Liddle (Battlefield H.S., Haymarket, Va.) is one of the top catchers in the country, as she was named an Under Armor All-American as a junior. She led her team to a state runner-up finish last year and was an All-Met first-team selection by *The Washington Post*. Liddle batted .471 with five home runs, 14 RBI and 11 extra-base hits in leading Battlefield to its best season in school history last year. Liddle was also the Cedar Run District player of the year, a second-team Group AAA all-state choice and an all-region first-team selection. Heading into her senior season, she has a career batting average of .502.

"Courtney is truly a blue-chip player and

we are very excited to add her to the roster," Thomas said. "She is a strong catcher with great power at the plate and should contribute immediately."

Kristina Cruz (Santa Fe C.C., Tampa, Fla.) is strong defensively and is expected to take over at third base. Last year, she hit .322 with eight doubles, seven home runs and 36 RBI at Santa Fe and was selected to the 2008 national all-tournament team after hitting .583 with a home run and nine RBI at the NJCAA National Tournament. She was also named to the Mid-Florida Conference team. Cruz, who graduated from the Academy of the Holy Names before enrolling at SFCC, will be a junior when she enrolls at Tech.

Jasmin Harrell (Beckman H.S., Irvine, Calif.) is a strong pitcher who is also expected to contribute at the plate. She was the *Tustin News'* 2008 All-City Softball Team's Most Valuable Player after going 14-3 with a 0.66 ERA last year. She had 135 strikeouts in 116 innings and also hit .410 with 21 RBI.

Brittany "BK" Smith (Southern Lee H.S., Cameron, N.C.) is a utility player who can catch, and play shortstop or in the outfield. She earned Cape Fear Valley All-Conference honors as a sophomore and junior, as well as all-district and all-state honors last year. She has earned letters in volleyball, softball and basketball and is president of her senior class.

Finally, local product Hollee Warlitzer (Alleghany H.S., Clifton Forge, Va.) is a utility player who can catch or play in the outfield. A two-time All-Timesland first-team pick by *The Roanoke Times*, she hit .480 with three home runs and 15 RBI as a junior last spring, earning All-Region III and honorable mention all-state honors. She also scored 22 runs and stole 19 bases.

VOLLEYBALL

After bringing in seven freshmen for this year, head coach Chris Riley and his staff only had room for one signee for the 2009 season, but they made it a good one. Cara Baarendse (William Mason H.S., Mason, Ohio) is a 6-foot-1 middle hitter who also plays for the Cincy Classics Club Team.

Baarendse is a four-year letterwinner for Mason and earned the Greater Miami Conference athlete of the year award after leading the league in kills (331) and service aces (60) on the season. In 2007, she led her squad to a 19-5 record (8-1 in conference), which helped her to garner first-team all-league honors. As a sophomore, Baarendse received second-team All-Fort Ancient Valley Conference Buckeye Division recognition.

"Cara is a great athlete who plays well over the net," Riley said. "We expect big things from Cara playing as a middle or on the right side."

WRESTLING

Head coach Kevin Dresser and his staff have landed six student-athletes from six different states for the 2009-10 season.

Andrew Clement (Grassfield H.S., Chesapeake, Va.) projects to be a 174-pounder in college. He was a two-time Group AA state champion at Christiansburg High and also won the Super 32 Tournament before transferring to Grassfield.

Hayden Countryman (Prattville H.S., Prattville, Ala.) is one of the most accomplished wrestlers in Alabama history and is ranked 17th in the country by *W.I.N. Magazine*. He has won the Class 6A championship in the 152-pound classification for four consecutive years and will have an opportunity to win his fifth state title this winter. As a junior, Countryman finished with a


59-1 record (58 pins) and earned National High School Coaches Association (NHSCA) All-America honors. Should Countryman win the individual state championship title this winter, he will become only the second wrestler to win five individual state championships.

Taylor Knapp (Collins Hill H.S., Suwanee, Ga.) is a NHSCA national champion who is ranked 11th in the country by *Wrestling USA Magazine* at 152 pounds. He took third at the state tournament as a freshman, but has taken the title the past two seasons and went 59-1 last year. He takes a 146-10 record into his final year. Knapp is ranked 15th in the country by *W.I.N. Magazine* at 152 pounds and the No. 74 overall recruit in the country by *InterMat*.

Erik Spjut (The Woodlands H.S., The Woodlands, Texas) is ranked fourth nationally at 130 pounds by *W.I.N. Magazine*. A NHSCA All-American, he is a two-time Texas state champion and a three-time place-winner. The projected 133-pounder is ranked the No. 66 overall recruit in the country by *InterMat*.

Brian Stephens (Graham H.S., St. Paris, Ohio) is a two-time Ohio state place-winner. The projected 149-pounder grappler was a NHSCA All-American.

Cody Tyler (Oak Park, H.S., Kansas City, Mo.) is a projected 125-pounder who is currently ranked eighth in the country at 119 pounds by *W.I.N. Magazine*. Tyler placed second in the state the past two years.

"Overall, we're really excited about these six guys," Dresser said. "We feel like we've just completed our third straight quality recruiting class. We've got some guys at areas where we feel like our depth is a little vulnerable, so we feel like we're putting the pieces of the puzzle together a little more each year." 



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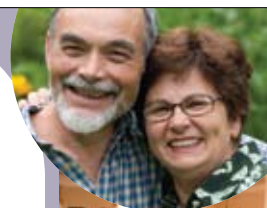
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– Bobby Bowden, Coach, Florida State football

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OLYMPIC SPORTS

YOUNG TECH GRAPPLERS OFF TO PROMISING START

By Matt Kovatch

There isn't a whole lot going on in the Olympic sports realm around the holiday season, but one Tech team that has been performing rather admirably has been the wrestling squad. Pundits around the country have even begun to take notice, because as of press time, the InterMat/NWCA/NWMA rankings listed true freshmen Jarrod Garnett 11th at 125 pounds and Jesse Dong 19th at 157 pounds. WrestlingReport.com lists Garnett 10th and Dong 17th, along with four other Hokies at various spots within the top 33.

The Hokie grapplers jumped out to a 3-0 start before entering invitational action on Dec. 4th and 5th in both Las Vegas and Davidson, N.C. Tech opened the season with a 22-18 home win over George Mason on Nov. 9th before drubbing Anderson 42-3 and shutting out Chattanooga 37-0, both on Nov. 30th in Tennessee.

The win over Chattanooga was particularly special because of a huge upset by sophomore Chris Diaz. The 141-pounder provided the highlight of the match when he toppled the



Sophomore Chris Diaz is just one of many young Hokies performing well in the wrestling season's early going.

nation's fourth-ranked wrestler in the weight class, Cody Cleveland, 8-6. Cleveland was an All-American last year for the Mocs.

With the team schedule on respite until January, the Hokies began traveling the country for various individual tournaments, and four Hokies placed in the competitive Las Vegas Open.

Both Garnett and Diaz finished fourth in their respective brackets. Garnett lost to top-seeded Rollie Peterkin from Penn in his first match of the day, 12-5, but rebounded to defeat third-seeded Marcus Orozco from Cal Davis, 6-4, to earn a trip to the 125-pound consolation finals. He then fell to second-seeded Anthony Robles from Arizona State 18-1.

Diaz reeled off three straight victories, including a 5-4 victory over Chris Drouin

from Arizona State, to secure a trip to the consolation finals at 141 pounds. Diaz faced second-seeded Kellen Russell from Michigan and dropped a heartbreaker, 3-1, with Russell scoring a takedown in sudden victory for the win.

Rounding out the top finishers for Tech were sophomore D.J. Bruce at 197 pounds and freshman Pete Yates at 149 pounds. Bruce earned a major decision over Matt Powless of Indiana, winning 17-4 and capturing seventh place. Yates was pinned by seventh-seeded Matt Kyler of Army and took eighth place in his bracket.

Meanwhile, at the Davidson Open, freshman Brock LiVorio won the 133-pound title, sweeping through the bracket and winning the final match against Campbell's Trevor Smith via a major decision, 17-4.

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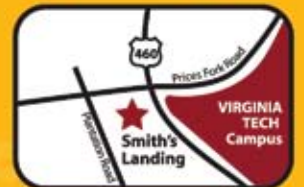
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Willoughby, Leaser named All-ACC

With a final record of 20-11, the Tech volleyball team finished with its highest win total since 2002 and it was due in part to sophomore middle blocker Felicia Willoughby and freshman setter Erin Leaser, both of whom were honored by the ACC for their efforts.

Willoughby garnered first-team all-conference honors after topping the ACC in hitting percentage this year, breaking Tech's school record by striking at a .402 clip. The Pleasanton, Calif., native finished the season with team-highs of 326 kills and 117 blocks. Willoughby received All-ACC second-team status in 2007, as well as a spot on the conference's all-freshman squad.

Leaser, an Allentown, Pa., native, registered 1,084 assists on the season to rank fifth all-time among Tech freshmen and earn a spot on the ACC's all-freshman team. The Hokies have now placed a player on the ACC all-freshman team the past three years, with Willoughby in 2007, and Taylor Parrish in 2006.

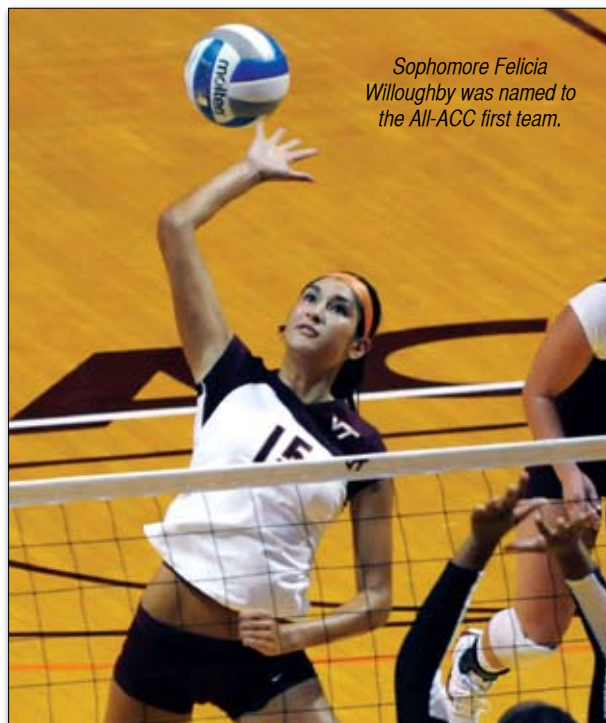
Track and field opens season

The Virginia Tech pole vaulters began the 2008-09 indoor track and field season strongly on Dec. 4th at the Liberty Kickoff in Lynchburg, Va., as freshman Abby Schaffer captured the title for the Hokie women and junior Yavgeniy Olhovskiy won the event for the men.

In her first collegiate competition, Schaffer showed why she was one of the top pole vault recruits in the country last year. The Easton, Pa., product cleared 12 feet, 9 1/2 inches for the victory, while junior Elise Birnbaum vaulted 11-9 3/4 to take third.

The Hokies finished one-two-three in the men's competition. Olhovskiy, a 2008 All-American in the event, continued where he left off last season, clearing 17-0 3/4 for the gold medal. Sophomore Jonathan Hall placed second and he was followed by junior Jared Jodon.

Be sure to pick up January's issue of this magazine for a preview of the track and field season with the inside scoop from director of track and field Dave Cianelli.



Sophomore Felicia Willoughby was named to the All-ACC first team.

OLYMPIC SPORTS SCOREBOARD

WRESTLING

Nov. 8	at NC State Open	
9	GEORGE MASON	W, 22-18
16	at Hokie Open	
22	at Navy Classic	
30	vs. Anderson	W, 42-3
30	at Chattanooga	W, 37-0
Dec. 5	at Las Vegas Invitational	
6	at Davidson Open	
6	at Las Vegas Invitational	
29	at Southern Scuffle	All Day
30	at Southern Scuffle	All Day

Lone Star Duals at Dallas, Texas

Jan. 3	vs. Brown	11 AM
3	vs. Central Oklahoma	5 PM

Bulldog Duals at Boiling Springs, N.C.

Jan. 10	at Gardner-Webb	11:30 AM
10	vs. The Citadel	1 PM
10	vs. Davidson	2:30 PM

Jan. 16	at Appalachian State	5 PM
16	vs. Campbell at Boone, N.C.	7 PM
18	RUTGERS	3 PM
18	VMI	5 PM
24	vs. Binghamton at Ann Arbor, Mich.	Noon
24	at Michigan	4 PM
25	vs. Nebraska at Mt. Pleasant, Mich.	11 AM
25	at Central Michigan	3 PM
31	vs. Virginia * at Glen Allen, Va.	1 PM
Feb. 1	at North Carolina *	1 PM
8	MARYLAND *	5 PM
15	NC STATE *	5 PM
15	DUKE *	7 PM
19	at Old Dominion	7:30 PM
Mar. 7	ACC CHAMPIONSHIPS	All Day
19	at NCAA Championships	All Day
20	at NCAA Championships	All Day
21	at NCAA Championships	All Day

*Indicates ACC match; Home games in CAPS

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